

**Assessment of Parental Involvement in Bursary Schemes: A Case Study of Selected  
Secondary Schools of Northern Education Division**

By

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## **Declaration**

I, Madalitso Denis Mbalazada, declare that, the organization and writing of this thesis is entirely my own original work, except where otherwise stated, and has been carried out under the supervision of Dr Artz Luwanda. It has not been, nor is it being concurrently submitted for any other degree than the degree of Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Educational Leadership and Management at Mzuzu University.

All reference material contained in here has been duly acknowledged.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to all secondary school managers and bursary providers who are working diligently to assist needy students with school fees.

## **Abstract**

This study was undertaken to assess parental involvement in the management of secondary school bursary schemes in Northern Education Division. The study employed a qualitative case study design grounded in constructivist worldview. Interview guides, document analysis and observations were used to collect data.

Results and discussions followed a thematic analysis approach. The results of the study indicate that parents of bursary beneficiaries are not involved in the administration of their wards' bursary programs. Hindering factors to parental involvement include, favouritism by school administrators in selection of needy students, lack of clear policy on parental participation in bursaries, school culture and low levels of education in most parents of bursary beneficiaries. Nevertheless, parents have important roles in management of bursary programs. Their participation has advantageous outcomes to students' academic development. Findings indicate that parents are the best advisors of their wards' academic progress. Parents can speak the truth about their economic status which would be the best determining factor for selection of needy students. Parental participation in their wards' bursary programs enhances a sense of ownership and responsibility over their wards and prevents favouritism by school managers when selecting needy students. Parental involvement would improve learners' academic performance and general conduct, hence bursaries would positively benefit beneficiaries.

This study recommends that the Ministry of Education reviews its policy on the guidelines for selection of bursary recipients to ensure that parents or guardians of beneficiaries have roles to play in the management of bursary programs.

## **GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goal
UNICEF	:	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
CAMFED	:	Campaign for Female Education
MoE	:	Ministry of Education
MoEST	:	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
CDSS	:	Community Day Secondary School
USA	:	United States of America
UK	:	United Kingdom
DHET	:	Department of Higher Education and Training
DEM	:	District Education Manager
TPB	:	Theory of Planned Behaviour

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Chapter Introduction**

This chapter focuses on contextual background of the study. Besides, it exposes the problem statement, purpose of the study, research objectives, significance of the study as well as limitations and delimitations of the study.

### **1.2. Introduction to the study**

Many studies have concentrated on parental involvement in education though little is known about the roles these parents play in management and administration of their wards' bursary schemes. Furthermore, the education sector is haunted by non-completion of secondary schooling. A close look into the guidelines for management of secondary school bursaries portray lack of clear strategies on parental involvement in their wards' bursary programs. This is why the study focused on assessing parents'/guardians' participation in bursaries as one way of curbing the challenges of non-completion and move towards a successful achievement of educational goals.

### **1.3. Background to the Study**

In all countries around the world Malawi inclusive, a large portion of national resources, both public and private are devoted to education. The rationale behind this is that education is universally recognized as a form of investment in human capital that yields economic benefits and contributes to a country's future wealth by increasing the productive capacity of its people

(Woodhall, 2004). According to the United Nations Education and Scientific Cooperation (2010), education is a fundamental human right because it empowers individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to increase production and income, as well as enabling individuals take advantage of employment opportunities in order to reduce poverty. Similarly, the objective of Sustainable Development Goal Number 4 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Sustainable financing of secondary education, therefore, requires both feasible policy reforms and sustainable financing options in order to enhance learning for all. Besides, the government must play its central role in policy direction and encourage strong partnership among all the stakeholders including communities, NGOs, private sector and external support among others. Main financing policy reforms relate to improved secondary school enrolment rates, improved retention rates and improved transition rates (Ndung'u et. al., 2019). According to the World Bank (2018), supporting education is one of the smartest economic and human development investments that any country can make. Secondary education plays a vital role in ensuring that a country's development through training, are pre-requisites to economic growth and social development. To achieve this, governments and other stakeholders worldwide, are striving to make education accessible to even the vulnerable population through provision of bursary schemes.

Bursary is one of the education financing options that has been used globally to pay the cost of education not only at secondary school level, but all levels (Ojwang, 2022). It has been used to reduce the fee burden from parents and guardians in order to facilitate effective participation by learners in education. In economically advanced countries in the western world, tuition vouchers, cash transfers, grants and scholarships have been widely used to pay education costs.

Western countries such as the United Kingdom used tuition vouchers and cash transfers to assist the needy students (Andrew & Baxter, 2005). In the United Kingdom, bursaries were provided in education in an attempt to eliminate the socio-economic gap between the rich and the poor while in Singapore, 'Edusave' was a financial intervention meant to assist students from poor households and retain them in school (Ojwang, 2022).

Globally, bursaries have proved to serve many purposes such as facilitating access, retention, participation and completion of educational programs, to enhance high quality of secondary education and to provide equal opportunities to learners (Onuko, 2012). Similarly, in Malawi, secondary school bursary scheme is an initiative of the government aimed at helping students from poor backgrounds to obtain education. The scheme is also aimed at ensuring that students are retained in school after enrolment (Hapompwe, et. Al., 2020). To ensure equality and access to secondary education in Malawi, the education sector introduced secondary school bursary schemes to allow needy students afford secondary education (MoE, 2022). According to the 2021/22 Education Sector Performance Report (2022), a total of 21,861 orphaned and vulnerable students had benefited from the government bursary scheme in Malawi. Out of the students who received the bursaries in Malawi, 56% were girls while 44% were boys. Bursaries, therefore, provide an opportunity to learners who would otherwise miss benefits of education. Provision of this assistance has always been perceived as necessary and relevant. In fact it resonates well with the Malawi Vision 2063, specifically Enabler 5, which advocates for human capital development and dream of a Malawi population with skills and capabilities for wealth creation by 2063 (MW2063).

