

Curriculum Literacy as Cultural Capital: Parental Education and Support for Competence-Based Education in Public Primary and Junior Schools in Kajiado County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Competence-Based Education (CBE) devolves part of the instructional task from the school to the household, and in doing so presupposes a parent able to decode strands, portfolios, rubrics and formative assessment feedback; where that capacity is unevenly distributed, a curriculum designed to widen opportunity may instead distribute it along the lines of existing advantage. This article examines the ways in which parental level of education influences parental support for CBE implementation in public primary and junior schools in Kajiado County, Kenya. Anchored on Systems Theory and drawing subordinately on Bourdieu and Epstein, a convergent mixed-methods design combined a survey, a phenomenological strand and a documentary strand, with achieved samples of 316 teachers (83.2%) and 446 parents and guardians (82.6%) and sub-scale reliabilities of $\alpha = .824$ to $.904$. Parental engagement capacity rose across the four education categories, from $M = 2.65$ ($SD = 0.15$) among parents with no formal education and $M = 2.67$ ($SD = 0.27$) among the primary-educated to $M = 3.01$ ($SD = 0.53$) among the secondary-educated and $M = 3.54$ ($SD = 0.43$) among the tertiary-educated, $F(3, 442) = 111.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .431$, every pairwise comparison being significant except no formal education versus primary (mean difference = -0.022 , $p = .958$); teacher-reported parental education support correlated with the implementation composite at $r(314) = .846$, $p < .001$. Three themes a curriculum literacy gap, a digital communication divide, and a paradox of aspiration and structural exclusion supplied the mechanisms, while school records documented parent meeting attendance of 17.4% to 34.6% in rural and pastoralist schools against 74.2% to 78.5% in urban schools. The null hypothesis was rejected. Parental education functions not as a demographic characteristic but as a form of educational and cultural capital whose distribution conditions whether the instructional labour CBE devolves to the home can in fact be performed there, and the relationship is stepped rather than linear, with a capacity threshold above primary level.

Keywords: Competence-Based Education, curriculum literacy, cultural capital, digital communication divide, Kajiado County, parental level of education, parental support, pastoralist communities, Systems Theory

INTRODUCTION

Education systems have over the past three decades moved from content-heavy, examination-driven curricula towards models organised around demonstrated competence, defining learning as the observable mastery of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, citizenship, digital literacy and self-efficacy rather than as the recall of subject content (Mulder, 2017; Voogt & Roblin, 2012; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). Kenya adopted the model nationally in 2017, restructuring basic education into a 2-6-3-3-3 progression and reorganising assessment around continuous, school-based evidence of competence (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD], 2017; Republic of Kenya, 2019); by 2025 the first cohort had progressed through junior school under the new framework. The reform is therefore past the point of debate about its desirability, and the operative question for research and for policy is one of conditions of what a household must already possess before a competence-based curriculum can be delivered as designed.

That question is not principally economic. Unlike a content-based curriculum, which can be delivered from a single textbook and a chalkboard, CBE redistributes the labour of instruction outward from the state to the school and from the school to the home. It assumes a parent who can interpret what a strand is, what a portfolio requires,

what a formative assessment comment means and what a project brief is asking the household to produce, and who can then supervise the learner in producing it (Ochieng, 2022; Mwebi & Akala, 2020). This is decoding work, and the capacity to perform it is a property of households rather than of institutions. Following Bourdieu (1986), it is best described as cultural capital in its embodied form: the literacy, vocabulary and dispositions through which the expectations of a school are recognised and acted upon. A curriculum requiring such capital while presenting itself as uniform will be implemented unevenly wherever the capital is unevenly supplied.

That expectation is well supported internationally but untested where it should bind hardest. Competence-based models transfer substantial responsibility for pacing, evidence-gathering and progression to learners and their families, advantaging households with higher formal education (Snodgrass Rangel & Berliner, 2022), and competency frameworks are routinely written on the assumption that the home will extend and consolidate school learning (Anderson, 2021). In sub-Saharan Africa the tension is sharper, because the reforms have been adopted into systems already carrying substantial deficits in adult schooling: learner-centred reform in Ghana was transmitted downwards with limited reference to household readiness (Adu-Yeboah & Forde, 2011); Rwanda's reform demanded home support many parents were not positioned to supply (Ndayambaje & Mukabaranga, 2018); and implementation in Uganda was constrained by limited parental understanding of competence-based assessment (Okello & Nyeko, 2019). The household-capacity constraint is therefore a structural property of competence-based design rather than an artefact of any single context yet the evidence thins precisely as it approaches the settings where it should be most severe.

Kajiado County is where the general argument becomes measurable. Within a single administrative unit it contains an urbanised northern belt integrated with the Nairobi metropolitan economy, peri-urban settlements, and extensive rangeland in Mashuuru, Oloitilal and Loitokitok where transhumant pastoralism dominates (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2022). Letura and Ole Seki (2021) document ethnographically a Maasai population in which many learners are the first generation in their households to attend school and in which parents with little or no formal schooling delegate educational matters entirely to teachers, while Wamukuru, Koros and Muthoni (2020) identify migratory livelihood combined with weak provision as the condition that makes curriculum reform hardest to deliver in such counties. Because the county administration, the officer cadre and the capitation regime are constant, the variation that remains across localities is variation in household and school conditions within one policy environment.

Statement Of The Problem

Kenya's curriculum architecture assigns the household a formal instructional role: parents are expected to supervise home-based competence tasks, respond to formative assessment feedback, attend consultative meetings and participate in curriculum communication (KICD, 2017; Republic of Kenya, 2019). National reviews nonetheless report that this architecture presupposes literate, curriculum-conversant households that many Kenyan communities do not contain (Waweru & Githinji, 2023; Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2022). In Kajiado the mismatch is concentrated and measurable: a large proportion of parents have no formal schooling and cannot decode the written and digital communication through which schools transmit CBE requirements (Letura & Ole Seki, 2021; KNBS, 2022), so that learners studying the same curriculum under the same administration receive materially different levels of home support. The empirical record does not establish the structure of that divergence, because Kenyan research on CBE has concentrated on curriculum design, policy readiness and teacher preparation, and where parental education is examined it is treated singly and reported at national level (Ngware, Mutisya & Oketch, 2019; Oduor & Simiyu, 2021).

