

Education is a dependable mechanism to improve people's lives through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and desirable attitudes. It is therefore imperative to ensure that children are receiving equal educational opportunities regardless of circumstances out of their control such as their socioeconomic status, ethnicity, geographical location, the school they attend, or the social and economic context of the country (Demeuse, Frandiji, Greger and Rochex ,2012).The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of government bursary funds on participation rates in public secondary schools in Makueni County, Kenya. Bursary funds are a form of educational subsidies. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The study sampled 196 principals and deputy principals out of all the 384 public secondary schools in Makueni county that were targeted for the study. All the 9 Sub-County Directors of Education in Makueni County were also targeted for the study. Sampling was done through stratified, simple random sampling. Data collection instruments included questionnaires for Principals, Deputies and interview schedule for Sub-county Directors of Education. The instruments were ascertained through piloting and by research experts to ensure content validity while reliability was achieved through piloting and testing reliability. Data was analyzed by use of SPSS version 22. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations and inferential statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. Qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis and the responses presented in narratives, tables and figures. The results revealed that the relationship between government bursary funds and participation rates was positive but moderate ($R = .679$). An adjusted R^2 gave a clear prediction. The adjusted R square of 0.68 indicated that 68% of the variation in the participation of students in schooling in public secondary schools in Makueni County could be explained by provision of government bursary funds in financing education. The study recommends that the government should continue and also increase bursary awards to

students as a way of bolstering participation rates of students in secondary school education. This should be done by targeting the vulnerable in the society.