

## CONSTITUENCY BURSARY SCHEME FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA: CHALLENGES OF THE CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND (CDF) TESO

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the study was to establish the factors that are affecting the management of the constituency bursary scheme for secondary schools in Amagoro Constituency, Teso, Kenya. The objectives were: To determine the factors considered in allocating secondary school bursaries to students, to identify the mechanisms used for targeting needy, to determine if there is the timely disbursement of constituency bursary funds to students, to establish the levels of adequacy of the constituency bursary funds, to establish the constraints facing the CBC in managing the bursary scheme for secondary school students in Amagoro Constituency. Ten principals and 262 students were sampled by census and purposive methods. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The results showed the students aware of varied background not necessarily orphans. Most students did not get information in time from varied sources, disbursement was not timely and the amount was inadequate. Recommendation: to establish student data bank from primary school level, seek more funds from the government, and to strictly adhere to guidelines.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Constituency Bursary Funds, Disbursement, Secondary Education, Kenya*

### INTRODUCTION

According to the Ministry of Education in 2003, the secondary schools bursary scheme was formalized to meet clear objectives including enhancing equity by allocating funds on the basis of poverty index and enrolment; increasing access to secondary education for children from poor and vulnerable households; ensuring retention of the poor who enter secondary schools; enhancing completion by those who enter secondary school; reducing regional disparities and inequalities in access and provision of secondary school education; contributing to increase in transition rate from primary to secondary. The bursary budgetary allocation from 2005/2006 to 2009/10 is as shown in Table 1

**Table 1: MoE Bursary Allocation: 2005/06-2009/10**

Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Allocation (Kshs.) Millions	800	800	600	500	500

Source: MOE Bursary Section data, 2010.

The table shows a reduction in the allocation for a bursary from Kshs. 800 M in 2006/2007 to Kshs. 500 M in 2009/2010. According to MoE this is due to the introduction of Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE), which was introduced in January 2008 as another mode for financing secondary education. Under FDSE, the government allocates Kshs. 10265 per student (revised to 12000) for all learners in public secondary schools per year to meet the cost of tuition and other school costs other than boarding. Under this programme, day secondary education is free,

hence the reduced allocation for a bursary from 2008.

According to Njeru and Orodho (2003), following decentralization of bursary disbursement to Constituency Bursary Committees (CBCs) in 2003, various positive aspects have been realized, including more students have benefited from the bursary fund; the beneficiaries are now spread across all the constituencies; and retention of students has been enhanced. They further argue that to ensure effective and efficient responses in addressing the plight of the poor and vulnerable consumers, the bursary scheme should adopt a participatory stakeholder approach involving all relevant stakeholders.

The Ministry of Education has continued to issue guidelines to be used for the management of the Secondary School Bursary Scheme. The MoE introduced the system of administration of bursary funds at the constituency and district level in which it specified the formula for allocating bursary funds to constituencies; membership of the constituency bursary committee; and the bursary disbursement procedures and regulations. Each of these revised the earlier guidelines with a view to streamlining the management of the bursary scheme. According to Olembo, Wanga, and Karugu (1992), management is defined as working with and through individuals and groups to accomplish organizational goals or objectives. The process of management always has forces that promote or hinder it, including legal, administrative and institutional structures.

In carrying out its mandate of managing the Constituency Bursary Scheme, the Constituency Bursary Committee (CBC) works with and through individuals and groups, including Ministry of Education and its officers, members of CBC, parents, students, principals, and teachers of secondary schools, politicians, provincial administration and religious and community leaders. Effective and efficient management of the bursary scheme by CBC depends on many factors, including timely disbursement of funds to beneficiaries, adequacy of funds received, adequacy of funds allocated to students, effective and timely communication between the CBC and stakeholders, compliance with guidelines and consistency in funding beneficiaries and skills in financial management. This shows that the management of the bursary scheme is affected by many factors, some of which are within the control of the CBC, while others are beyond its control.

In many developing countries, and particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, a high cost of education is often seen as the most serious impediment to accessing secondary education. Kenya's secondary education spending is notably low, at 1.6 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or roughly 21.4 percent of total education spending (KIPPRA, 2006). Mingat (2004) suggests that in order to attain a net enrollment of 90 per cent, African countries would be required to double the current expenditure levels for secondary education, a scenario that does not seem feasible given the financial constraints facing most countries. In Kenya, for instance, secondary education budget constitutes roughly 22 per cent of government expenditure on education, while secondary teachers' salary alone as a proportion of the total MOE recurrent budget is 24 per cent (MPER, 2007).

