

**Constituency bursary scheme for secondary schools in Kenya: Challenges of the
constituency development fund (CDF)**

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ABSTRACT

Constituency Development Fund (CDF) is money put aside by the government for the development of communities in Kenya. A constituency is the basic unit for electing a member of parliament. One of the provisions is the bursary scheme for needy children. This is meant to increase access to secondary education among the needy families since education is a right (Children's Act). The purpose of the study was to investigate the factors that affect the management of the constituency bursary scheme (part of CDF) for needy secondary school students in Kenya. The study aimed at determining the factors considered in allocating bursaries to needy students, identifying mechanisms for targeting needy students, establish if disbursement of funds is timely and if the funds are adequate, and to find out the constraints facing the constituency bursary committee. The study was based on the Classical Liberal Theory of Equal Opportunity. The descriptive survey design was adopted. The target population consisted of principals, students and members of constituency bursary committee. Purposive sampling was employed to select 14 secondary schools with boarding facilities from twenty four public secondary schools in Amagoro constituency in Western Kenya. This is because boarding schools are expensive for most parents and yet they perform better in national examinations. Therefore,

most parents would prefer boarding schools as they allow more time to students to concentrate in their studies. Purposive sampling was used to select 300 students who had applied for 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 for principals and students, and an interview guide for the constituency bursary committee. Documents analysis was conducted on records of students who had applied for bursaries and those who benefited from the bursary scheme for the period 2005 – 2009. Validity of the instruments was enhanced through piloting and review by experts, while reliability was ensured using the test-retest method to compute the Pearson's Product Moment correlations coefficient. The data collected from the field was coded and entered into the computer for analysis assisted by the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical analysis was done, included frequencies, means and percentages. The results of data analysis were presented in frequency tables, and pie-charts. Qualitative data was first organized into categories or themes and patterns were created, after which it was analyzed using descriptive statistics as was done for quantitative data.

The study established that the major factors considered in allocating bursaries were special needs, orphans, poor parents and academic performance. The study also established that the mechanisms for targeting needy students were through dissemination of information through principals, teachers and public gatherings. According to the study, the amount of bursary funds awarded to needy students was at most times inadequate, and the disbursement of funds to students was untimely. The study further found that the CBC is faced by various challenges, including insufficient funds allocated to it by the Ministry of Education, late release of these

funds, unreliable information provided by applicants, and lack of a reliable database on applicants and beneficiaries.

The recommendations to make the bursary scheme more efficient and effective were as follows; the CBC should intensify sensitization of parents/guardians, students, principals and teachers on the factors considered for bursary allocation, and the CBC should be facilitated by Ministry of Education to establish a database of applicants for the bursary scheme to enable the committee fund only the most needy students. The government should allocate more funds to the CBC and remit to the constituency at the beginning of school holidays, and that the Ministry of Education should strengthen the monitoring and evaluation structures of the bursary scheme to ensure that it meets its objectives of assisting the needy hence increasing access to secondary education.

The conclusions of the study: management of the bursary scheme is affected by inadequacy of funds disbursed to CBC, inadequate communication to stakeholders, ineffective identification of needy students and untimely disbursement of funds to CBC and students.

Key terms: Constituency Development Fund Bursary, disbursement, secondary education, access, Kenya

Contribution to comparative education

This paper is informative as it provides a mechanism that can be used by other developing countries to increase access to secondary education by addressing the shortcomings.