

Modalities of Constituency Bursary Fund Allocation & Their Effect on Access and Retention in Nairobi County

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Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

The provision of quality education in Kenya has been a central policy issue since we attained independence. This has been due to governments' commitment to provision of quality education and training as a basic human right for all Kenyans in accordance with the new constitution and the international conventions. Secondary education policies have evolved over time with the Government addressing challenges facing education sector through several commissions, committees and task forces. Immediately after independence, the first commission chaired by Ominde, in 1964 sought to reform the education system inherited from the colonial government to make it more responsive to the needs of the country. The Report of The presidential Working Party on the Second University chaired by Mackey, led to the replacement of A- Level secondary education with the current 8-4-4 education system (GOK, 1964; 1981 & 2005 and IPAR, 2008).

In the recent past, Kenya's education sector has undergone accelerated reforms in order to address the overall goals of economic recovery strategy for Employment and wealth creation 2003-2007 (ERS) as well as meeting the international development commitments, including the millennium development Goals (MDGs) and Education for ALL (EFA). The major reforms include: launch and implementation of the Free Primary Education (FPE) in January 2003, development of the Sessional paper No. 1 of 2005 on policy framework, which advocate that the government is already implementing measures on how to improve access and retention in secondary education and introduction of Free Day Secondary Education in January 2008. In addition to these reforms, the government has also been implanting several strategies to ensure that disadvantaged children have equal opportunity in accessing education at all levels. One such reform is secondary school bursary scheme.

The secondary schools bursary scheme was introduced by the government in the 1993/94 financial year to enhance access, ensure retention and reduce disparities and inequalities in the provision of secondary school education. In particular the bursaries are targeted at students from underprivileged families, those in slum areas, those living under difficult circumstances, those from pockets of poverty in high potential areas, districts in arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL), orphans and girl- child (GOK, 1992; 1994; 2003; 2005).

At inception of the fund, funds were disbursed directly to secondary schools from the ministry of education headquarters. Due to lack of clear guidelines to schools on how to identify needy students for bursary awards, beneficiaries were identified through different ways. However, in most cases the head teachers ultimately decided on who was to be awarded the bursary and the amounts to be allocated. In 2003, the fund was modified in line with government policy on decentralization and to respond to complaints of mismanagement and lack of impact. The bursaries also known as constituency bursary funds (CBF) are channeled to various schools through constituencies.

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The disbursement is done by the constituency Bursary committees (CBCs) guided by the 2005 guidelines of the ministry of education science and technology (GOK, 2005).

Despite the decentralization of the CBF, it has been transformed into a political instrument thus compromising its effectiveness (Wachiye and Nasongo, 2010). In their study, Njeru and Orodho (2003) accused the system of allocating funds to politically correct persons as gift of loyalty at the expense of the needy. Onyango and Njue (2004) observe that the fund is not serving its purpose for it is under direct control of members of parliament who give bursaries to cronies and political supporters who are not necessarily needy. In addition, there are variations in the amount of allocated. Furthermore, the amount is split into portions that do not constitute support.

Odallo (2000) notes that bursary allocation is severely faulted for there are unfairness of awarding undeserving students. Odebero *et al.*, (2007) study confirms these sentiments by asserting that bursary allocation is not equitably distributed among the recipients. Mwangi (2006) posits that the process of sending money from central government to constituencies then to schools take a long time. By the time recipients get the money, many would have been sent away from school. This affects students' retention at secondary school.

A study by Wachiye and Nasongo (2010) in Kanduyi constituency established that there were incidences whereby local Member of Parliament allocated bursaries to supporters and relatives though they did not deserve it. They also observed that there was delay in disbursement of funds. In two constituencies of Nairobi County, the area members of parliament are said to have taken control of the fund deciding who gets the bursaries and they keep the records as well (IPAR, 2008). These practices have a negative effect on students' access and retention in public secondary schools. It is against this background that the researcher has found it necessary to conduct empirical study into the effect of the modalities of CBF on access and retention at secondary school level in Nairobi County.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