Amagoro Constituency has benefitted from government allocations for secondary school bursary since inception of the scheme at constituency level in 2003. For example, in 2008/2009 financial year, the constituency received Kshs. 1,942,490, which benefitted 200 male and 186 female students. Republic of Kenya (2003) shows that poverty incidence in Amagoro Constituency, which is the per cent of individuals below the poverty line, is about 50 per cent. This figure is close to the national rural poverty index of about 53 per cent. The data further shows that, according to 1999

Census, Amagoro Constituency had a population of about 175,877, out of whom the estimated number of poor individuals was 88,443. The 2009 census is bound to have higher population. About half of the population of Amagoro Constituency is considered to be poor, hence unlikely to afford the cost of secondary school education. According to Roe, Edgar, and Morphet (1969), the state should support the citizens.

The print media commonly have news items on the plight of bright primary school learners who cannot raise fees for form one. This is illustrated by newspaper items like; “Lack of fees hinders top KCPE boy from joining Form One”, The East African Standard, Wednesday, 11/3/09, P 10 and “Top KCSE girl hired as a herder to raise fees”, Odalo., The Sunday Nation, 8/3/09, P 6. These two news items seem to suggest that the constituency bursary scheme suffers from poor targeting. The two bright pupils from poor families would not have had problems in accessing secondary education if the bursary scheme was efficiently managed. As already mentioned many residents of Amagoro Constituency are poor and therefore cannot afford the cost of secondary education. The bursary scheme is ,therefore. a welcome relief to the residents of Amagoro Constituency, and its efficient management is ,therefore. a matter of great interest to them.

### **Statement of the Problem and Objectives**

From the background above, it is clear that the Government of Kenya, through the Ministry of Education, is determined to ensure that needy children access secondary education, and that the bursary scheme is managed in an effective and efficient manner that is transparent and accountable. Despite the government efforts to streamline the operation of the Secondary Schools Bursary Scheme, stakeholders continue to raise a lot of complaints touching on the management of the bursary scheme such as the news reports cited above and letters to the editors of print media. The fact that a top student in KCPE in a school can fail to join Form One, or drop out of a secondary school raises the possibility that the management of the secondary school bursary scheme is not effective and efficient.

Various studies have been carried out on secondary school bursaries. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) carried out a study in 2008 to appraise the secondary school’s bursary scheme, while Oyugi, Riechi. and Anupi (2008) carried out a study on public expenditure tracking of the bursary fund in Nairobi. However, limited studies have been carried out to establish the factors affecting the management of secondary schools bursary scheme hence this study of the factors affecting of management of the CDF bursary scheme in Amagoro Constituency. The purpose of the study was to establish the factors that are affecting the management of the constituency bursary scheme for secondary schools in Amagoro Constituency Kenya. The objectives were:

- To determine the factors considered in allocating secondary school bursaries to students in Amagoro Constituency.
- To identify the mechanisms used for targeting needy students in Amagoro Constituency.
- To determine the timeliness of disbursement of constituency bursary funds to students in relation to the school programme.
- To establish the levels of the adequacy of the constituency bursary funds disbursed to students.
- To establish the constraints facing the CBC in managing the bursary scheme for secondary school students in Amagoro Constituency.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Oyugi, Riechi, and Anupi (2008) study had these objectives: to assess the level of demand and efficiency for the secondary education bursary fund in Nairobi Province; find out if there were any leakages in the secondary education bursary fund in Nairobi Province; and, make appropriate recommendations so as to strengthen the bursary fund. The survey revealed that the bursary scheme was experiencing a number of challenges, notably: inadequate funds disbursed from the Ministry of Education; poor use of allocation guidelines; and inconsistent support to needy students. Further, the findings indicate that there was poor keeping of records resulting in huge variations between funds allocated to constituencies and those disbursed to beneficiaries. PricewaterhouseCoopers (2008) carried out in Kenya was to appraise the secondary school bursary scheme. The study found that due to poor targeting, monitoring and accountability, it was difficult to ensure that only students who were genuinely needy benefitted from the bursary scheme. It also found that many stakeholders had negative perceptions about the operations of the scheme. The results laid the basis for this study.

## METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey design was adopted. Purposive sampling was employed to select 14 boarding secondary schools. Purposive sampling was used to select 300 students who had applied for a bursary. The 14 principals of the sampled schools were automatically selected, while sixteen members of the Constituency Bursary Committee (CBC) were randomly selected for the study. The instruments used for the study were questionnaires and an interview guide. The validity of the instruments was enhanced through review by experts and pretesting during a pilot study, while reliability was determined using the test-retest method. A descriptive statistical analysis was done which included frequencies and percentages (Mugenda, O. M., and Mugenda, A. G., 1999; Orodho, 2005).

### Findings of the Study

#### Factors considered for Constituency Bursary Funds

**Status of Parents:** The students (applicants) were required to indicate the status of their parents. The responses are summarized in Table 2

**Table 2: Status of the Parents**

	Frequency	Per cent
Both parents alive	93	35.5
Both parents dead	27	10.3
One parent dead	30	11.4
Single parent alive	45	17.2
Single parent dead	17	6.5
Parents divorced/separated	50	19.1
Total	262	100.0

The results show that the students were not strictly orphans hence other parameters were used to gauge needy students.

### **Fairness by Constituency Bursary Committee**

The study sought to establish from principals whether CBC is fair in allocating bursary to needy students. On whether the CBC is fair in allocating bursaries, a majority of the principals, 8 (80 per cent), said that the CBC is not fair in allocating bursaries while only 2 (20 per cent) said that the CBC is fair in allocating bursaries. These findings show that there is a high perception that there is no fairness in the allocation of bursaries by CBC, and therefore many needy students miss out on the bursary and are denied education through failure by the CBC to ensure fairness in its allocation of bursaries. The findings further suggest that the CBC does not strictly follow the Ministry of Education guidelines for allocating bursaries to needy students.

A majority of the principals further indicated that there was no consistency on how CBC funds, needy students to completion; they also indicated that CBC should guarantee subsequent funding once a needy student is funded the first time.

### **Familiarity with CBC Operations by Principals**

Principals were asked to indicate if they were conversant with how the Constituency Bursary Committee (CBC) operates.

On whether the principals are conversant with how the Constituency Bursary Committee (CBC) operates, the majority who indicated that they were fully aware or not aware were equal at 40 per cent (4 each), while 2 (20 per cent) were partly aware. This implies that majority of the principals (60%) are either partly or not aware of how CBC operates. This shows that there is little effective communication CBC and principals on the bursary scheme yet principals are very important stakeholders.

### **Students' Awareness of Bursary Award Criteria**

The students were asked to say whether they were aware of the criteria that the Constituency Bursary Committee uses to select students who receive a bursary. The findings show that the majority 84 percent (220) of the students indicated that they were not aware of the criteria that the Constituency Bursary Committee uses to select students who receive the bursary and only 16 per cent (16) were aware. These findings are supported by those from principals, a majority of whom reported that they were either partially aware or not aware of how CBC operates.

### **Bursary Award Criteria as Perceived By Students**

The students who were aware of the criteria for bursary award were further asked to indicate the criteria that they knew that the Constituency the Bursary Committee uses to select students who receive a bursary. The findings are shown in Table 3

**Table 3: Bursary Award Criteria Students are Aware of**

	Yes	No
Orphans	95.4	4.6
Poor parents	67.9	32.1
Academic Performance	58.4	41.6
Discipline	43.1	56.9
Gender (Boy/Girl)	29.4	70.6
Special needs (disability)	93.1	6.9
Connection to powerful person(s)	74.1	25.8

Table 3 shows most, 95.4 per cent of the students (250) indicated that they felt that CBC considers special needs (disability), 93.1 per cent (244) indicated orphans, 74.1 per cent (194) indicated connection to powerful person(s), 67.9 per cent (178) indicated poor parents, 58.4 per cent (153) indicated academic performance, 43.1 per cent (113) indicated discipline, while 29.4 per cent (77) indicated gender (boy/girl). These findings show that there is a high perception that connection to powerful people is an important factor in the award of the bursary. Although this perception may or may not be correct, it may discourage needy pupils who have no connection to powerful persons from applying to CBC for a bursary. These findings concur with those of CBC members who were interviewed that the major criteria considered in the allocation of bursaries are orphans, special needs, poor parents and academic performance; although the CBC members denied that they consider a connection to the powerful person(s).