To ensure smooth and effective outcome of bursary schemes, there is need to ensure involvement of all important stakeholders, one of which are parents. Such outcomes include

learners' high retention in secondary schools and high enrolment of students. However, despite governments' and other stakeholders' efforts in providing bursary schemes to secondary schools, non-completion of secondary schooling continues to be a matter of concern for policy makers and practitioners not only in Malawi but also beyond, thereby compromising efforts to attain Sustainable Development Goal 4 (MoE, 2022; Gray et. al, 2009). Studies by Hapompwe et al (2021) show that in Zambia and Malawi, close to 70% of secondary school students are entitled to bursary schemes which are supposed to cover 75% tuition fees for most beneficiaries and up to 100% for vulnerable groups such as double orphans (Hapompwe et al, 2021). For example, according to 2021/22 Education Sector Performance Report, (MoE, 2021), 23, 063 secondary school students of which 13, 973 (60%) were females dropped out of school.

In Malawi, the Ministry of Education (2020), presented annual school census statistics on the number of students who applied and received bursary schemes in the 2019/20 academic year, indicating a total of 30349 students who benefited from both public and private bursaries. Further to this, the same statistics indicate that out of 100 students age 17 years (the age supposed to be in form 4 from the population) in the population only 22.1% of them completed secondary school in 2020. A closer look at the gender shows more males completed secondary education than their female counterparts and yet more females are on bursary schemes.

Existing studies indicate that in Malawi, bursary scheme beneficiaries are normally identified in three main ways: (i) from a previous school; (ii) at the school; and (iii) by the bursary providers themselves (in case of private or individual bursaries) (Gondwe, 2020). For Government beneficiaries, findings show that community-based targeting has been used in bursary programs and has proved successful in identifying the right beneficiaries in a cost-effective manner (Sineta, 2012).

In Malawi, for one to benefit under the MoEST bursary scheme, the expected beneficiary should be genuinely needy, and already selected to a secondary school. Additionally, one should be well behaved, not recipient of another scholarship, should have positive attitude towards education and should have completed a bursary application form (Hapompwe, 2020). All these three criteria do not vividly explain how parents are involved in the initial, during and at the final stages of the scheme. Perhaps, disengagement or tokenistic involvement of the parents could be the key to challenges of non-completion of secondary education by bursary scheme beneficiaries.

In some instances, schools establish bursary committees which conduct surveys at schools to identify the needy girls. Further inquiry is made on the girls who are identified, and they are ranked according to the degree of need. The names are later submitted to the benefactors (Gondwe, 2020). At the beginning of each financial year, head teachers of various public secondary schools provide the Education Division with the number of needy children to benefit based on completed and verified bursary application forms collected (NOVOC, 2009). The analysis of this, does not clearly show the roles of parents to ensure effective outcome of the bursary schemes as espoused by the government and other stakeholders.

Parental roles as asserted by Miksic (2015) can be broadly understood as ways in which parents support their children's education in word and deed. Parents can be involved in the school setting by attending meetings of parents-teachers' associations, contacting school personnel and volunteering at school. Parental roles in home setting include discussion of school activities, checking homework, parenting styles, home roles and supervision (Shute & Hansen,

2011). Parental role in the learning activities of their children is seen as an effective strategy to ensure students' success.

The importance of parental roles and involvement in schools has increasingly gained recognition at both national and international levels (Magwa & Mugari 2017). For example, the Educate America Act on National Education Goals, set out in 2000, noted that every school should promote a partnership between home and school that will increase parental involvement and participation in the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Perhaps, collaboration between schools and parents whose children are on bursary can be a missing puzzle in the effective implementation of bursary schemes. Ecahune et al (2015) asserted that in most African countries such as Kenya, Uganda and South Africa, policies that support parental roles in their children's education are clearly noted. For example, the Basic Education Act of Kenya (2013) was enacted requiring school managements to assess school needs with full participation of parents.

While secondary school bursary schemes continue to be marred by numerous challenges, there seems to be little or tokenistic involvement of parents in their children's bursary schemes. The nature of parental involvement sought is the material and moral input on improving the schemes' efficacy. Parents might be economically needy but need not to be neglected. They can still give consent and offer moral support in the academic progress of their wards. Most of the bursary programs start from benefactors, school managers to beneficiaries. Guidelines for management of bursary schemes as per the Ministry of Education simply give mandate to school managers to form a bursary committee at school level that shall be responsible for identifying needy students (MoEST, 2001). The same guidelines describe the bursary committee to be comprised of the deputy head teacher as the chair, heads of departments,

school head boy or head girl and one member from Parents-Teachers Association who in practice, is never incorporated into the committee. Government bursary schemes for secondary school students for example, selection and implementation process of beneficiaries is done by school managers with a directive from Education Division Office. Criteria for selecting beneficiaries does not clearly define the roles of parents.

