

Effects of Headteachers' Implementation of Government Secondary Education Bursary Fund on Students' Retention in Masinga Sub County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Bursary fund helps to increase access to secondary school education, ensure retention of students in secondary school and promote transition and completion rates in secondary school education. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effect of headteachers implementation of government secondary school bursary fund on students' retention in Masinga Sub County, Kenya. This study was anchored on human capital theory. The study used descriptive survey research design. The study had a target population of 5022 students, 50 headteachers and 50 deputy headteachers. A sample size of 420 was determined using purposive sampling and Yamane formula. Purposive sampling was used to identify 25 headteachers and 25 deputy headteachers. Yamane formula was used to compute 370 students. Simple random sampling was used to identify 370 students. Questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis were used to collect data. Validity of the research instruments was ascertained through expert judgment and piloting. Reliability of the research instruments was achieved through test-retest method where the instruments were piloted in a time interval of two weeks and the two results were correlated using Pearson's product moment correlation method. In addition, inferential analysis was employed that involved correlational analysis at a 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis was rejected or accepted at 0.01 level of significance. The findings showed that there is a significant strong correlation between effective implementation of government bursary funds by the headteachers and students' retention ($r(23) = 0.79, p = 0.00$), hence the hypothesis was rejected and an alternative hypothesis accepted. The study concluded that effective allocation of bursary funds leads to increased students' retention. Bursary funds could provide necessary financial support for students' who might otherwise struggle to continue with their education due to financial constraints. The study recommended that more financial resources should be allocated to schools for bursary to enhance students' retention.

Keywords: Bursary, Education, Headteachers, Implementation, Retention, Students

I. INTRODUCTION

Supporting education is one of the smartest economic and human development investments that any country can make (World Bank, 2018; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2018). Secondary education plays a vital role in ensuring that a country's development through training, are pre-requisites to economic growth and social development. This is why governments all over the world are committed to the provision of education to their citizens; also especially, girls.

Bursaries provide a lifeline to those students who might otherwise be forced to abandon their dreams due to financial constraints. They level the playing field, ensuring that every child, regardless of their background, has the chance to pursue their academic ambitions. Provision of bursary enables learners from poor backgrounds to complete school (Nyakundi et. al., 2017)

Bursaries not only support disadvantaged students financially but also help to boost their confidence and motivation by recognizing their academic potential (Tournes & Scott-Smith, 2018). Bursaries can also enhance the social mobility of disadvantaged students, providing them with opportunities to pursue careers that may have been previously out of reach (Farah, 2020). Lin (2016) studied the relationship between financial aid, students' satisfaction and academic achievement among university students in Taiwan. The study found that financial assistance was positively correlated with students' satisfaction and academic achievement. The retention of students in their studies has been a topic of interest since the establishment of formal education systems (Aljahani, 2016). Students withdrawing from their studies before completion is costly for the education system overall, the individual students and their families and for their societies. Retaining students in their studies until completion rather than them dropping out is seen as a significant measure of the effectiveness of academic programs and processes.

Kipruto (2015) reported that majority of the students come from poor economic backgrounds and that constituency bursary fund was a critical source of funds for financing secondary education as majority of the parents did not have stable income. According to him lack of school fees was a major hindrance to access and retention of needy students in public boarding secondary schools. The study concluded that the most significant way of improving constituency bursary fund disbursement to needy students was increasing the bursary fund allocation to ensure access and retention of needy students, create awareness on constituency bursary and review guidelines on allocation of constituency bursary fund.

Tallam and Njoroge (2020) established that communication of county bursary fund allocation through the public participation forum, posters, radio social media was detailed enough to make the application and submission easy for the applicants. The study recommended that more awareness campaign should be enhanced using various forms of communication.

Masaiti (2018) reported that despite the introduction of bursary to assist bright and needy students, there exist dropouts in secondary schools in Kenya. The retention rates continue to dwindle despite the existence of the bursary fund in all administrative constituencies in the republic of Kenya.

Kopiyo et al. (2024) established that effective targeting, adequacy, consistency and timeliness of bursary disbursement are crucial for retaining students and ensuring they complete their education. The study recommended that bursary providers implement multi-year funding models to ensure financial stability, expand bursary coverage to include various educational expenses and establish mentorship and monitoring programs to support students' education completion rates.