### How Student Learnt About Bursary Scheme

The students were asked about how they learnt about the existence of the bursary scheme. The findings are presented in Table 4

**Table 4: How Student Learnt About Bursary Scheme**

	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Radio	180	68.7	82	31.3
Newspaper	90	34.4	172	65.6
Television	197	75.2	65	24.8
Principal/Teachers	202	77.1	60	22.9
Parents	150	57.3	112	42.7
Other Students	102	38.9	160	61.1
Constituency Bursary Committee	110	42.0	152	58.0
Provincial Administration (District Officer, Chief, Assistant Chief)	130	49.6	132	50.4
Education officials (DEO, AEO, etc)	105	40.1	157	59.9
Politicians (M.P., Councilor, Political Party officials)	145	55.3	117	44.7

From the findings, the majority 77.1 per cent of the students learnt about the bursary from their principal/teachers, and 75.2 per cent through the television, 68.7 per cent learnt about the bursary through the radio, 57.3 per cent learnt about the bursary from parents, 55.3 per cent learnt about the bursary from politicians like Members of Parliament, Members of County Assembly (councilors) and political party officials, 49.6 per cent learnt about the bursary from provincial administration officers such as Sub county (District) Officers, Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs, 42 per cent learnt about the bursary from constituency bursary committee, while 40.1 per cent learnt about the bursary from education officials. The findings show that teachers and principals are the most common source of information on the existence of bursary scheme. This should be expected because a student spends 30 weeks (about 75%) of their time in school where they interact with the teachers.

### Timeliness of Disbursement of Funds

#### Head Teachers on Timeliness of Disbursement

The principals were asked to respond to various issues that touched on the timeliness or otherwise of the

disbursement of bursary funds by the CBC. They were asked to indicate whether the disbursement of bursary funds to needy students in their schools was timely in relation to the school programme. The findings indicate that the majority represented by 6 (60 per cent) of the principals indicated that the disbursement was never timely while 4 (40 per cent) said that it was sometimes timely. No principal indicated that the disbursement was timely. These results show that the bursary scheme is highly affected by the poor timing of disbursement and Nyaga (2005) concurs. Proper timing of disbursement of funds by the CBC is very important since failure to disburse funds at the right time may result in students from needy families missing school for long periods, or even dropping out of school altogether. It may be necessary to find out whether the delay in disbursing bursary funds is due to poor management by the CBC, or is due to factors beyond the control of the CBC, such as failure by the Ministries of Finance and Education to release funds in good time. Okumbe (1998) concurs that managers should provide resources within time frames.

### **Timing when Constituency Bursary Committee Remits Bursary Funds**

The principals were asked when CBC remits bursary funds to schools. The results show that most, 8 (80 per cent) of the principals indicated that CBC remits bursary funds to their schools in the middle of the term while only 2 (20 per cent) said it was at the start of term. These findings show that there is no timely disbursement of bursary funds to schools by the CBC. The bursary funds should reach schools before the term starts otherwise needy students may end up missing school for some time or even dropping out as they wait for disbursement of funds.

### **Adequacy of Funds**

#### **Adequacy of Funds Disbursed To Students**

All the principals (100%) indicated that the amount of bursary awarded to needy students in their schools was never adequate. This view was shared by CBC members who indicated that the bursary funds allocated to the CBC cannot meet the demand from needy students. They also indicated that the CBC remits bursary funds for successful students in their schools through cheques in the school's name and that the school acknowledges receipt of funds by issue of official receipt to CBC, letter to CBC and also an issue of official receipt to students. This agrees with the information got during the interview with the CBC members and complies with guidelines on the financial management of bursary funds. CBC is required to write cheques to schools of beneficiaries which should, in turn, acknowledge receipt of funds by writing receipts to the CBC and the student.

### **Rating of Management of Bursary Scheme**

The principals were requested to give their overall rating of the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of the secondary school bursary scheme.

The findings show that 4 (40 per cent) of the principals rated the efficiency and effectiveness of the management of the bursary scheme by CBC as good, 4 (40 per cent) rated it as average while 2 (20 per cent) of the principals rated them as poor. These findings indicate that, on the overall, a majority (80 per cent) rated the management as satisfactory. This suggests that, despite the misgivings and the challenges the CBC meets in discharging its mandate, most principals feels there is room for the CBC to improve its management of the bursary scheme.



## Challenges

### Misdirecting Funds

Principals were asked to indicate if there were instances in which CBC misdirects funds to schools. The findings illustrate that most principals, 6 (60 per cent), said that there were instances where CBC misdirected funds to their schools, while 4 (40 per cent) said there were no such instances. These findings suggest that there is a lack of effective record keeping by the CBC which needs to be improved. Misdirecting funds could result in such funds getting lost, which means the intended beneficiary may end up missing school for long while the funds are being traced, or even drop out of school altogether if the funds are not traced. It leads to delay if the funds are eventually directed to the beneficiary and the right school.