Three consequences follow. Because no study has established where on the educational distribution parental capacity actually changes, sensitisation programmes are designed without knowing the audience they must reach. Because parental education is reported as involvement rather than as curriculum literacy, the mechanism through which it operates remains unspecified, and interventions address attendance at meetings rather than comprehension of what meetings are about. And because no study has examined the channels through which schools communicate curriculum expectations to low-literacy households, the possibility that those channels themselves amplify the inequality remains untested. The article is accordingly guided by one research question in what ways does parental level of education influence parental support for CBE implementation in Kajiado County, Kenya? and tests one null hypothesis at the .05 level: H_0 : Parental level of education has no statistically

significant influence on the implementation of Competence-Based Education in public primary and junior schools in Kajiado County, Kenya.

Research Question

This study was guided by the research question: In what ways does parental level of education influence parental support for CBE implementation in public primary and junior schools in Kajiado County, Kenya?

Research Hypothesis

The following research null hypothesis guided the study and was tested at the .05 level of significance: H_0 : Parental level of education has no statistically significant influence on the implementation of Competence-Based Education in public primary and junior schools in Kajiado County, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis is anchored on Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1950, 1968), whose central contribution is the open system: unlike a closed system, an open system survives only by importing resources from its environment, transforming them, and exporting the results back into it. Four features carry the argument the input–process–output sequence; feedback, by which information about outputs regulates subsequent inputs; holism, whereby impairment of any subsystem constrains the output capacity of the whole; and environmental embeddedness, whereby performance is bounded by what the environment can supply. Applied here, the school is the focal open system and the household the part of its environment at issue. Parental level of education is a household input the school does not control yet depends upon, entering implementation through the supervision of home-based competence tasks, attendance at consultative meetings and the interpretation of assessment feedback, and so conditioning the throughput by which curriculum intentions become learner activity.

The framework generates three testable expectations. First, localities whose households supply weaker educational capital should record lower implementation outputs. Second, because the system is holistic, the household deficit should constrain the productivity of the school's own processes rather than merely coexist with them. Third, and most consequentially, feedback in the CBE system operates through instruments that are themselves literacy-dependent report books, portfolio comments, written circulars and parent–teacher consultation so that where parents cannot decode them, the loop through which the system self-corrects is attenuated at precisely the households whose children most need mediation. Low parental education does not merely reduce an input; it degrades the mechanism by which the system learns about its own outputs.

Systems Theory explains that unequal inputs produce unequal outputs but not why inputs are unequally distributed, and two further theories are retained in a strictly subordinate role. Bourdieu (1986) converts socio-economic status into distinguishable resources economic, cultural and social capital that schools implicitly require without themselves supplying; cultural capital in its embodied form supplies the literacy and dispositions through which curriculum expectations are decoded, and his account of symbolic violence applies directly to the imposition of assumptions about literate, connected parental support on communities for whom those assumptions are structurally unrealisable. Its limitation is determinism, and the qualitative strand accordingly attends to the strategies through which parents and head teachers in low-capital settings attempt to sustain partnership. Epstein (1987, 2001) models family, school and community as spheres of influence whose overlap institutional practice can enlarge or reduce, and so treats home–school partnership as an institutional achievement rather than a parental attribute; its limitation, which the findings confirm, is a tendency to read weak engagement as a deficit remediable by outreach where motivated parents may be structurally prevented from engaging. Sen's (1999) capability approach is invoked at one point of interpretation the reading of low engagement scores as capability deprivation rather than preference.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND KNOWLEDGE GAP

Parental level of education is understood here not as a demographic label but as a household capability operating at the point of curriculum delivery, given substance by four indicators: curriculum literacy, meaning parents'

grasp of the aims, tasks and assessment logic of CBE; the capacity to supervise home-based competence tasks; participation in school communication; and the literacy and digital barriers that limit the partnership. This is itself a departure from a literature in which parental education is generally a background variable or a synonym for attendance at school events.

The global and continental literature converges on a single proposition that what adults in a household know about schooling conditions what children can do with it while sharing a limitation of level. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) established that at-home parenting was more strongly associated with pupil achievement than school-based involvement and that the involvement effect was itself conditioned by parental education, and Hattie (2009) found parental familiarity with the language and expectations of schooling among the home factors most consistently associated with attainment. Across Africa, UNESCO (2022) identifies household adult attainment, and maternal attainment particularly, as among the most consistent correlates of foundational learning; Mlachila and Moeletsi (2019) show econometrically that such demand-side constraints operate alongside the supply-side weaknesses that dominate policy attention; and Unterhalter (2019) argues that maternal attainment exerts intergenerational effects that headline participation measures obscure. These are syntheses and cross-country models rather than primary studies of implementation: they aggregate across dissimilar systems, treat parental education as a control rather than a construct with its own mechanisms, and render intra-national inequality invisible.

A smaller body of work addresses competence-based reform specifically, and does so at the level of policy text rather than of households. Snodgrass Rangel and Berliner (2022) identify devolved evidence-gathering as the mechanism by which such models advantage more educated households, and Anderson (2021) shows that competency frameworks are written on the assumption that the home will extend school learning; neither reports a population, sample or instruments, and neither measures parental education as a variable, while the World Bank (2022) observes that adult capacity to guide technology-mediated tasks conditions completion at home but reports only at global aggregate level. Regionally, Okello and Nyeko (2019) and Ndayambaje and Mukabaranga (2018) record that limited parental understanding of competence-based assessment constrained implementation in Uganda and Rwanda, but both are commentaries reporting no design, sampling frame or validated instruments, while Adu-Yeboah and Forde (2011) establish for Ghana that the constraint attaches to learner-centred reform generally without measuring the household attribute in question. UNESCO (2021) identifies the conjunction of low adult literacy, mobility and distance that weakens school-home communication in the East African drylands the conjunction the present study observes operating on a particular curriculum. The mechanism, in short, is named repeatedly and measured nowhere.