Presently, no documented studies holistically focused on the study variables was focused on Masinga sub-county. Some were done outside Kenya hence contextual gaps. Other studies used different methodologies posing some methodological gaps.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Provision of secondary school bursary to needy students is done worldwide to enhance student retention. The retention rates in Masinga Sub County education institutions have been fluctuating, posing a challenge to quality education. Data obtained from Masinga Sub County education office showed that in the year 2019 the Sub County had a total enrollment of 11034 students. 3343(34.9%) dropped that year. In 2020 the Sub County had a total enrollment of 12035. 4200 students dropped out. In the year 2021 12902 students was the annual enrollment. 4568 (35.4%) dropped out. In 2022 the Sub County had enrollment of 13045. 4710 (36.1%) of the students dropped out (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2022). Among the factors contributing to this is financial constraints. Other works including that of Farah (2020), Lin (2016) and Aljahani (2016) have shown that Secondary education bursary fund plays an important role in enhancing the retention of students. However, no documented studies have been done targeting secondary education bursary particularly in Masinga Sub County.

Understanding the intricacies of students' retention is crucial for developing effective interventions by the headteachers to enhance the presence and success of students in Masinga Sub County education institutions, thus the need for this study.

1.2 Research Objective

The objective of this research was to investigate the impact of headteachers implementation of government secondary education bursary fund on student retention in Masinga Sub County, Kenya.

1.3 Research hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between effective implementation of government secondary school education bursary fund and students' retention.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Human Capital Theory

This study was anchored on human capital theory developed by Shultz (Shultz, 1961). The theory explains the positive correlation between education levels and earnings. The longer the students stay in school to graduation the higher the skills they acquire. According to this theory people should invest in education for future gain in form of economic development. This hypothesis forms a strong theoretical basis for this study as it shows the high government investment in education inform of bursaries.

2.2 Empirical Review

Empirically Nyakundi and Onsonu (2023) established that there is a significant strong relationship between constituency bursary provisions and internal efficiency in secondary schools. In addition, Kenedi (2023) reported that bursary programs positively impacted the academic performance of low-income students especially those with lower initial academic performance. The program increased the number of students graduating with a degree and helped reduce the educational gap between low income students and their wealthier peers.

In a research carried out in United Kingdom by Kaye (2021) reported a systematic review of the efficiency of financial support for improving participation or attainment in higher education, using evidence primarily relevant to higher education in England and concluded that evidence for the effectiveness of bursaries is scarce and inconsistent.

Rana et al. (2021) explored the effect of non-government scholarship programs on students' pursuit of higher education at the graduate and post graduate level in Bangladesh. The study established that bursaries have significant positive effect on higher education. The evidence from this study showed that scholarship programs positively affect students pursuing higher education in Bangladesh.

Hapompwe et al. (2020) investigated the impact of bursary scheme on transition from public secondary schools to tertiary education in Malawi. The findings showed that the criteria used to identify needy students is not very transparent and accountable. The study also revealed that the total amount of the bursary has the potential to sustain the girls in school because it covers school fees but it is not an automatic button for their transitioning to tertiary level.

Ngasura et al. (2023) reported that the government subsidy significantly influenced students' retention. The study concluded that government subsidy was critical in students' retention. Another study done by Nyawira (2015) established that the amounts awarded to students was too little to enable them remain in school throughout the study period hence affecting their performance negatively. The findings also showed that there was no consistency in allocation and that the allocations were not in line with the school calendar hence being of little help to the students in having them retained.

Ndungu et al. (2023) studied the effectiveness of the presidential secondary school bursary on education of orphans and vulnerable children in selected sub counties in Nairobi City County. The findings showed that the presidential secondary school bursary was not adequate as most of the beneficiary absenteeism from school was due to fee balances. Deserving students were left out due to non-observance of scheme procedures and guidelines. The study recommended an increase in the annual allocation of funds to the presidential secondary school bursary.

A study done by Nzuki (2018) on Kenyans constituency development fund, free secondary education policy and access to secondary education established that CDF had contributed significantly to the improvement of enrollment with the establishment of new day schools that are more available to low income families.