From the background of the study, it is apparent that the government has stated in its policy documents (GOK, 1992; 1994; 2003; 2005) that CBF was introduced so as enhance access, equity and retention at secondary school level among the poor and other vulnerable groups. In most developing countries and in particular sub-Saharan Africa, the system of awarding bursaries has made it difficult for the poorest to access education (World Bank, 2009; Lewin, 2009; UNESCO, 2010; Nyabanyaba, 2009 & Kanungo 2004). In Kenya, there has been concerns that bursary is not equitably distributed to recipients. Students from poor families are still unable to access secondary school education despite its availability. The Gross Enrolment Rate for secondary education in Kenya is 29.8 % (GOK, 2006; Odebero *et al.*, 2007; IPAR, 2010 & Wachiye and Nasongo, 2010). Major concerns with CBF revolve around weak administrative systems and questionable allocation criteria where cases of political interference are rampant. As a result of this, most secondary school going children are unable to participate fully in this intermediate education as reflected by increasing (7.1 %) dropout rates (GOK, 2003; Onyango & Njue, 2004).

The bursary fund level is too low to cover the entire tuition fee for the poor (Mwangi, 2006). In the 2007/08 financial year for instance, 84.2 % of the beneficiaries in Nairobi County received minimum allocation or less. This exposes serious inconsistencies and limitations in awarding bursaries in low-income areas of Nairobi particularly slums (IPAR, 2008). A number of studies have investigated the effectiveness of CBF in relationship with access and retention in Kenya. However, a few have zeroed in on its impact on access and retention. This study takes care of modalities of CBF and its effects on access and retention of secondary school students in Nairobi County. The study therefore, calls for the need to streamline the CBF policy in view of expectations of the Kenyan public and the government in line with the stipulated guidelines.

Justification of the Study

The Constituency Bursary Fund was introduced by the government as a safety net in the secondary education level (IPAR, 2008; Odebero *et al.*, 2007 & GOK, 2003). However, there are increasing concerns with regard to its ability to cushion the disadvantaged groups. Major concerns revolve around inadequate funds rendering it unable to cater all the needy cases, weak administrative systems and questionable allocation criteria. Due to these shortcomings, access and retention of the targeted students still remain low. On this basis, this study was endeavoured to assess the modalities of CBF and their effect on access and retention of secondary school students in Nairobi County.

Significance of the Study

First, findings are expected to be of significance to policy makers in the Ministry of Education. They will use the findings to establish how the constituency bursary fund is administered in regard to financing secondary education in Kenya. Secondly, it is hoped that documented results will provide policy makers, educational professionals and practitioners with much needed information on the current loopholes in constituency bursary allocation mechanism with a view of redefining strategies to curb them.

Methodology and Research Design

Research Design

Research design is a plan and the procedure for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2006). The research design adopted for this study was mixed methods leaning towards quantitative design. The study was mixed methods in a single research which allows for pragmatism. The blending of qualitative and quantitative methods in this study neutralized bias, sought convergence of results and produced final product which highlighted the significant contribution of both approaches, where both, therefore used numeric and word data easily.

Target Population

The target population for this study comprised of 1200 students in the 2011 form three cohort who benefited from the constituency bursary fund. In addition, the study targeted 192 class teachers and 48 school principals of the bursary beneficiaries and 120 CBFC members from the eight constituencies of Nairobi County.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample size for this study was determined using sample size determination formula advanced by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{X^2 * N * P(1 - P)}{(ME^2 * (N - 1)) + (X^2 * P * (1 - P))}$$

Where:

n= Sample size

X² = Chi-square for the specified confidence level at 1 degree of freedom

N= population size

P = population proportion

ME = Desired Margin of Error (expressed as a proportion)

Using the formula, the sample size for a target of 1200 respondents at confidence level of 95 % was 291.

Sample Size

The sample size for this study therefore comprised 291 Form three bursary beneficiaries, 129 class teachers 48 school principals and 24 constituency committee members from eight constituencies of Nairobi County. The total sample size was therefore 492 respondents.

Research Instruments

The main data collection instruments included questionnaire and in-depth interview schedules. Document analysis was also used.

Reliability of the Research Instruments

To determine the reliability of the instrument, student questionnaire was piloted on a small sample of bursary beneficiaries in one of the constituencies of Nairobi County who were not part of this research study. Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was used to test on the reliability of the instruments. A correlation coefficient of 0.77 was obtained indicating that the instrument was reliable and acceptable.