Kenyan evidence has accumulated rapidly since 2017 and has consistently identified parents as the group least prepared for the reform, without resolving the question analytically. The Elimu Yetu Coalition (2022) national survey documents widespread parental difficulty with project work, portfolios and school communication, but is an advocacy report that discloses neither sampling procedure nor instrument validation and offers no disaggregation for Kajiado. Ochieng (2022), the closest antecedent of the present research, finds involvement in competence-based tasks significantly associated with parental attainment, with parents who had not completed primary schooling reporting difficulty in interpreting assessment rubrics and supervising project work; but the study reports neither sampling frame nor reliability in a form permitting replication, does not disaggregate by county or ecological zone, gives no attention to pastoralist households, and employs a single-method design. Most importantly, it establishes an association without locating the point on the educational distribution at which parental capacity changes, and without identifying the mechanism through which attainment operates. An association tells a policymaker that parental education matters; it does not tell them which parents to design for. Wanjala (2020) reports the same direction of association, but the binary it reports secondary-and-above against primary-or-none cannot establish whether the threshold lies at secondary level, or whether primary schooling confers any advantage over none, because it does not test pairwise differences across all four categories. Contextually proximate work stops short from the other direction: Letura and Ole Seki (2021) examine participation rather than CBE implementation; Nyaga and Mwaura (2022) rely on secondary data and official interviews; and Kimani (2022) treats governance capacity rather than household educational capital.

Read critically, this body of work leaves four gaps. Contextually, no reviewed study examines parental level of education in relation to CBE implementation in a pastoral arid and semi-arid setting across both primary and

junior schools. Conceptually, parental education is treated as a demographic control or as generalised involvement, and no reviewed study distinguishes a parent's willingness to engage from a parent's capacity to decode what engagement requires, although the policy implications of the two differ entirely. Theoretically, the studies draw on involvement and equity frameworks without locating parental education within a systems account linking household inputs to school processes and implementation outputs. Methodologically, none employs a convergent mixed-methods design capable of establishing both the size of the association and the mechanisms producing it. The present study addresses these gaps by measuring parental education as a four-dimensional household capability within one socio-economically diverse county, testing pairwise differences across all four attainment categories to locate the threshold, and triangulating survey measurement against phenomenological accounts and institutional records.

METHODOLOGY

Design And Setting

The study adopted a convergent mixed-methods design in which the quantitative and qualitative strands were given equal priority, collected during the same phase, analysed independently, and merged at interpretation so that results could be compared for convergence, complementarity or divergence (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The design follows from the structure of the problem: how far parental support differs across levels of attainment is a question of measurement, while why it differs is a question of meaning and process. A cross-sectional survey of teachers and of parents and guardians therefore measured the association; a phenomenological strand elicited the lived experience of supporting and communicating about CBE under constraint from head teachers, Sub-County Education Officers (SCEOs), Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) and parents; and a documentary strand analysed against a structured checklist supplied institutional evidence independent of respondent perception. The strands map onto the systems framework: the quantitative measures the household input and the school output, the qualitative describes the transformation and communication processes, and the documentary provides an independent record of both. A single-county design was chosen because the explanatory target is socio-economic rather than administrative variation: holding Kajiado constant holds constant the education administration, the officer cadre and the capitation regime, so that what remains is variation in household conditions within one policy environment.

Population, Sampling and Response

The target population comprised all 505 public primary and junior schools in the county together with 3,801 teachers, 108,000 parents and guardians of learners enrolled in CBE classes, 505 head teachers, 7 SCEOs and 12 QASOs, an accessible population of 112,325 individuals. Each group occupies a distinct position in the implementation system: teachers and head teachers operate the transformation processes, parents and guardians supply the household input at issue, and the officers operate the feedback and supervision functions. A four-stage procedure stratified the county by sub-county, allocated the sample proportionately across strata, selected schools by simple random sampling within each stratum, and selected respondents by simple random sampling for teachers, systematic random sampling from class registers for parents and guardians, automatic inclusion for head teachers and a census of both officer groups, schools serving as primary sampling units because no single frame exists for the individual respondents of interest (Cochran, 1977; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The parent sample size was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula and the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table.

Table 1 Sampling Procedure and Achieved Sample

Respondent group	Target population	Sampling technique	Sampling %	Sample size	Achieved	Response rate (%)
Public primary and junior schools	505	Stratified proportionate random	10	50	50	—

Teachers	3,801	Multi-stage stratified simple random	10	380	316	83.2
Parents and guardians	108,000	Systematic, proportionate and simple random	0.5	540	446	82.6
Head teachers	505	Stratified simple random	10	50	27 (interviews)	54.0
Sub-County Education Officers	7	Purposive / census	100	7	5 (interviews)	71.4
Quality Assurance and Standards Officers	12	Purposive / census	100	12	7 (focus group)	58.3
Total				1,141		

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Response rates above 80 per cent on both survey instruments are adequate to guard against non-response bias (Waweru & Orodho, 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The shortfall was concentrated in remote pastoralist schools where questionnaires could not be retrieved within the collection window a pattern consistent with the accessibility constraints the study documents.

Instruments, Validity and Reliability

Five instruments were used structured teacher and parent questionnaires, semi-structured interview schedules for head teachers and the two officer groups, a focus group guide and a document analysis guide designed as a set, so that the research question was addressed by at least three of them and every substantive finding could be triangulated across instrument types and respondent categories. On the teacher questionnaire, Section C measured parental education support through nine items on parental curriculum literacy, capacity to supervise home tasks, meeting attendance and responsiveness to school communication, while Section F, the dependent measure, comprised nine items on the urban–rural implementation gap, the effects of gender and household wealth on access, the inclusion of learners with special needs and of pastoralist learners, and the equity of policy and resourcing. All items were rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); both are adequacy scales on which a higher score denotes a more favourable condition, and the single item worded against its scale was reverse-coded before composites were computed. The parent questionnaire recorded demographic, livelihood, device-ownership and meeting-attendance characteristics and comprised four nine-item Likert scales; its items referred to observable household actions rather than to abstract curriculum terminology, so that the instrument would be intelligible to respondents with limited formal schooling, and because capacity content is distributed across its sections the dependent measure for this analysis was the overall parent engagement composite, the mean of the four scales. Focus group participants were drawn from the sampled schools but were not those who completed the questionnaire, and the document analysis guide extracted meeting frequency, attendance rates and the recorded substance of parental contributions from association and board minutes.