In addition, Muriuki and Gikuhi (2019) established that not all deserving cases benefited from bursary funds and that bursary schemes slightly improved secondary school retention rates which means that there may be other factors affecting retention other than the availability of funds. The study also found out that the most common challenges faced in the distribution of bursary funds were lack of transparency and lack of clear procedures in identifying the needy children.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

This study was carried out at Masinga Sub County, Machakos county Kenya. Masinga Sub County is one of the eight sub counties in Machakos County. The others are Machakos town, Kathiani, Athi River, Yatta, Matungulu, Kangundo and Mwala sub counties. It covers an area of approximately 1,411.0 square kilometers. The Sub County is divided into five administrative wards namely: Kivaa, Masinga central, Ekalakala, Muthesya and Ndithini wards. This area was chosen due to high rates of dropouts reported from 2018 to 2022 (MoE, 2022)

3.2 Research Design

According to Cooper and Schindler (2014) research design is a construct or the blue print of the study that direct the processes of study from the formulation of the questions and hypothesis to reporting the results. This study employed a descriptive survey research design. This research design is appropriate because it aims to accurately portray the characteristics, behaviors or attributes of a particular population or phenomenon, especially capturing a snapshot of the current situation by observing and recording details without manipulating variables. (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2023)

3.3 Target Population

The study had a population of 5122 participants. The study population included 50 headteachers, 50 deputy headteachers and 5022 students of the 50 public secondary schools in Masinga Sub County.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for the students was calculated using Yamane (1973) formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n = sample size;

N = population size;

e = margin error (0.05);

1 = constant

Hence:

$$n = \frac{5022}{1 + 5022(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 370$$

According to Matula et al. (2018) sampling is a method, process or procedure used to select a subset of a population to take part in the study. It is the process of choosing a large number of people for a research in such a way that ensures the chosen people accurately reflect the large population from which they were chosen. This study used purposive sampling technique to select 25 deputy headteachers and 25 headteachers. The researcher further used simple random sampling to select 370 students.

3.5 Data Collection

Questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis were used to collect data. This approach enabled the researcher to collect both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the processing of data to obtain answers to the research questions (Zozus, 2020). It deals with working with the data breaking and synthesizing in search of patterns and attempting to discover what the important issues are (Nyarko, 2019). Data analysis was done using SPSS (statistical package for social sciences) version 22.0. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, means and percentages summarized demographic characteristics and key variables. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically and findings were presented using text.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

To ensure validity of the research instruments the department supervisors examined the content validity of the questionnaires then provided the necessary advice. According to Mugenda (2008) reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. This study applied test-retest method to establish the reliability of the items in the questionnaire. The reliability coefficient was computed using Pearson's product moments correlation. The questionnaires had a correlation coefficient of 0.70 which was considered acceptable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003)

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The University of Nairobi, department of Educational Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies issued an introductory letter to the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) which gave permit for data collection. Permission was also sought from the County Commissioner Machakos County. It was also sought from the Sub County Director Masinga Sub County. The researcher ensured voluntary participation by the respondents and assured them of the confidentiality of the information collected.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

The researcher administered 370 questionnaires on the students' while 25 questionnaires were administered on the headteachers. 350 questionnaires were returned for analysis by the students which formed 95% return rate. All the 25 questionnaires issued to the headteachers were returned forming 100% return rate. In addition, all the interview guide forms issued to deputy headteachers were returned hence forming 100% return rate.

4.2 Demographic Information of Headteachers 'and Deputy Headteachers

Table 1 shows the summary of the demographic information of headteachers and deputy headteachers.

Table 1*Demographic Information of Headteachers 'and Deputy Headteachers*

Demographic Information	Particulars	Headteachers		Deputy Headteachers		Students	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	19	76	16	64	150	42.8
	Female	6	24	9	36	200	57.2
Age	35-39	2	8	5	20		
	40-44	9	36	13	52		
	45-49	8	32	6	24		
	50-55	3	12	1	4		
	Above -55	3	12	0	0		
Level of education	PHD						
	Masters	6	24	2	8		
	BED	19	76	23	92		
	Diploma						

Table 1 shows the summary of the demographic information of headteachers and deputy headteachers. Majority 19(76%) of the headteachers were male while 6(24%) were female. In addition, majority 16(64%) of the deputy headteachers were male while 9(36%) of the Deputy headteachers were female. 9(36%) of the headteachers were aged between 40 and 44 years. 8(32%) were aged between 45 to 49 years while 3(12%) were aged between 50 to 55 years.