Validity of the Research Instruments

Validity refers to the accuracy, correctness, meaningfulness of inferences and soundness of results of conclusion, which are based on the research findings (Kothari, 2008; Dane 1990; Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The researcher sought expert opinion on content and construct validity. Comments solicited from them were used to improve the research instrument before commencing data collection. Moreover, the instrument was also piloted to a selected sample of bursary beneficiaries who were not part of the study in Nairobi County. This piloting improved the validity of the instrument. . Piloting is important to establish the content validity of the instrument and to improve questions, formats and scales. To test the validity of the instruments used in the study, the questionnaire was availed to supervisors together with a panel experienced researchers of Moi University to review the instruments. The results from the piloting together with the comments from the experts were incorporated in the final instrument revisions and improved its validity.

Data Analysis Procedures

The SPSS computer package was used as a 'toolbox' to analyze data related to objectives. Qualitative data was analyzed by use of mean standard deviation and the ranges, percentages, pie charts, bar graphs, and frequencies of occurrences. Descriptive statistics give general opinion with regard to the disbursement modalities of constituency bursary fund and its effect on access and retention. Quantitative data was analyzed using inferential statistics. Inferential statistics were used to examine hypotheses of the study. The specific tools that were employed under inferential statistics are ANOVA, independent sample t-test and regression analysis.

Results and Discussions

In line with the Government's guiding principle on decentralization, as it is indicated by circulars from ministry of education science and technology (GOK, 2005), the criterion that is used to distribute the bursary funds from treasury to constituencies is based on the number of students from the constituency and enrolled in secondary schools in Kenya, The national secondary schools enrolment, the district poverty indices and the national poverty index as represented by the formula;

Consti tuency_bursary	Total enrollment in constituency	District poverty index	Total amount allocated bursary
	Total national enrolment	National poverty index	

Allocations of the bursaries at the national level tend to assume fairness in distribution to all needy secondary school students throughout the country. The constituency bursary fund scheme as designed targets to assist; orphans, Children from poor households (especially with no incomes, children from ASAL areas and urban slums, the girl child and children in difficult circumstances (those with special needs and girls rescued from difficult circumstances) (MoE, 2010 & YIKE, 2011).

At each constituency level, applicants are requisite to fill a bursary application form identified as FORM "A". This form contains data on student individual particulars including gender, academic performance, type of school, total fees paid and outstanding fee balance. The tool also seeks for information on family's socio-economic state of affairs and head teacher's report on student's discipline. Based on data given by an applicant on form "A", scores are awarded using a rating scale for three major indicators namely; a student's family status, affirmative action/special circumstances and discipline as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Bursary Application Evaluation scores

A. Family Status	Score
Total orphans	20
Single parent without a source of income	18
Partial orphan (mother/Father alive) without a source of income	16
Both parents alive – without a source of income	14
	Maximum 20
B. Affirmative action/special circumstance	
Girl child	5
Boy child	4
Slums/pockets of Poverty/marginalized	5
Special Needs (Handicapped)	5
	Maximum 15
C. Discipline	
Excellent	5
V. Good	4
Good	3
Fair	2
Poor	1
	Maximum 5

According to the findings of the study, CBF committee reported that applicants of the eight constituencies of Nairobi County were ranked based on scores attained by each applicant on form 'D' (applicants rating form). Depending on the amount allocated to each constituency, it was revealed that the respective CBFCs decide their own threshold for awarding the bursary starting from the highest score. All the interviewed CBF committee agreed that there are guidelines stipulated by the ministry of education on the award of bursary to beneficiaries. Committee members in all the eight constituencies claimed that during the allocation phase of their work, every effort was made to follow the allocation criteria provided by the Ministry of Education. The interviewed members explained that once applications had been received, vetting followed and based on rankings of applications, students were awarded bursaries.

Most study participants especially the principals and teachers were however of the contrary opinion and felt that the bursary committees never followed the allocation criteria. This study finding concurs with Odundo & Rambo (2006) who pointed out that there were many cases of needy applicants in their schools who have never received any bursary while a significant number of the non-needy always awarded the bursary.

According to the MOE (2010), the government has kept on issuing and revising guidelines for bursary disbursement by CBFC through a number of policy circulars. Circular reference number S19/17/155 of 1st April 2008 emphasized strict adherence to previous guidelines. The circular for 2005 introduced and revised the earlier guidelines with a view of streamlining disbursements. Further, the circular for 24th January 2008 provided guidelines on minimum allocation of Ksh. 8000 to boarders and bared Day scholars from the bursary scheme. These guidelines according to YIKE (2011) are aimed at ensuring that the objectives of the scheme are met and the CBFC are required to strictly adhere to the stipulated guidelines. The researcher sought opinions of respondents on the adherence to established criteria for bursary award to needy students.