This missing link is not only noticed at the country level, but also in secondary schools in the Northern Education Division (NED). For example, Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) International Bursary program does its selection of beneficiaries at school level through teacher representative or school bursary committee in the division. Parents of the recipients are not consulted at the preliminary stage of the bursary scheme implementation. In practice and experience, assessment of a learner's financial need is determined at school level without consulting parents or guardians. However, there seems to be a continuous rate of dropout of students including those on bursaries. While involvement of parents in their children's school activities have shown to improve students' performance (Gwija, 2016), the role of parental involvement in management of bursary schemes is yet to be established. Perhaps, this can also bridge the knowledge gap regarding why students on bursary scheme continue to drop out of school.

#### **1.4. Problem Statement**

Despite the efforts by the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders in providing bursary schemes to needy secondary school students in Malawi in general and NED in particular, non-completion of secondary schooling continues to haunt the sector. Further, the criteria used to identify and implement bursary schemes in secondary schools do not explain how parents are involved to arrest the problem of non-completion. Worse still, there is lack of literature to

establish how parents are involved in the secondary school bursaries for their children and wards. This leaves a gap in knowledge regarding parents' perceptions and attitudes towards the bursary schemes. It is hoped that active participation of parents in secondary school bursaries would ensure parents play an active role in reducing non-completion of secondary schooling thereby ensuring effective outcome of bursary schemes' objective. While many studies have concentrated on examination of parental involvement and students' achievement, little is known about the roles these parents play in management and administration of bursary schemes.

### **1.5. Purpose of Study**

The purpose of the study was to carry out an in-depth assessment of parental involvement in awards of bursaries to their wards and explore the extent to which parents can participate in administration of bursary programs in secondary schools in Malawi. The rationale for the study was basically on attainment of educational goals through collaboration of various bursary stakeholders especially parents who seem to be left out in the process of bursary schemes' administration.

### **1.6. Research Objectives**

In order to address the aim of the study, the research focussed on the following specific objectives:

1. Assess the extent of parental involvement in bursary schemes.
2. Find out barriers to parental participation in bursary schemes.

3. Explore the value of parental involvement in bursary schemes.

### **1.7. Significance of the Study**

In Malawi very little has been done to understand the level of participation of parents in the bursary schemes. The findings of the study would therefore, shed more light to educational stakeholders on the significance of involving parents as one way of reducing drop-out rate of bursary schemes beneficiaries than just relying on views of teachers and members of the bursary committee whose composition is sometimes questionable. Using the findings of this study, schools would perhaps effectively evaluate their bursary schemes' practices and use some of the findings of the study to promote effective implementation of the bursary programs.

The study has unveiled challenges facing implementation of bursary programs at school level in the perspective of school managers and parents. It has also exposed feelings of parents on the enactment of bursary schemes thereby bringing to the attention of benefactors, policy makers and other practitioners on how to achieve effectiveness in the administration of bursary programs.

The study has helped to unfold the interests or motives of benefactors in the implementation of bursary programs which would be of use in executing plans for further admissions and monitoring of the programs. The study further, adds more depth on existing body of knowledge on proper and effective implementation of secondary school bursary schemes. Therefore, the study contributes to the body of knowledge as it provides the specific views of stakeholders on how parents need to be involved in the bursary schemes.

## **1.8. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

Some head teachers were reluctant and suspicious to allow students participate in the study arguing students would only talk negative about teachers. However, to ensure that head teachers grant consent to researcher, specific purpose of the study was explained to them and confidentiality and anonymity were assured to them. In addition, allocating time to engage the participants was difficult especially during the official school hours because of academic commitments of students. The researcher therefore, could sometimes engage the respondents after the official school hours. Finally, there are many organizations in Malawi in general and NED in particular, that offer secondary schools with bursaries to needy students, which one study cannot manage to reach. It is the same with secondary schools that host students on bursary schemes; almost every secondary school, be it community day, grant aided, district or national, have one or more bursaries being administered. The study therefore, looked at three bursary programs namely; Government, CAMFED and UNICEF in four secondary schools that are in Chitipa and Karonga of Northern Education Division.

## **1.9. Chapter summary**

In this chapter, the problem under investigation has been introduced and highlighted in terms of its nature and scope. The chapter has provided the background to this study, statement of the problem as well as purpose of the study. Finally, the chapter has outlined the research objectives guiding the study, its significance and limitations as well as delimitations of the study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Chapter Introduction**

This chapter reviews studies on the topic of parental involvement in the administration of secondary school bursary schemes. It attempts to expose what studies say regarding secondary school bursaries and parental involvement on the same. To achieve this, the chapter involves exploring over literature on bursary schemes and research objectives. Specifically, it addresses the following objectives: Assess the extent of parental involvement in bursary schemes, Explore barriers to parental involvement in bursary schemes and find out the value of parental involvement in bursary schemes. Before, reacting to these objectives, the chapter provides a conceptual analysis of bursaries and their justifications.

#### **2.2 Meaning of Bursaries**

The concept of bursaries appears more problematic by definition as it is used interchangeably with the term scholarship. Various authors have used the term bursary to mean financial support given as need to support education (Harrison & Hatt 2019, Callendar 2009). Mwangi and Cheloti (2017) view bursary as a monetary award made by an institution to individuals or group of people who have bursary capability from the school to help pay educational fees. Studies in USA and England at higher education, used the term bursary to either mean financial assistance to aid students from low economic background to persist in school or to support already capable students (Harrison & Hatt, 2012).