Content validity was assessed by a panel of three experts two in Educational Administration and Planning and one in research methods working against a matrix mapping every item to the research question, construct and sub-construct it was intended to measure; disputed items were re-mapped or removed, unclear items reworded, and the revised instruments re-approved before piloting. Face validity was assessed by pilot respondents, and construct validity by deriving every scale from the conceptual framework and examining the inter-correlations

among composites, which ran in the predicted directions. The instruments were piloted with five teachers, ten parents and guardians, two head teachers and one SCEO in two non-sampled Kajiado schools, one peri-urban and one rural. On the pilot data the teacher parental-education scale returned $\alpha = .88$; on the main dataset all nine sub-scales returned coefficients between $\alpha = .824$ and $\alpha = .904$, with the teacher parental-education support scale at $\alpha = .824$ and the implementation scale at $\alpha = .835$. Split-half reliability reached .97 for that sub-scale, and test-retest coefficients computed two weeks apart exceeded $r \geq .70$ on every scale. Trustworthiness in the qualitative strand was established through credibility (triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing), transferability (thick description and maximum variation across locality types), dependability (an audit trail and code-recode procedure) and confirmability (a reflexive journal recording the researcher's positionality as a member of a religious community working in the county, verbatim grounding of every theme, and independent review of the coded data), following Patton (2015).

Data Collection, Analysis and Ethics

Authorisation was obtained from the university, the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, the County Director of Education, the Sub-County Education Offices and each participating head teacher before any data were collected. Because a substantial proportion of parent respondents had limited formal schooling, the parent questionnaire was administered as a guided interview, a trained research assistant reading each item aloud in Kiswahili or Maa as the respondent preferred. The adaptation is itself analytically significant: an instrument measuring the consequences of low literacy cannot be administered in a form that presupposes literacy without excluding the very respondents whose circumstances it is designed to capture. Interviews and focus groups, the latter constituted homogeneously by locality type, were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim, and documentary indicators were extracted on site, incomplete records being excluded from the relevant comparison rather than estimated (Yin, 2018). Every participant gave written informed consent after an explanation of purpose, procedures, risks, benefits and rights, read aloud and recorded by thumbprint where literacy was limited; participation was voluntary and withdrawable, no learner was a respondent, and schools and participants are identified only by code.

Quantitative data were analysed in IBM SPSS Statistics version 22. All 446 parent cases and all 316 teacher cases were complete on every Likert item with no out-of-range responses, the sole exception being the parent education-level variable discussed among the limitations; composites were computed as arithmetic means, so that each is expressed on the original one-to-five metric and is directly interpretable against the scale anchors. The grouping variable was the parent's highest level of education, a four-category ordinal variable, and the dependent variable the parent overall engagement composite; the test was a one-way analysis of variance with Tukey HSD post-hoc comparisons, supplemented by a Pearson product-moment correlation between the teacher parental-education support composite and the teacher implementation composite. Pairwise post-hoc testing was specified in advance, because the analytical question concerns the shape of the relationship across attainment categories and not merely the existence of an overall difference. Every composite departed significantly from normality on the Shapiro-Wilk test (all $p < .001$), with absolute skewness between 0.94 and 1.30 a pattern produced by the county's urban-rural polarisation rather than by measurement error so parametric tests are reported as the primary analyses, given the robustness of the F statistic at these sample sizes, with Kruskal-Wallis and Spearman's rho alongside as sensitivity checks. Eta squared is reported as the effect size and the hypothesis tested at the .05 level. Because the design is cross-sectional and non-experimental, results are reported throughout as relationships and differences and not as causal effects. Qualitative data were analysed by reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006), codes being generated across the dataset both deductively from a frame corresponding to the research questions and inductively wherever the data expressed something that frame did not accommodate, collated into candidate themes, reviewed against the coded extracts and the full dataset, and defined in terms of the analytic story each tells; documentary indicators were extracted onto the checklist and compared across locality types. The strands were merged through the joint display reported below, in which each theme was examined for whether it converged with, complemented, explained or contradicted the corresponding statistical result, divergences being reported rather than reconciled.

FINDINGS

Respondent Profile

The distribution of household educational attainment is itself a substantive finding and is therefore reported before the analysis proper (Table 2).

Table 2 Selected Characteristics of Parent and Guardian Respondents (n = 446)

Characteristic	Category	f	%	Characteristic	Category	f	%
Gender	Female	300	67.3	Livelihood type	Pastoralist	250	56.1
	Male	146	32.7		Agricultural	105	23.5
Education level	No formal education	161	36.1		Urban/commercial	91	20.4
	Primary	107	24.0	Owns digital device	No	254	57.0
	Secondary	117	26.2		Yes	192	43.0
	Tertiary	61	13.7	Attends school meetings	Yes	254	57.0
					No	192	43.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Three features of Table 2 govern the interpretation of everything that follows. First, 268 respondents (60.1%) had primary schooling or none, and only 61 (13.7%) had attained tertiary education. Second, 254 (57.0%) owned no digital device, so the majority of households cannot be reached by the channels through which schools increasingly communicate. Third, 300 (67.3%) were female, which matters because formal schooling has historically been less accessible to girls in the county's pastoralist communities, so that the parent who most often liaises with the school is drawn from the segment in which educational deficit is concentrated (KNBS, 2023). Among the 316 teachers, 157 (49.7%) served rural or pastoralist schools, 85 (26.9%) peri-urban and 74 (23.4%) urban; 126 (39.9%) had received no CBE-specific in-service training although 271 (85.8%) held a degree or diploma. Preparedness was therefore distributed not by qualification but by locality: the households with the least schooling were served by the schools with the least trained teachers.

Parental Education and Parent Engagement

The parent overall engagement composite rose across the four education categories. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics, the analysis of variance and the post-hoc comparisons together.

Table 3 Parental Level of Education and Parent Engagement in CBE: Descriptive Statistics, One-Way ANOVA and Tukey HSD Comparisons (n = 446)

Education level	n	M	SD
No formal education	161	2.65	0.15
Primary	107	2.67	0.27
Secondary	117	3.01	0.53

Tertiary	61	3.54	0.43
Pairwise comparison (Tukey HSD)		Mean difference	p
No formal education vs Primary		-0.022	.958
No formal education vs Secondary		-0.361	< .001
No formal education vs Tertiary		-0.891	< .001
Primary vs Secondary		-0.339	< .001
Primary vs Tertiary		-0.869	< .001
Secondary vs Tertiary		-0.530	< .001

Note. ANOVA: $F(3, 442) = 111.72, p < .001, \eta^2 = .431$. Levene's test: $F = 29.52, p < .001$. Kruskal–Wallis: $H(3) = 116.67, p < .001$. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The gradient is steep, but its shape is more informative than its slope. The difference between parents with no formal education and parents with primary education was negligible and statistically indistinguishable (mean difference = -0.022, $p = .958$), whereas every comparison involving secondary or tertiary education was significant at $p < .001$. Parental capacity to support a competence-based curriculum is therefore not a linear function of years of schooling but a stepped function with a threshold: primary schooling alone is associated with almost no additional capacity to navigate CBE, and a capacity premium appears only from secondary level upward. Answering the research question directly, parental education influences parental support not by incremental accumulation but by the crossing of a comprehension threshold, below which additional years of schooling make no observable difference to what a household can do with the curriculum.

