

Improving Literacy Instruction in Kenya through Teacher Professional Development and Text Messages Support: A Cluster Randomized Trial

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Abstract

We evaluated a program to improve literacy instruction on the Kenyan coast using training workshops, semiscripted lesson plans, and weekly text-message support for teachers to understand its impact on students' literacy outcomes and on the classroom practices leading to those outcomes. The evaluation ran from the beginning of Grade 1 to the end of Grade 2 in 51 government primary schools chosen at random, with 50 schools acting as controls. The intervention had an impact on classroom practices with effect sizes from 0.57 to 1.15. There was more instruction with written text and more focus on letters and sounds. There was a positive impact on three of four primary measures of children's literacy after two years, with effect sizes up to 0.64, and school dropout reduced from 5.3% to 2.1%. This approach to literacy instruction is sustainable, and affordable and a similar approach has subsequently been adopted nationally in Kenya.

Keywords: Early grade reading, Literacy instruction, Africa, Kenya, RCT

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