In developing countries, the concept of bursary has been used in context of poverty considering bursaries as a tool to promote education of those who could not afford the same. Defining bursary in this way would entail clearing a distinction between bursaries and scholarships. From a traditional perspective, the term bursary has been described to include financial assistance given to students based on financial need while scholarships have been understood to mean financial support awarded solely on the basis of merit or basing on one's academic achievement (Callender, 2009). In real life though, it is observed that some scholarships are awarded solely on financial need while others are awarded both on merit and financial need. It is with this regard that it becomes confusing to clearly distinguish the two.

Literature reveals that some bursaries, for instance, CAMFED include both financial and material support given to beneficiaries in a transparent manner (Chapman & Mushlin 2008). Therefore, basing on the available literature reviewed, bursary would mean a non-repayable amount of money and material resources that institutions or organizations can award to needy students with the aim of covering their educational expenses, thereby dealing with poverty and promoting development. It is the later definition that this study adopts as a working definition.

### **2.3. Justification for provisions of bursary schemes in secondary schools**

Poverty has negatively affected the economy of many developing countries and it is directly associated with educational costs prohibiting individuals from accessing education. Studies conducted in the UK confirm that bursaries are used to relieve anxiety, widen participation, promote access, retention, academic success and reduce tuition costs from the disadvantaged students (Harrison & Hatt., 2012). Bursaries in developing nations have been justified to alleviate poverty. It is generally understood that, lack of access to schooling is strongly affected by the macro-economic environment, family social economic status and also cultural practices (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015; Unterhalter et al., 2014). From the literature

reviewed, the studies largely confirm this statement. For example, in Bangladesh and Cambodia the Female Stipend Program (FSP) and the JFPR projects respectively were meant to address poverty issues by ensuring girls access to education.

In developing countries, bursaries have been justified as a means to alleviate poverty. In Kenya, secondary school bursaries were introduced during 1993/94 financial year to enhance transition from the primary schools to secondary schools (Wachiye et al, 2010). These bursaries targeted the vulnerable groups such as orphans, girls, children from slums and the poor in high potential areas as well as in arid and semi-arid lands or districts. Therefore, during that time, the prime purpose of the bursary scheme was to cushion households from the rising impacts of poverty, unstable economy and the devastating effects of HIV and AIDS pandemic (Nduva, 2004; Odebero & Wafula, 2019). Though this method had loopholes, it clearly shows that it was premised on providing non-repayable amounts of money and materials to the needy. By implication therefore, the bursary scheme was provided as a way of ensuring access to secondary education of the needy students.

Furthermore, studies conducted for instance, to assess the effectiveness of bursaries on access and retention revealed that there is a relationship between financing of education access and retention. The study conducted by Mwangi (2013), revealed that, bursaries promoted secondary school education in the district witnessed by increased access through new and expanded school facilities such as classrooms, science laboratories, school water and electricity projects. The study further revealed that retention rates were enhanced in the district through bursaries and expanded funding in young schools.

In Malawi, the introduction of a fee-free education policy for primary schools in 1994 was an attempt to increase access especially to the disadvantaged (Ipor, 2016). Bursary schemes were therefore introduced in Malawi to ensure better access and equity, relevance and quality, as well as good governance and management in all institutions from basic education to higher education (Hapompwe et al, 2021). Studies conducted in Malawi and Kenya showed that, the girls who were on bursaries were from poor background either from single parent headed families and big families depicting a need for financial assistance (Musee, 2013; Ndung'u, 2016; Sineta, 2012). The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 echoes the need to substantially expand the number of bursaries available, particularly to those who are most likely to be financially needy (UNESCO, 2015).

Malawi Education Sector Analysis confirms that the dropout rate at secondary education level has been on the rise and it was at 10.9% in 2018 with more girls dropping out compared to boys (13.4 % girls, 8.5% boys). Fees has been a major reason for dropout for both boys and girls at secondary school level (MoEST, 2019). In addition, a research done in Nkhotakota reveals that bursaries are offered on the basis of need as well as gender. It shows that priority is given to girls though critically looking into Malawi standards, findings reveal that boys are equally in need (Gondwe, 2020). This cements the justification for the introduction of bursary schemes in secondary schools in Malawi. A report by MoEST (2018), states that the number of beneficiaries of secondary school bursaries tremendously increased by 288% from 3,165 in 2010 to 14,499 in 2018. This is Government funded only. MoEST introduced the secondary school bursary scheme in order to increase access and retention of boys and girls in secondary education.

The bursary schemes target orphans and other vulnerable students attending secondary education in the country. There are a number of other bursaries being provided by various organisations such as UNICEF, CAMFED and Peach Tree. Bursaries are therefore important strategy for access to education and a tool for the accomplishment of international human right to education. Lack of access to education is therefore, as a result of family economic status and also cultural practices. For instance, studies conducted in Malawi and Kenya showed that girls who were on various bursary schemes were from poor family backgrounds either with no parents, a single parent or big families portraying a need for financial aid (Musse, 2013; Ndung'u, 2016; Sineta, 2012).

In Malawi the Ministry of Education, (2020) presented an annual school census statistics on the number of students who applied and received bursary schemes in the 2019/20 academic year, indicating a total of 30349 students who benefited from both public and private bursaries. Further to this, the same statistics indicate that out of 100 students age 17 years (the age supposed to be in form 4 from the population) in the population only 22.1% of them completed secondary school in 2020. A closer look at the gender shows more males completed secondary education than their female counterparts and yet more females are on bursary schemes. The main reason for school dropout in Malawi as per education statistics is lack of school fees. This proves the value and importance of bursary schemes to the nation. Therefore, from the reviewed studies, it can be tentatively concluded that poverty is the main cause of school dropout leading to low access to secondary education. This justifies the need for support in education in form of bursary schemes.