Two further features bear on intervention design. The tertiary premium of 0.891 scale points over the no-formal-education group, close to a full point on a five-point metric, represents the cumulative advantage that Bourdieu-informed studies of Kenyan schooling predict (Akala, 2021; Kimani, 2022). Dispersion is itself a finding: the very small standard deviation in the no-formal-education group ($SD = 0.15$) against that of the tertiary group ($SD = 0.43$) indicates a floor of shared incapacity, where households differ little because none can perform the tasks the curriculum devolves. More importantly, secondary-educated parents recorded a composite of only 3.01, barely above the scale midpoint: the level at which effective partnership becomes observable lies above secondary, and only 13.7% of sampled parents had crossed it.

Teacher Evidence

The teacher survey approached the same construct from the institutional side, with teachers rating nine items on the extent to which parents in their school communities understand, support and engage with CBE (Table 4).

Table 4 Teacher Perceptions of Parental Education Support for CBE by Locality (n = 316)

Item	Statement	Urban M (SD)	Peri-urban M (SD)	Rural/Pastoralist M (SD)	Overall M (SD)
C1	Parents understand the goals of CBE	3.95 (1.08)	2.15 (1.02)	2.11 (1.11)	2.55 (1.33)
C2	Parents actively help learners with CBE homework and projects	4.28 (0.93)	2.18 (1.19)	2.11 (1.15)	2.64 (1.44)

C3	Parental education level enables meaningful engagement with teachers	4.19 (0.93)	1.93 (0.99)	2.27 (1.19)	2.63 (1.39)
C4	Educated parents follow up on learners' formative assessments	3.95 (1.19)	2.15 (1.20)	2.31 (1.16)	2.65 (1.38)
C5	Low parental literacy is a barrier to CBE implementation here	4.07 (1.10)	1.94 (1.00)	2.13 (1.17)	2.53 (1.40)
C6	Parents attend and participate in school meetings on CBE	4.08 (1.08)	2.06 (1.13)	2.37 (1.17)	2.69 (1.38)
C7	Parents contribute ideas to school activities and planning	4.16 (1.02)	2.05 (1.08)	2.13 (1.17)	2.59 (1.41)
C8	Parental guidance at home strengthens competency acquisition	4.05 (1.11)	2.14 (1.28)	2.34 (1.27)	2.69 (1.45)
C9	Overall, parental education is a significant enabler of CBE	4.08 (1.20)	2.13 (1.13)	2.27 (1.13)	2.66 (1.39)
	Section C composite	4.09 (0.41)	2.08 (0.40)	2.23 (0.36)	2.62 (0.90)

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Item C5 is worded as a barrier rather than as a capacity and was reverse-coded before analysis, so that on every item a higher score denotes a more favourable condition. Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Urban teachers rated parental engagement capacity roughly two full scale points higher than their peri-urban and rural or pastoralist colleagues. Outside the urban zone, means below 2.4 on the items concerning parents' understanding of CBE goals, help with homework and projects and follow-up on formative assessments indicate that teachers experience the home–school partnership presumed by the CBE design as largely absent, and the low scores on reverse-coded item C5 record strong agreement among the same teachers that low parental literacy is a barrier. Standard deviations within each band, at or below 0.41 on the composite, are small relative to the two-point between-band gap, indicating shared institutional realities rather than idiosyncratic perceptions. The household deficit therefore registers institutionally: it is not only that less-educated parents report doing less, but that the schools serving them experience the curriculum's parental-engagement architecture as non-functional. The dependent measure follows the same distribution, the implementation composite standing at $M = 4.16$ ($SD = 0.28$) in urban schools against $M = 2.15$ ($SD = 0.34$) in peri-urban and $M = 2.08$ ($SD = 0.34$) in rural or pastoralist schools.

Documentary Evidence

Parent–teacher association and board of management minutes from nine sampled schools provided institutional corroboration independent of respondent perception, on two dimensions: how often schools convened parents, and what parents said when convened (Table 5).

Table 5 Parent Meeting Frequency, Attendance and Recorded Quality of Contribution from School Records

School code	Zone	Meetings held (year)	Average attendance (%)	Parental contributions recorded in minutes
SCH-KN-001	Urban	4	74.2	High (policy questions, CBE project feedback)

SCH-KN-002	Urban	4	78.5	High (assessment queries, materials funding)
SCH-KC-001	Peri-urban	3	62.4	Moderate (general school matters)
SCH-ISON-001	Peri-urban	3	58.8	Moderate (attendance, uniform)
SCH-KW-001	Rural	2	34.6	Low (attendance, fees only)
SCH-MAS-001	Rural/Pastoralist	2	28.2	Very low (mostly passive)
SCH-MAS-002	Rural/Pastoralist	2	22.5	Very low (language barriers noted)
SCH-LOI-001	Rural/Pastoralist	1	19.8	Very low (one meeting this year)
SCH-OLO-001	Rural/Pastoralist	1	17.4	Minimal (quorum not reached at last meeting)

Source: School Records and Board of Management Minutes, 2025–2026.

Two patterns bear on the research question, and the second is the more important. The first is frequency: urban and peri-urban schools convened parents three or four times a year while rural and pastoralist schools convened them once or twice, in two cases only once in the academic year and in one case without reaching quorum. The formal channel for communicating CBE expectations is therefore barely functional in the most marginalized communities an institutional deficit rather than a household one, since a parent cannot attend a meeting that is not held. The second is attendance and, critically, content. Attendance ranged from 74.2% to 78.5% in urban and 58.8% to 62.4% in peri-urban schools against 17.4% to 34.6% in rural and pastoralist schools, and the substance of recorded contributions differed as sharply: urban parents raised questions about CBE assessment methodology, project funding and curriculum content, while rural parents' contributions were confined to attendance, fees and uniform. The record therefore converges with the survey evidence not merely on whether parents engage but on what they are able to engage about the more precise expression of curriculum literacy.