Further, 2(8%) were aged between 35 to 39 years. The findings showed that majority 13(52%) of the deputy headteachers were aged between 40 to 44 years. Further, 6(24%) of the deputy headteachers were aged 45 – 49 years. In addition, 5(20%) were aged between 35 to 39 years. Further, the findings showed that 1(4%) was aged between 50 to 55 years. Richter et al (2011) asserted that teachers between the ages 30-49 years are keen on trying new ideas, have hope in the system and aggressively seek to produce results and are likely to be appointed for leadership. The implication here is that majority of the headteachers were in the right age bracket to implement government secondary education bursary found to enhance students' retention.

The findings also indicate that majority of the headteachers 19(76%) were degree builders while 6(24%) of the headteachers had master degree. In addition, 23(92%) of the deputy headteachers were degree holders while 2(8%) of the deputy headteachers had masters degree. Consequently, the respondent had attained the necessary qualification of a degree in education for effective school management.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics was done on the basis of the study variable.

4.3.1 Descriptive Statistics on Headteachers' Implementation of Government Secondary Education Bursary Fund

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of headteachers implementation of government secondary education bursary fund on students' retention in Masinga Sub County, Kenya. Table 2 shows headteachers responses on the effectiveness of secondary education bursary fund.

Table 2*Headteachers' Responses on the Effectiveness of Secondary Education Bursary on Students' Retention*

STATEMENT	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Bursary effectively promote equitable access to secondary education	1	4	2	8	2	8	8	32	12	48
Bursary reduces the financial burden on disadvantaged learners	2	8	1	4	2	8	10	40	10	40
Bursaries enable learners to achieve the academic goals	1	4	2	8	3	12	7	28	12	48
Bursaries boost learners confidence and motivation	2	8	1	4	2	8	7	28	13	52
Bursaries enhances the social mobility of disadvantaged learners	2	8	2	8	1	4	12	48	8	32

Findings in Table 2 indicate that 20(50%) of the headteachers either agreed or strongly agreed that bursaries effectively promote equitable access to secondary education. 3(12%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed with 2(8%) remaining neutral. Further findings indicated that 20(80%) of the headteachers believed that bursary reduces the financial burden on disadvantaged learners with 3(12%) either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing 2(8%) remained neutral.

Further, 19(76%) either agreed or strongly agreed that bursary enables learners to achieve academic goals. In addition, 3(12%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed with 3(12%) remaining neutral.

The findings, indicate that 20(80%) of the headteachers believed that bursary boosts learners confidence and motivation. 3(12%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed with 2(8%) remaining neutral. Findings revealed that 20(80%) either strongly agreed or agreed that bursary enhances the social mobility of the disadvantaged learners. 4(16%) either strongly disagreed or disagreed with 1(4%) remaining neutral. These findings are in agreement with Ngasura et al (2023) who established that government bursary is critical in students' retention. The findings also agree with Muriuki and Gikuhi (2019) who established that bursary slightly improved secondary school retention rates.

Table 3

Headteachers' Responses on the Initiatives to ensure Students' Retention

Initiatives	Frequency	Percent
Parents are urged to assist	5	20
Other sponsors are approached	10	40
School grown bursary for needy and poor students	6	24
Students given more time to pay	4	16
Total	25	100

Findings in Table 3 indicate that 10(40%) of the headteachers approached the sponsors to assist the needy students. Further, 6(24%) used school grown bursary initiatives to retain the needy students. 5(20%) urged parents to assist while 4(16%) gave students more time to pay school fees. These initiatives if fully implemented by the headteachers can ensure that students are retained in school. The school headteachers approach various sponsors who pay school fees for bright students from poor backgrounds. In addition, the headteachers organized for school grown bursary where teachers and board of management members contributes some money to help students from poor backgrounds pay school fees. Commenting on school grown bursary, one deputy headteacher had this to say:

"The school has internal bursary program. We as teachers contribute the money and also get it from school income generating activities such as bus hire, school farm and the school canteen. Only the bright students from poor backgrounds benefit from this bursary scheme".