It therefore, clearly entails that bursaries are meant to relieve the beneficiaries from burdens of schooling costs such as school fees, books among others thereby ensuring access,

retention and persistence in school thereby promoting the development of the developing nations. Therefore, from the review of studies, it can be tentatively concluded that, poverty largely stands as a driving force behind the problems of students' schooling which leaves them helpless or in hopeless situations. However, this literature does not clearly spell out how parents participate in the processes of bursary schemes.

#### **2.4. Implementation of bursaries schemes in secondary schools**

The implementation of bursaries differs depending on the benefactors or providers and the composition of bursary from one country to another. Studies reveal a number of ways in which bursary schemes are implemented (Wachiye & Nasongo, 2010; Onuko, 2012). According to Wachiye and Nasongo (2010), the government of Kenya introduced constituency bursary fund. Under this programme, bursaries were administered from the Ministry of Education headquarters from where money is sent to district headquarters for disbursement. The respective District Education Boards (DEB) then made allocations and disbursed the funds to the various schools based on the level of financial need prevailing in the student body (Wachiye & Nasongo, 2010). However, this implementation strategy was faulted for its bureaucracy and perpetuation of unfairness by offering bursaries to underserving students as well as to those that were well connected (Odaro, 2000). Therefore, the guidelines are vague in that they do not spell out the role of parents or guardians in this whole arrangement.

It is these flaws that led to the introduction of the Constituency Bursary Fund whose strategy was in line with government of Kenya's policy on devolution, decentralisation of power and empowerment of local communities (Kimenyi, 2005). Through this arrangement the central government makes annual budgetary allocations to each constituency and the funds are channelled to schools through the constituencies. The Constituency Bursary Fund mandates

members of the community, through a committee of officials to select recipients of the fund. This is done on the assumption that members of the community know best those in their midst who deserve financial support. These guidelines at least specify the application procedures, evaluation criteria and allocation ceilings. However, this implementation strategy too, does not clearly state how parents are involved in this process. Besides, the bursary fund is under the direct control of members of parliament, thereby, transforming it into a political instrument. This compromises its effectiveness as parliamentarians end up giving bursaries to friends and political supporters who are not necessarily needy (Onyago & Njue, 2004).

In Gambia, some bursaries which are coordinated by the government for instance, are not directly given to the beneficiaries. Rather; they are remitted into the regional office of ministry of education where the fund administrator controls the disbursement between the program and schools (Gajigo, 2016). On the other hand, in Cambodia, the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) scholarship does not directly subsidize the fees paid by parents for their children's education. Instead, families receive cash transfers provided the student is enrolled in school, maintains passing grade among others (Filmer & Schady, 2008). As the case of AGS, which largely constitutes of materials, implemented in Malawi, Sierra Leone and Djibouti, the package was said to be distributed directly to the beneficiaries in public to ensure transparency and accountability and it was reported to involve a number of actors (Chapman & Mushlin, 2008; Sineta, 2012). The South African government have bursaries coordinated by Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). These bursaries are not directly given to the recipients, rather, they are forwarded into the regional office of ministry of education or the academic institution where the fund administrators control the disbursement between the program and schools (DHET, 2020). With these variations from the reviewed studies, it can be

tentatively concluded that bursaries are implemented either directly or indirectly with no clear guidelines on how parents are involved in the processes.

Government bursaries in Malawi follow the same criteria by disbursing the bursary funds to Ministry of Education which forwards an allocated amount to either higher learning institutions' accounts or to the Education Division Offices' accounts. As for the case of secondary schools, the education division offices deposit bursary funds to individual school accounts. This implies that the bursary beneficiaries do not receive the funds directly from the benefactors (Gondwe, 2020).

CAMFED International deals directly with the bursary program coordinator with support from a team of stakeholders who help in identifying girls who are eligible for support. The identification is done at school level using an established school bursary committee led by CAMFED teacher representative. After identification, funds are released to schools to pay termly fees for returning bursary students followed by procurement of bursary items that are given to beneficiaries directly in a transparent manner (Lake, 2016).

UNICEF regards each government as its primary partner for the implementation and priority setting in the bursary programs (UNICEF 2019). Financial operations start from the organization to the government that disburses funds to the Ministry of Education and finally to the school administration. Unless the assistance comes in form of material aid then it would be given directly to beneficiaries.

It is evident from the studies that the implementation process is well connected from bursary providers to school administration with a number of actors in the government system, mentors

then school managers. With these discoveries from the reviewed studies, bursaries are implemented indirectly. Indirectly in this case would mean not given directly to the beneficiaries unless the aid comes in form of material support. It can also be noted that parents are not directly involved in the selection, administration and implementation of bursary scheme programs.

## **2.5. Criteria for selecting bursary scheme beneficiaries in secondary schools**

This section attempted to review literature related to criteria used in identifying bursary scheme beneficiaries. Several studies revealed varied information regarding the criteria used (Odebero et al., 2007; Musee, 2013; Gondwe, 2020; Hapompwe, 2021; Ojwang, 2022). Odebero, Sang, Bosire and Othuon (2007) conducted a study onto determining the extent to which the government bursary was equitably distributed among secondary school students in Busia District of Kenya. The study was meant to determine the opinion of head teachers on equity of the established criteria in bursary support for the needy. Then to determine the extent of equity in bursary distribution to the recipients in Busia District of Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive statistics design in analysing the primary data to determine head teacher's opinions on the established criteria as well as common considerations in the selection of needy students. In their findings on the criteria for selecting needy students, the study found that head teachers used the same criteria in the selection of bursary recipients. The criteria were set by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and circularised to all the secondary schools through the District Education office. The criteria included good academic performance, good discipline and poor family background and orphanhood. These were distributed to the school heads through the District Education officers.