Qualitative Evidence

Theme 1: The Curriculum Literacy Gap

The theme establishes that the constraint on parental support operates through comprehension rather than concern, and that the vocabulary of the curriculum is itself a component of the barrier. HT-KN-01, serving an urban school in Kajiado North, described the stratification of even a relatively well-educated parent community: "The more educated parents ... attend our meetings consistently, ask questions, follow up on homework. They have smartphones; they are in the school WhatsApp group. But parents with lower education levels are less involved, not because they do not care, but because they often do not understand what CBE requires of them. We have had to simplify our communication, translate some materials into Maa and Swahili, conduct open days where we demonstrate what the children are learning." That lower-educated parents are less involved "not because they do not care" is analytically decisive: it locates the constraint in comprehension rather than motivation and assigns responsibility for bridging the gap to the institution, in the terms Epstein (1987) proposes, while indicating that the remedies are already known to practitioners.

The depth of the gap emerged more starkly in the rural focus group, where FGD-RURAL-P8, one of the few participants holding a secondary school certificate, described her own difficulty: "I completed Form 4. I am unusual here ... even I do not understand all the CBE activities the teacher sends. There are things about portfolios and learning outcomes and strands. I had to ask my cousin who is a teacher in Nairobi what these terms mean. If even I am confused, how about a mother who has never been to school?" The account supplies the mechanism

behind the threshold observed in Table 3. If a secondary-educated parent requires a specialist contact to decode the vocabulary of the curriculum, the terminology is functioning as a barrier at exactly the level where the quantitative data record the first capacity premium and the premium is correspondingly modest ($M = 3.01$). Parents below that level are excluded from meaningful engagement altogether, which is what the indistinguishability of the two lowest groups records numerically. The theme also converts an apparently intractable condition the attainment of an adult generation no policy can retrospectively alter into a tractable one: the register in which schools and curriculum documents communicate.

Theme 2: The WhatsApp and Digital Communication Divide

The theme establishes that the channel through which schools communicate constitutes a second and analytically independent mechanism, operating even where comprehension would not otherwise bind. The school WhatsApp group that HT-KN-01 identified as the medium keeping educated, connected parents informed is structurally inaccessible to the 254 sampled parents (57.0%) who own no digital device, so the medium reproduces the educational divide in a second register: a parent who could understand a message cannot receive it. Where digital channels were unavailable the alternative proved no more inclusive. SCEO-LOI-01 reported that schools in Loitokitok had no viable alternative to notice boards, and FGD-RURAL-P6 described the result: "I walk there sometimes. Other mothers cannot walk that far. And when there is a meeting, who tells us? They put a notice on the school board, but nobody comes to tell us. Some mothers cannot read the notice. The communication is broken." Three compounding barriers appear in a single utterance distance, absence of active notification, and literacy and both available channels are literacy-dependent and therefore accessible only to the educated minority. The theme complements rather than merely confirms the quantitative gradient: schools relying on these channels are not neutral transmitters of curriculum information but amplifiers of the inequality the curriculum was intended to reduce.

Theme 3: The Paradox of Educational Aspiration and Structural Exclusion

The theme stands in tension with the first two and guards against a deficit reading of the statistics. Rural and pastoralist parents expressed strong aspirational commitment to schooling even where they possessed none of the educational capital required to support it practically, and FGD-RURAL-P4 articulated the competing logics directly: "Education is important. We know this. Our children must go to school. But when the grass is gone and the water is gone, the cows must go. And when the cows go, the family follows. The children follow. What can we do? The cattle are our life." The speaker does not reject education; she subordinates it to a survival imperative where the two genuinely compete for the same time and presence. The theme therefore complicates rather than confirms the quantitative finding, and changes its policy meaning: the low composites in Table 3 measure what these parents are able to do with the curriculum, not what they want for their children, and read through Sen (1999) they index capability deprivation rather than indifference. The aspiration is an existing community asset, and intervention designed around it will succeed where intervention designed to correct assumed indifference will not.

Integration of the Strands and Test of the Hypothesis

The three streams explain one another with unusual precision, and Table 6 sets out the joint display through which they were merged.

Table 6 Joint Display: Integration of Quantitative, Documentary and Qualitative Evidence

Dimension	Quantitative evidence	Documentary evidence	Qualitative theme	Relationship	Integrated interpretation					
Curriculum literacy	2.65 → 2.67 → 3.01 → 3.54	no formal vs primary	all other pairs $p < .001$	$\eta^2 = .431$	Rural contributions confined to	urban on assessment and	Curriculum literacy gap	Converges and explains	Capacity is stepped, with a	the barrier is comprehension of curriculum

		n.s. (p = .958)			attendance, fees, uniform	curriculum content			threshold above primary level	motivational vocabulary, not
Supervision of home tasks	C2 (2.18)	2.11)	C8 (2.14)	2.34)	—	Curriculum literacy gap	Converges	Parents cannot scaffold tasks they cannot themselves decode, irrespective of willingness		
Participation in communication	C6 (2.06)	2.37)	57.0% own no device	Meetings 3–4 per year urban vs 1–2 rural	attendance 74.2%–78.5% vs 17.4%–34.6%	quorum failure	Digital communication divide	Comments: a mechanism the survey did not measure	Both channels are literacy-dependent	the home–school overlap is under-maintained where most needed
Literacy and digital barriers	254 (57.0%) without a device	161 (36.1%) with no formal education	Language barriers noted in SCH-MAS-002	Digital communication divide	Converges	Channel choice reproduces the educational divide in a second register				
Motivation and aspiration	Very low dispersion at the floor (SD = 0.15)	Low attendance despite recorded commitment	Aspiration and structural exclusion	Complicates: contradicts a deficit reading	Low scores index capability deprivation, not indifference	aspiration is a community asset				
Institutional outcome	r(314) = .846, p < .001 (p = .546)	implementation 4.16 urban vs 2.15 and 2.08	Meeting quality tracks zone exactly	All three themes	Converges	Schools serving educated parent communities are the same schools reporting successful implementation				

Source: Field Survey, School Records and Board of Management Minutes, 2025–2026.