The study findings suggested that majority of the respondents do not believe that Bursary beneficiaries are genuinely needy, bright and disciplined students. Evidence to back this up is drawn from Odebero *et al.*, (2007) study that argued out that some of the needy students ended up missing bursary support unfairly through the criteria of poor performance. The next was the level of need where a resonant proportion of school principals felt that they were used to deny needy students to access bursary.

It further appeared that even though the bursaries are meant for students from poor socio-economic backgrounds, majority of the beneficiaries are from well off families who have strong connections with the constituency bursary committee members and area Members of Parliament. These findings are not different from the observation of Wachiye & Nasongo (2010) that established that politicians through their cronies allocate bursaries to supporters and relatives though they did not deserve it. This further corresponds to Mwembi's, (2012) study that the criteria of determining the genuinely needy students had limitations both on governance, efficiency, effectiveness and consistence in support. In addition, the fund was found to experience impediments such Political interference by the local politicians.

From the responses, on the contrary, it appeared that majority of the class teachers believed that orphans and girls were not awarded bursaries as per their needs but were still being marginalized by their respective Constituency Bursary Committees in Nairobi County. This concurred with the views expressed by YIKE (2011) that contrary to the objectives, CBF has not played any role in improving access to secondary education among children from Nairobi's informal settlements especially girls. Evidence to back this up is also drawn from the views put forth by Macharia (2011) that a multiplicity of social and economic factors has locked out girls from the constituency bursary fund that is meant to enable poor students finance secondary education.

Responses from All Constituency committee members in Nairobi County indicated that they had been unable to fully follow the laid criteria for the allocation of funds. In Embakasi Constituency for instance, it was observed that even though students filled applications and forwarded to Constituency Bursary Committee, these forms were never used as the basis for awards. Often, the incumbent area Member of Parliament asks school principals simply to forward their lists of applicants for consideration. As a routine, each secondary school principal was allowed 20 chances. It was therefore upon school principals to decide whose names would be forwarded for consideration. Interviews with school principals revealed that once the 20 chances had been allocated, a school's internal bursary committee deliberated on whom to include in the list to be presented at the constituency bursary committee.

This internal vetting of potential beneficiaries was in fact an exception rather than the norm since most principals simply drew their lists without any consultations with class teachers on who are the neediest students. The situation of non-adherence to the allocation criteria in constituencies of Nairobi County was confirmed from responses from teachers and students. It was found out that adherence was not 100 percent. It depended on how well one is known by the person fronting his/her name.

According to the guidelines of MOE, the committee members are authorized to utilize up to Ksh.25000 in each tranche for administrative purpose the rest of the money is supposed to be awarded to beneficiaries. However, this was not the case as evidenced by the interview of CBFC members for instance, in all the constituencies of Nairobi County that at least Ksh. 100,000 is left in the account for bank expenses and levies. CBFC members in Langata Constituency also indicated that, at times, members were allocated allowances for spending the time doing committee work. On the same note, it was also established in Embakasi that CBFCs in 2011, sat for two weeks vetting the list of applicants and each member was paid a transport allowance of Ksh. 500 each totaling to Ksh. 42,000 after the exercise. This was way above the amount that CBFCs are authorized to utilize.

Notwithstanding the adherence challenges that committees face, interviewed committee members of the Kasarani, Kamukunji and Makadara Constituencies noted that, CBFCs have had to make some adjustments in the funds to cater for other activities which have been overlooked by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Some amount of the fund was put aside to facilitate building of shelves to keep bursary documents. This opens loopholes where some committees might set aside huge amounts for such activities and allocate themselves high allowances at the expense of the students' bursary thus reducing the amount to be given to each beneficiary.

The government through the ministry of education had a noble idea of issuing guidelines because ideally, the bursary scheme was set up to cushion students in the lower income groups from high cost of secondary education. Senior education officer in-charge of bursary at the PDE's office asserted that:-

“The MoE had a noble idea of issuing guidelines because the main idea is to enhance access, retention and transition of students. But now the problem is that if the CBFC follow the guidelines to the latter, less than 5% of the applicants would benefit from the kitty”.