Statistically, 44.4% indicated that the criterion adequately targets support to needy students while 55.6% faulted the criteria by indicating that the criteria does not adequately target support to needy students. This criterion was also noted in a study, “Factors influencing allocation of bursaries to students in public secondary schools in central division of Machakos district in Machakos County” by Musee (2013). Perhaps, this shows that the criterion is lacking and wanting in that it does not involve all important stakeholders such as parents.

Jenzabar, a Boston-based organization that partners with higher education institutions worldwide, carried out a study in California and Latin America on education financing and revealed that the tuition voucher system and cash transfers were dominant and targeted university and college students. The basic education school levels were sponsored by the governments such that bursary intervention mostly captured private institutions and career-oriented areas. The voucher system was created in Latin America and targeted learners from low income backgrounds since 1991. They revealed that twelve states in Columbia used voucher systems and school fees for children in private schools was subsidized in order to reduce the education costs and enable even those from poor families to access and participate in high quality education (Ojwang, 2022).

In Namibia, the bursary scheme was referred to as Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF). It replaced the previous bursary docket which were perceived to be inadequate and outdated as it specifically targeted future civil servants (Ojwang, 2022). The new scheme was in three components: grant scheme, loans and full bursary only granted to exceptional cases. Every regional quota of the country came up with its own criteria of bursary disbursement. Namibia also gave ‘Eduloan’ that aimed to unlock the students’ potential. Develop Africa, a non-profit organization that was founded with the aim of

facilitating meaningful and sustainable development in Africa, supported children in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Tanzania by purchasing books and other learning materials. Furthermore, South Africa also enjoyed National Students Finance Aid Scheme which only targeted the poor but with a condition that the poor students must be bright. What was not clear was how students who were poor in academics and talents were treated.

In Rwanda, bursaries were mainly directed to orphans while in Botswana, both bursaries and scholarships were issued under the bursary scheme according to critical areas of need for manpower, choice of course for higher education students and academic performance at the senior school level. Bursaries targeted specific fields of study where the society benefitted most (World Bank, 2008).

Gondwe (2020) conducted a study that focused on secondary school girls who are basically teenagers to explore the extent to which bursaries offer solutions to the problems emerging from injustices and inequalities. This study adopted the Social Justice Theory based on the work of Griffiths (1998). On identification of beneficiaries for bursary schemes, the study found that the beneficiaries are identified in three ways: from a previous school, at the school and by the bursary providers themselves. This means that some beneficiaries could be identified while at primary school before being selected to secondary school while others were identified at the school level implying that schools are largely master beneficiary identifiers. At school level, the beneficiaries are identified by form teachers by checking the class attendance and welfare of each individual learner even in connection to their homes. In addition, at the school level, Gondwe (2020) noted that beneficiaries could also be identified through mere checking of fees payments. However, it is not clear how authentic it is to identify needy students without parental consent.

Besides the use of form teachers, it was also revealed that in some centres bursary committees were established at school level for the same purpose. This committee conducts surveys at school to identify the needy students. This is followed by further inquiries on the identified students and are finally ranked according to the degree of need. This process is followed by the submission of names to the benefactors through the Education Division office that makes a final recommendation. As for other non-governmental bursaries, the school administration conducts examination assessments as part of selection process, the ranked names from which those who pass are considered. What is not clear in this criterion is the composition of the bursary committee and whether parents are involved in these committees.

In a related study by Hapompwe et al. (2021), titled “Impact of bursary schemes on girls’ transition from public secondary schools to tertiary education in Lilongwe, Malawi”, conducted to examine the extent to which bursaries impact the transitional rate of public secondary school girls to tertiary level in Lilongwe, Malawi, the study found that 59% of the students agreed that information on selection process is always available while 30% disagreed. This meant that information regarding the selection of beneficiaries is somewhat available in schools and that parents and guardians do know of a bit of the arrangement. Moreover, during the face to face interviews with the teachers and the administrators, the study found out that information about bursaries is always made available to the students. All teachers and administrators indicated that the announcement regarding available bursaries is shared during assembly time the first day of school but also pasted on notice boards. They also indicated that they encourage the students to follow the award of bursaries with the District Education Managers office which handles secondary school bursary schemes.

## **2.6. Level of parental involvement in bursary schemes**

The term parent includes those who act in a primary caregiver or parent role whether they are the biological parent, adoptive parent, foster parent, or nonrelated caregiver (Riojas-Cortez, 2014). In fact, parent, can be one person or a group of individuals as long as they form part of support systems that help meet the cognitive, linguistic, physical, social-emotional and cultural needs of children. This study defines parental role in education in form of 'home education' as a term that represents educational impact of the parents on children (Ceka & Murati 2016). In this case, parental role in education incorporates a range of social-pedagogical and educational tasks. These may include the material support, moral values, organization, development, or provision of a positive learning environment for children.