The display supports three integrative conclusions. First, the strands converge on the shape of the relationship: the quantitative gradient establishes that engagement capacity is stepped with a threshold above primary level, and the curriculum literacy gap theme explains why, since parents cannot scaffold tasks they cannot themselves decode. Second, they are complementary on the institutional dimension: the documentary record shows that rural schools convene parents half as often as urban schools and that rural parents, when convened, speak about fees and uniform rather than about assessment, while the communication divide theme explains how the informational ecosystem of CBE bypasses low-literacy households even before a meeting is called. Third, one theme complicates the statistical picture rather than confirming it, and the divergence is reported rather than reconciled: because the low composites cannot be read as preference, the quantitative finding under-describes what it measures.

The hypothesis was tested on two complementary analyses. The analysis of variance reported in Table 3 was statistically significant, $F(3, 442) = 111.72, p < .001, \eta^2 = .431$, a large effect indicating that 43.1% of the variance in parental engagement capacity is associated with education level; because Levene's test indicated heterogeneous variances ($F = 29.52, p < .001$), the Kruskal–Wallis test returned the same conclusion as a robustness check, $H(3) = 116.67, p < .001$. At the teacher level, the correlation between perceived parental education support and CBE implementation was strong and positive, $r(314) = .846, p < .001$ ($\rho = .546, p < .001$). H_02 was therefore rejected: the effect size is large by conventional benchmarks, and the relationship is stepped rather than linear.

DISCUSSION

Parental Education as Delivery Infrastructure

That parental engagement capacity rises across education categories will surprise no one; that it does not rise at all between no formal education and completed primary schooling is the contribution of this analysis. Wanjala (2020) and Ochieng (2022) both report a significant association with attainment, but neither located the point at which capacity changes, because neither tested all pairwise comparisons across the full attainment range. The evidence here places that point above primary level and thereby converts a general association into an actionable specification. The qualitative data identify a pathway that is decoding work at every step, running from educational capital to curriculum literacy, from curriculum literacy to the ability to receive and act on school communication, from communication to home supervision of competence tasks, and from supervision to the engagement CBE presupposes. Primary schooling in Kenya confers literacy in the narrow sense the capacity to decode text without conferring the disciplinary vocabulary in which the curriculum communicates about itself. The chain therefore breaks at its first link for the 60.1% of sampled households with primary schooling or none, and breaks in the same place and to the same degree for both, which is what the indistinguishability of the two lowest categories records. That reframing relocates the intervention point: the attainment of an adult generation cannot be retrospectively altered by policy, whereas the register in which schools communicate can be altered immediately and at negligible cost.

Interpretation Through the Theoretical Framework

Read through Systems Theory, the result is what the framework predicts and, more usefully, it identifies which part of the system is impaired. The analysis of variance establishes the first expectation, that localities whose households supply weaker educational capital record lower engagement outputs, and the strength of the teacher-level correlation ($r = .846$) supports the second, since the household deficit is observed in the same schools that report low implementation. The third is the most analytically productive. Feedback in the CBE system operates through report books, portfolio comments, written circulars and parent–teacher consultation, all literacy-dependent instruments; the documentary evidence that rural schools convened parents once or twice a year, that one failed to reach quorum, and that rural contributions were confined to attendance and fees indicates that the feedback loop is structurally attenuated at exactly the households whose children most need mediation which is why the deficit is self-sustaining rather than self-correcting.

Read through Bourdieu (1986), the gradient is cultural capital operating as predicted: a curriculum requiring home-based interpretation rewards households already endowed with the dispositions to interpret while

presenting itself as uniform and neutral. Symbolic violence applies with precision to a communication architecture built on written circulars and smartphone messaging in a population where 36.1% of parents have no formal education and 57.0% own no digital device, and the floor effect is the empirical signature of a population positioned outside the capital the curriculum requires. Read through Epstein (1987, 2001), the finding also identifies where remedy lies, and qualifies the theory in doing so: Epstein treats the home–school overlap as an institutional achievement, and the documentary evidence indicates that in these localities the institution was not achieving it, meeting frequency, notification channel and language of delivery being school-level decisions that were all operating against the households they were meant to reach. But the aspiration theme exposes the model's limitation, since FGD-RURAL-P4 describes a parent who values education and is nonetheless structurally prevented from sustaining engagement when pasture and water fail. Outreach cannot resolve a constraint of that kind; it can only ensure that the school's side of the overlap is maintained when the household is able to meet it.

Relation to Previous Research

The findings agree with the direction of the Kenyan evidence and extend it in three respects. They agree with Ochieng (2022) and Wanjala (2020) that parental attainment is significantly associated with engagement in competence-based tasks, and with the Elimu Yetu Coalition (2022) that difficulty with portfolios and school communication is widespread; they extend that record by locating the threshold, by disaggregating within a pastoral county rather than reporting national aggregates, and by adding strands that identify the mechanism rather than only the association. Where Ochieng (2022) reports that less-educated parents find rubrics difficult, the present study finds that a secondary-educated parent required specialist assistance to decode standard curriculum terminology, which suggests the difficulty is a property of the instrument as much as of the parent. The findings likewise agree with the international literature while relocating its explanatory claim: the dynamic Snodgrass Rangel and Berliner (2022) and Anderson (2021) identify in high-income systems and in framework design is observable in a low-income pastoral economy with a radically different political economy. The magnitude, however, differs. In a system with near-universal adult literacy the mechanism sorts households within a literate population; in Kajiado it excludes 36.1% of households at the threshold of written communication entirely. The mechanism is the same; the consequence is categorical rather than graduated. Two points of tension should also be recorded. UNESCO (2021) and Letura and Ole Seki (2021) describe pastoral parents as delegating educational matters entirely to teachers, a formulation that risks being read as disengagement, which the present evidence contradicts while supporting the behavioural observation. And the involvement literature treats outreach as the principal remedy; outreach is necessary, but the finding that a secondary-educated parent could not decode curriculum vocabulary indicates that outreach in the existing register would fail even if frequency were doubled.