The shortfall of the fund has prompted the committee not to fully adhere to the stipulated guidelines. The MOE requires that students who are beneficiaries go on with getting the fund until they complete their schooling. However, this is not the case as it applies to constituencies in Nairobi County. The study findings established that most of the students received bursary once or twice in the four years of study and have accrued fee balances. This agrees with IPAR (2008) report in which it is observed that there is no consistency of support and minimum amount of bursaries are awarded late during school sessions. This forces them to make frequent trips to the educational offices to inquire on the position of their funding and for those in schools that cannot retain those students with fees arrears, they are sent home from school several times to go and raise funds to meet their fees requirement.

Because of the aforementioned factors, the CBFC members in all constituencies of Nairobi confessed not to have been able to adhere to guidelines for disbursement of CBF. The minimum amounts recommended for applicants of various categories of secondary schools should be reasonable enough to increase access and retention. For instance, according to guidelines of 2005 from the MoE, the students attending day secondary schools should be awarded KSh. 5,000 per year while those in provincial boarding and national schools should be awarded Ksh. 10,000 and KSh. 15,000 per year respectively (MoE, 2008).

However, reality on the ground is that all the constituencies of Nairobi County except Kasarani award a flat rate of KSh. 5,000 or less regardless of the school type attended by beneficiaries. Kasarani constituency on the hand awards a flat rate of Ksh. 8,000 per beneficiary.

According to the guidelines of the year 2008 as it has been stated elsewhere in this study, it was stipulated that CBFC should give attention to mostly on boarding and national schools. Contrary, majority of the applicants of CBF in Nairobi County Constituencies hail from much challenged backgrounds with their parents having no income at all and therefore attend day secondary schools. After the inception of the Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE), the government felt that it had taken care of Day schools' fees. However, CBFC members observed that apart from tuition fees, there are other costs in Day schools which could be equated to boarding fees. These include lunch programme, purchase of school buses, construction of dining halls and equipping laboratories. While contributing on this argument, Chairman, Westlands Constituency Bursary Fund noted that;

“Every day school is supposed to charge a minimum of Ksh. 2,000 per year as development fund but because of the expansion of these schools including purchase of school buses, construction of Dining halls and equipping laboratories, you will find that another KSh. 4,000 will be required from each student to develop the institution”.

On average, it was reported that a student in a Day school requires approximately Ksh. 16,000 per year. If she/he is an orphan or a child from poor households, he/she is going to drop out of school if not awarded bursary. Worst still is the student in boarding school whose minimum fess is not less than Ksh.22, 000. With the minimum allocation of Ksh. 5, 000 per student in each of the seven out eight constituencies of Nairobi County, their access and retention at school is not guaranteed as noted by Odundo & Rambo, (2006).

ANOVA was used to test the significance of the variables on adherence to the established criteria for bursary allocation in Nairobi County. The null hypothesis to be tested was; H_0 : There is no statistically significant relationship between adherence to established criteria for bursary allocation and access to secondary education in Nairobi County $p \geq 0.05$.

Table 4.2: ANOVA on Adherence to Established Criteria

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	310.475	5	103.492	6.414	.001
Within Groups	580.900	105	16.136		
Total Sum of	891.375	110			

Table 4.2 shows that adherence to established criteria for the award of bursary were significant with $F(5,105) = 6.414$; $p < .01$) indicating that there is a statistically significant relationship between adherence to established criteria, bursary allocation and access & retention and therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that in the eight constituencies of Nairobi County, bursary fund beneficiaries are not genuinely needy students; they are not bright academically and are not well disciplined.

Conclusions

The guidelines stipulated by the government on the award of bursaries are not followed by the Constituency Bursary committee while allocating bursaries in Nairobi County constituencies.

From the findings students from diverse backgrounds benefit from CBF but not necessarily students from poor socio-economic backgrounds, students living under difficult conditions and orphans/girls. The selection criteria only emphasize academic performances leaving out needy cases that are bound to perform poorly (in primary) due to poor facilities. Therefore the Constituency Bursary committee members do not adhere to the established criteria of Bursary allocation.

Recommendations of the study

In order for CBFC to adhere to the stipulated guidelines for bursary allocation, the government through the Ministry of Education should improve the process of targeting and identifying the needy students. Besides, the evaluation criteria should be restructured in such a way form one beneficiaries are assured of continued support until the finish form four.

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