Many researchers and scholars have expressed the value and need for parental involvement in their children's education, but parents' participation in management of bursary schemes is missing. For instance, Durisic and Bunijevac (2017) argue that parental support implies a range of co-operation, participation and partnership by parents to the children's present or future situation outside the classroom. They put an emphasis on parental partnership with school, and community that will improve policy and practice in an effort to increase student academic achievement and student success. Liu and Liu (2000) consent that unlike teachers, whose influence on child's conduct is relatively limited, parents maintain a life-long commitment to their children. Academic activities that support parental involvement provide a conducive home-school learning environment leading to academic success. Furthermore, parental role is enhanced by parental involvement where there is a two-way flow of information and such involvement occurs when parents take an active role in promoting conducive educational environment for their children that is caring, motivating and goal oriented (Chindanya, 2001).

Therefore, literature reveals tokenistic way of parental participation in bursary schemes involving their children or wards. Research by Luis Tato (2022) shows that most parents simply despair and give up when their wards' future is cut off due to lack of school fees. Such parents do not know where to turn to and seek for financial aid. The rescue usually comes from sympathisers or other concerned elites. This is an indication that even at the preliminary stage of sponsor identification, most parents have no knowledge of bursary providers. As a result, other interested parties such as sympathisers, school managers and benefactors, work out the whole bursary process without parental participation. In her study, Gondwe (2020) opines that during the identification process of needy students, form teachers play a greater role. In this process, needy students are identified through observation in a school environment, face to face interviews with the concerned learners, and sometimes through lack of payment of school fees.

Besides, Gondwe (2020) reveals that when bursary scheme providers conduct the process of needy students' identification, they use community members and public announcements or advertisements. These community members are not direct parents or guardians of bursary beneficiaries, not even members of parents-teachers-association. This also shows unclear strategy and undefined levels of parental involvement. Moreover, it is not clear how close these members of the bursary committee are to the beneficiaries to appreciate the challenges the beneficiaries in particular, and the program in general meet. This clearly shows that parental involvement in bursary schemes is not clear in the literature as well as the guidelines. Where it seems to be clear, their tokenistic involvement exposes a huge gap to the smooth implementation of bursary schemes.

## **2.7. Barriers to parental involvement in secondary school bursary schemes**

This sub-section aims at revealing what literature say regarding barriers parents face when participating in secondary school bursary schemes. Because parental participation is almost negligible, literature is very scanty on the same. Available literature has focused on barriers to parental participation on their children' schooling. Epstein (2009) noted that there are significant barriers for schools reaching out to parents. In communicating with parents, educators must communicate on a level in which parents do not feel intimidated and give the parent a fair or accurate report on the academic progress of their children or the quality of their schools. In essence, there is need for positive parenting which can improve parent/child relations by involving students with the “greatest teachers” they will have, their parents.

Some studies have also shown that educators are often unaware of how they come across to low-income families (Jeynes, 2011, p.38). For Jeynes (2011), parents with limited resources often perceive teachers and principals as requiring a great deal from them and offering them little in return. Assisting families of low socio-economic status has shown that the most ideal ways for schools to inspire families to become active participants with the schools is to help the whole family, not just the students. As literature shows, the common criteria to identifying needy students is that of using the school where parental role is considered secondary. This leaves a gap for bursary scheme providers to clearly understand the status of parents or guardian so that they can better assist them. Study by Jeynes (2011) found that poor and minority parents will become involved if they believe they are valued and loved by the schools. The need is to reach out in an attitude of love and warmth, offering opportunities to parents to involve themselves in ways parents can clearly identify as acts of love.

Lack of understanding and knowledge of what rural life entails is one of the many barriers to parental involvement in school activities. According to Davies (1987), schools tend to label these parents as hard-to-reach. This is due to the low level of meaningful contact between parents and schools which led educators to conclude that parents lack interest in learners' education. As literature reveals, little is known on the barriers to parental involvement in bursary schemes which is often marred with students' dropout and other challenges. It can perhaps be argued, that parental involvement may be a missing link to resolving challenges faced by secondary school bursary schemes.

## **2.8. Advantages of parental involvement in Bursary Schemes**

Literature is scanty on duties and advantages of parental involvement in bursary schemes. This, perhaps, is an oversight on the value of parents or guardians in promoting effective implementation of bursary schemes in secondary schools. Majority of the literature talks about the impact of parental involvement in academics in general (George & Mensah, 2010; Hixson, 2006; Olender, Elias & Mastroleo, 2010). Parental involvement in schooling consisted of support offered to their children's activities at home such as supporting with home assignments, aiding children with reading, encouraging school attendance and offering support to school events like being present at school conferences, parenting sessions as well as taking part in fundraising projects (George & Mensah, 2010). Hixson (2006) observed that the contribution of parents as important stakeholders in decision making is often mentioned as a significant avenue to enhancing public schools. Parental involvement has proved to have an impact on the collaboration between parents and the school, and on students' mind-set, attendance and learning (Hixson, 2006). Parental involvement also promotes academic success by allowing collaboration of parents and school teachers to assist their children. Perhaps, bursary schemes'

processes will also need similar intervention by the parents because its objective is to also ensure academic success of the children.

The role of parental involvement was also recognised by Olender, Elias and Mastroleo (2010) who opined that if it is recognised that family units have a vital responsibility as partners in academic success, then educators must do whatever is necessary to bring parents into the educational schema. Educators must urge parents to be energetic participants in the schooling of their children to connect the home school and community in order to offer our children concrete education. This obviously include children who are on bursary. Perhaps, parents need to collaborate with teachers in monitoring how children on bursary are faring. This must begin with education of the parents on their role in bursary schemes. This is a huge gap in the literature about secondary school bursaries.