Contribution and Equity Implications

Three features of the setting make this evidence more than locally interesting. Within one administrative unit and under one education administration, 13.7% of the parent population holds tertiary qualifications and 36.1% has never attended school, which permits comparison of both extremes under a constant policy regime in a way no between-county design can achieve. Many learners are the first generation in their households to attend school (Letura & Ole Seki, 2021), so that the curriculum's assumption of intergenerational familiarity with schooling fails not partially but at its foundation. On that basis the study makes three contributions. It provides context-specific evidence that parental education operates on CBE implementation as a form of educational and cultural capital with an identifiable internal structure, rather than as a generalised involvement proxy. It locates the capacity threshold empirically, primary schooling being associated with no measurable premium over no schooling ($p = .958$) and the first premium appearing at secondary level, where it remains modest ($M = 3.01$) a specification sensitisation design requires and the prior literature does not supply. And it identifies both the register and the channel of curriculum communication as implementation variables in their own right, the latter analytically independent of comprehension, so that a school's choice of medium is an equity decision rather than an administrative convenience.

The equity structure of these findings invites two misreadings. The first is motivational. The composite of 2.65 among parents with no formal education measures what those parents are able to do with the curriculum, not

what they want for their children; the same parents affirmed the value of schooling without prompting, and an urban head teacher volunteered the same interpretation of her own low-education parents. A structural barrier is thereby converted, by measurement, into what looks like a motivational deficit. The second is that the deficit falls evenly within communities. It does not. The sample comprised 67.3% female parents, and because formal schooling has historically been less accessible to girls in the county's pastoralist communities the adult population contains more non-literate mothers than fathers (KNBS, 2023); since it is disproportionately mothers who attend school meetings, the school's communication reaches the household through the member least equipped to decode it, and HT-LOI-01 observed that cultural pressure on girls to leave school intensifies from Grade 5 or 6 a pattern that regenerates female non-literacy into the next generation of mothers. Reported as indicative, since the quantitative instruments were not designed to capture it, the intersection underlines that the problem is structural rather than individual: a curriculum assuming curriculum-literate households has been introduced uniformly into a county where, in six of seven sub-counties, that assumption does not hold.

Limitations

Four limitations qualify these findings. The design is cross-sectional and non-experimental, so the results establish relationships and differences rather than causal effects, and the direction of influence is inferred from the conceptual framework rather than demonstrated. Second, 161 parent records (36.1%) carried no entry for education level and were coded as no formal education, an interpretation consistent with the county's literacy profile but one to which the education-level analyses are sensitive; the unusually small standard deviation of that group ($SD = 0.15$) should be read with the coding decision in mind. Third, the parametric and rank-based estimates diverge in magnitude, $r = .846$ against $\rho = .546$, a divergence attributable to the bimodal distribution of the composites in a county with two implementation tiers; direction and significance are identical under both, but the parametric coefficient should not be read as an estimate of a smooth monotonic relationship. Fourth, the intersection of gender with parental education emerged from the qualitative strand although the quantitative instruments were not designed to capture it.

CONCLUSION

Parental level of education has a statistically significant influence on parental support for the implementation of Competence-Based Education in public primary and junior schools in Kajiado County, and H_02 was accordingly rejected, $F(3, 442) = 111.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .431$, with a teacher-level association of $r(314) = .846$, $p < .001$. Three subsidiary conclusions specify that relationship. It is stepped rather than linear: parents with no formal education and parents with primary education are statistically indistinguishable in their capacity to support the curriculum (mean difference = -0.022 , $p = .958$), and a capacity premium appears only from secondary level upward; because secondary-educated parents themselves recorded a composite barely above the scale midpoint, the level at which partnership becomes confident lies above secondary, and only 13.7% of sampled parents had attained it. The deficit is one of decoding and of communication channel rather than of motivation, as the testimony of a secondary-educated parent who required specialist assistance to interpret curriculum terminology, the independent account of an urban head teacher, and the aspiration documented in the pastoral focus groups together indicate. And school communication architectures amplify the deficit rather than mitigating it, since both channels available here are literacy-dependent while 57.0% of sampled parents owned no digital device, and the documentary record shows the overlap institutionally under-maintained in precisely the communities where household capacity to sustain it was weakest.

Taken together, these results support a single conclusion about what parental education is for the purposes of implementation policy. Where a curriculum devolves instructional labour to the home, parental education ceases to be a background characteristic and becomes part of the delivery infrastructure of the reform: not a covariate to be controlled for, but an input whose distribution shapes what the curriculum can be, in practice, for the learners of a given community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, the register of parent-facing curriculum materials should be reviewed and simplified: the evidence that a secondary-educated parent required specialist assistance to decode

standard curriculum terminology indicates that the vocabulary of the curriculum is itself an implementation barrier, and non-technical descriptions of strands, portfolios, learning outcomes and formative assessment should be developed for parental audiences and translated into Kiswahili and Maa. This is the lowest-cost intervention the evidence supports. To the Ministry of Education, sensitisation guidance should specify a design standard for audiences with primary-level literacy or none, since the composite of only 3.01 among secondary-educated parents indicates that sensitisation pitched at that level will not equip the majority of rural parents.

To head teachers and boards of management, parent sensitisation should be conducted orally, in Kiswahili and Maa, and through trusted community intermediaries such as elders, religious leaders and community health workers rather than through written circulars and digital messaging, since 254 sampled parents (57.0%) own no digital device and both existing channels exclude the households schools most need to reach; every school should maintain at least one non-literacy-dependent channel. Meeting frequency is itself a school-level lever, and the finding that rural schools convened parents once or twice a year against three or four times in urban schools indicates that the formal channel is under-used where it is most needed, while the quorum failure at one school indicates that frequency alone is insufficient without active notification. Open days at which learning is demonstrated rather than described should become standard practice, on the evidence of HT-KN-01 that demonstration was an effective substitute for written explanation. To county education authorities, outreach resources should be allocated against the distribution of household educational attainment rather than evenly across schools, since the deficit is concentrated in identifiable localities and the schools serving the least-schooled households are also those convening parents least often.

Three priorities for further research follow from the limitations. A gender-disaggregated study of curriculum access and home support in pastoral communities is required, given the concentration of educational deficit in the female parent population. A multi-county study is required to separate parental education from the other conditions with which it is tightly co-located here. And an intervention study testing simplified, oral and demonstrative parent communication against the existing register would establish whether the register is, as this evidence suggests, a modifiable component of the barrier.

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