### Students Overpaying Fees after Getting Bursary

The study sought to establish if there were cases in which students ended up overpaying fees after getting bursary allocation. The findings indicate that most of the principals, 6 (60 per cent), agreed there were students who overpaid fees while 4 (40 per cent) said there were no such cases. The majority of the principals further indicated that the excess funds overpaid are carried forward to the following year for continuing students.

All the principals (100 per cent) indicated that there were instances in which students who are not needy are allocated bursary by CBC. These findings show that some students who are not very needy are allocated bursary, this suggests that targeting of needy students is not effectively done by CBC, and which results in some needy students being denied their right to education. The findings further show that disbursement of bursaries is not timely, because by the time the funds reach the student, part of the fee balance indicated at the time of application for the bursary will already have been paid, hence resulting in an overpayment of fees when the bursary funds are received.

### Suggestions for Improving Bursary Scheme

The principals were asked to make suggestions that could be used to make the bursary scheme more effective and efficient. In answering this question, they mentioned the challenges that CBC faces, which were the inadequacy of funds allocated by the Ministry of Education, late receipt and disbursement of funds, and poor record keeping by CBC which results in CBC misdirecting funds to schools and allocating funds to students who have left school. This agrees with the information obtained during the interview of CBC members, who cited the same challenges, and in addition they cited: unreliable information provided by applicants, lack of capacity by CBC to verify information provided by applicants, and high number of applications that have to be processed, including from students who are not very needy. The CBC members further indicated during the interview that there is a high perception by many parents and students that the CBC is not fair in discharging its mandate.

The principals also suggested that at a school level, students should submit their application forms at the end of the year for the subsequent year disbursement and the schools should recommend the students for the assistance appropriately. The principals suggested that, at constituency level, the priority of disbursement should be given to the bright, needy and vulnerable students; the beneficiaries should be funded till they complete their form four courses; and CBC should consult the principals for information on the needy students.



At the Ministry level, the principals suggested that more funds should be disbursed to CBCs, and the funds should be disbursed in good time to enable CBCs to plan well and send the funds to schools in good time.

At the school level, the students indicated that the needy and the orphans should be given priority in bursary allocation; the school administration should recommend each and every student for bursary award even if they are not doing well in academics. At constituency level, the students suggested that the CBC should be free from corruption, and the funds should be given to needy students in every school without segregating students in schools with low population and poor performance. At Ministry level, the students felt there should be more funds allocated to the kitty.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

From the findings of this study the following conclusions have been drawn:

The factors that the CBC considers to select students who receive bursary are special needs, orphans, poor parents and academic performance;

On the mechanisms used for targeting needy students, disseminating information is done through the principals and teachers, television, radio, parents and politicians such as the Member of Parliament, Members of County Assembly (councilors), and political party officials

The disbursement is not timely as the funds reach schools in the middle of the term

That the amount of bursary awarded to needy students is not adequate and that there is no consistency by CBC in funding needy students to completion.

The CBC faces many challenges, including the inadequacy of funds allocated to it by the Ministry of Education and delay in receiving these funds. The high numbers of needy students, poor records of needy students, negative attitude by stakeholders who have a perception that CBC is not fair in allocating bursaries are among the challenges.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Ministry of Education should strengthen its oversight role on the CBC, and monitoring and evaluation measures to ensure that CBC adheres strictly to the guidelines for disbursement of bursaries. The budgetary allocation for the bursary scheme should be increased so that CBC can disburse adequate funds to beneficiaries or increase the client base.

That the CBC intensifies sensitization of principals, teachers, students and parents on the procedures and criteria on bursaries. The CBC should set up and regularly update a database of applicants and beneficiaries to track the progress and transfer, if any, of needy students.

That the principals should recommend needy students even if they are not doing well in class

## **Implications**

In this respect, the Ministry of Education should put in place measures to ensure that all CBCs promptly submit reports on disbursement of bursary funds and examine to take necessary corrective action;

Develop a Database of Std 8 to enable CBC to effectively target needy children before they join secondary school.

Early application will enable the CBC to finalize the list of beneficiaries even before the funds are received, so that the funds can be sent to schools immediately they are received

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