4.4 Impact of Secondary Education Bursary Fund on Students' Retention As Perceived by the Students

The researcher sought to know the extent to which secondary education bursary fund influences students' retention. The results are shown in Table 4

Table 4

Extent to which Secondary Education Bursary Fund Influences Students' Retention

Statement	Frequency	Percent
Great extent	70	20
Less extent	220	62.8
Rarely	50	14.2
Not at all	10	3
Total	350	100

Findings presented in Table 4 show that 220(62.8%) of the students stated that secondary education bursary fund influences students' retention to a less extent while 70(20%) stated that secondary education bursary fund influences students' retention to a great extent. In addition, 50(14.2%) opined that secondary education bursary influences students' retention rarely. In addition, 20(5.3%) felt that secondary education bursary does not influences students' retention. These findings are in agreement with Muriuki and Gikuhi (2019) who established that not all deserving cases benefited from bursary fund and that bursary schemes slightly improved secondary school retention rates. These findings also agree with Nzuki (2018) who established that constituency development fund had contributed significantly to the improvement of enrollment in secondary schools.

4.5 Students' Retention

Headteachers had been requested to state the effectiveness of secondary education bursary funds on students' retention. The responses are shown in Table 5.

Table 5*Effectiveness of Secondary Bursary Funds on Students' Retention*

Statement	Frequency	Percent
Very effective	2	8
Effective	15	60
Less effective	6	24
Not effective	2	8
Total	25	100

As presented in Table 5, majority 15(60%) of the headteachers considered secondary education bursary effective in increasing students' retention in their schools. 6(24%) felt that secondary education bursary fund was less effective in enhancing students' retention. In addition, 2(8%) opined that secondary education bursary was very effective. Further, 2(8%) were of the opinion that secondary education bursary was not effective. These findings are in agreement with Ngasura et al. (2023) who concluded that government subsidy was critical in students' retention. The findings also agree with Kenedi (2023) who reported that bursary programmes increased the number of students graduating with a degree and helped reduce the educational gap between low income students and their wealthier peers. Commenting on the effectiveness of secondary bursary funds a deputy headteacher said:

"These bursaries are very effective and most of our students are in school due to the bursary fund. Most students come from very poor economic backgrounds and as such the parents are unable to pay their school fees."

4.6 Correlations

The researcher tested whether a relationship existed between effective implementation of bursary fund and students' retention. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6*Correlation between Effective Implementation of Bursary Fund and Students' Retention*

		Effective implementation of bursary funds	Retention rate
Effective implementation of bursary funds	Pearson correlation	1	0.79
	Sig (2-tailed)		0.00
	N	25	
Retention rate	Pearson correlation	0.79	1
	Sig(2-tailed)	0.00	
	N	25	25

Correlation is significant at 0.001 level of significance (2-tailed).

Results in Table 6 shows that there is a significant strong correlation between effective use of the bursary funds by the headteachers and students' retention $r(23) = 0.79, p=0.00$. Null hypothesis was rejected and an alternative hypothesis accepted, suggesting that increase in effective implementation of secondary education bursary funds by the headteachers will lead to increased students' retention. This shows that headteachers who use bursary funds effectively can improve retention rate.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings the study concluded that effective allocation of bursary funds leads to increased students' retention. The study also concluded that bursary funds could provide the necessary financial support for students who might otherwise struggle to continue with their education due to financial constraints. The study concluded that bursaries enable learners to achieve their academic goals, boost learners' confidence and motivation. The study also concluded that bursary reduces the financial burden on the disadvantaged learners.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommended that more financial resources should be allocated to schools for bursary to enhance students' retention. The study recommended that there is need for stakeholder interventions to ensure that bursary was allocated timely. The study also recommended that there should be equitable distribution of bursary fund to all the needy students.

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