For Solomon (2010), parental involvement raises academic success and opportunities for the future, inspires self-esteem and self-assurance, and decrease behaviour problems and school absenteeism. In relation to implementation and management of bursary schemes in secondary schools, engaging parents would increase a sense of responsibility in the children thereby not misusing the given opportunity (bursary) as the literature reveals. Literature also reveals that when parents are involved in decision making about their children' schooling, the benefits include enriched academic achievement, decreased absenteeism, amended school behaviour, improved academic motivation and lower dropout rates. This augers well with most bursary schemes' conditions which attach students' behaviour and performance as conditions to retain them on a bursary. This is where parental involvement will be a key as some parents will be made aware of these conditions and later be involved in the promotion of the same.

Parents who are actively involved can join with the teachers to ensure that their child experiences academic success in school. According to Bokhorst-Heng (2008), the influence that parents have on the educational process is overwhelming, and research shows that with just a little assistance, encouragement and guidance from the school, parents can provide even more to their children's success. Parental involvement does not occur in isolation but in community and cultural context, which can make it difficult sometimes to achieve (Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). The guidelines on bursary schemes as literature shows, is not clear on how parents are involved and its impact.

Parental involvement in school activities has also shown to increase student' motivation on schooling. Coleman and McNeese (2009) explored the interrelationship with fifth grade students' academic success, family's participation, and the student's inspiration. Involved guardians can have an immense positive influence on their child's learning and overall school experience (Coleman & McNeese, 2009). Bokhorst-Heng (2008) argued that parental contributions, in the structure of a supportive home environment, are more important than factors such as "the family's income, education level, or cultural background" (p.40). Bokhorst-Heng found that the effects of such involvement may include higher achievement scores across the curriculum, improved behaviour and attitudes, and higher goals and achievements beyond grade school. The effective achievement of bursary scheme goal include higher student performance, as well as improved behaviour and attitudes. Therefore, if students are to effectively meet the needs of the bursaries, they need support from their parents.

## **2.9. Theoretical Framework: The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)**

The study is guided by the Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (1991), an additional construct to the original theory, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) made necessary by the

original model's limitations in dealing with behaviours over which people have incomplete volitional control (Ajzen, 1991). The theory proposes that behaviour is based on the concept of intention. The TPB assumes that the best prediction of behaviour is given by asking people if they are intending to behave in a certain way (Ajzen, 1991). Intention is described as the extent to which someone is ready to engage in a certain behaviour or the likelihood that someone will engage in a particular behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). People are more likely to do something if they plan to do something if they plan or aim to do it than if they do not. That is, the intention will not express itself in behaviour if it is physically impossible to perform the behaviour or if unexpected barriers stand in the way.

According to Ajzen (1991), there are three determinants that explain the behaviour intention namely the attitude, the subjective norms, and the perceived behavioural/volitional control. According to the model, attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control predict the intention, which in turn predicts the behaviour. Background variables, as demographical factors, are supposed to influence the behaviour through the three determinants and the intention. Attitudes, subjective norms and the perceived behavioural control explain the behavioural intention before the behaviour takes place. The intention is a good predictor of the actual behaviour. Theory also says that the perceived behavioural control is an estimate of the skills needed for expressing the behaviour and the possibility to overcome barriers. Therefore, a direct influence of perceived behavioural control on behaviour is supposed. The actual behaviour leads to feedback about the expectations of the behaviour.

Ajzen (1991) contends that attitudes are formed by a series of beliefs and result in a value being placed on the outcome of the behaviour. If the outcome or result is seen as being positive, valuable, beneficial, desirable, advantageous, or good thing, then a person's attitude will be

favourable with a greater likelihood of the person engaging in the behaviour. For example, if bursary providers believe parental engagement in bursary schemes is good, that it is better for the environment, the bursary scheme's student's attitude toward engagement of parents in bursary schemes in secondary schools will be favourable. Similarly, if parents believe parental involvement in bursary schemes is good, that it is better for the environment, their attitude toward participation in activities of bursary schemes in secondary schools will also be favourable. Conversely, an unfavourable attitude toward engagement of parents in bursary schemes may result from the belief that parents do not contribute anything towards the education of their wards on bursary or that as parents, they see no need to participate. These attitudes would negatively influence the intention of either bursary scheme providers or parents when implementation of bursary schemes need the parents most.

Regarding subjective norms, Ajzen (2002) contends that intention is influenced by subjective norms. A subjective norm is the perceived social pressure to engage in a certain behaviour determined by normative beliefs. The normative beliefs are the behaviours that we perceive important people in our lives expect from us (Ajzen, 2002a). These important people are often family members, friends or peers, religious figures, education service providers, or others we hold in high esteem. Subjective norms result from the behaviours we perceive these important people expect from us and our desire to comply with their perceived expectations. For instance, if the MoEST through secondary schools or bursary scheme providers suggest that parents need to actively be involved in bursary schemes, there is a greater willingness to comply and a greater likelihood of parents getting involved in these activities. On the other hand, if MoEST through schools or bursary scheme providers consider parental participation tokenistic, then the likelihood of parents getting engaged actively diminishes.

Although the TRA holds that behaviour is the result of a person's intention to do something, the behaviour has to be under volitional control in order for this to happen (Ajzen, 1991). A behaviour under volitional control is one in which the person is able to decide, at will, to engage in or not (Ajzen, 1991). However, in some situations, a person may not have control over a behaviour even though the intention to engage in the behaviour is great. For instance, a parent may wish to be actively involved in the activities of bursary schemes but may have limited volitional control over this behaviour even though his/her intention is to use one due to perception of the bursary scheme providers and other stakeholders over the same.

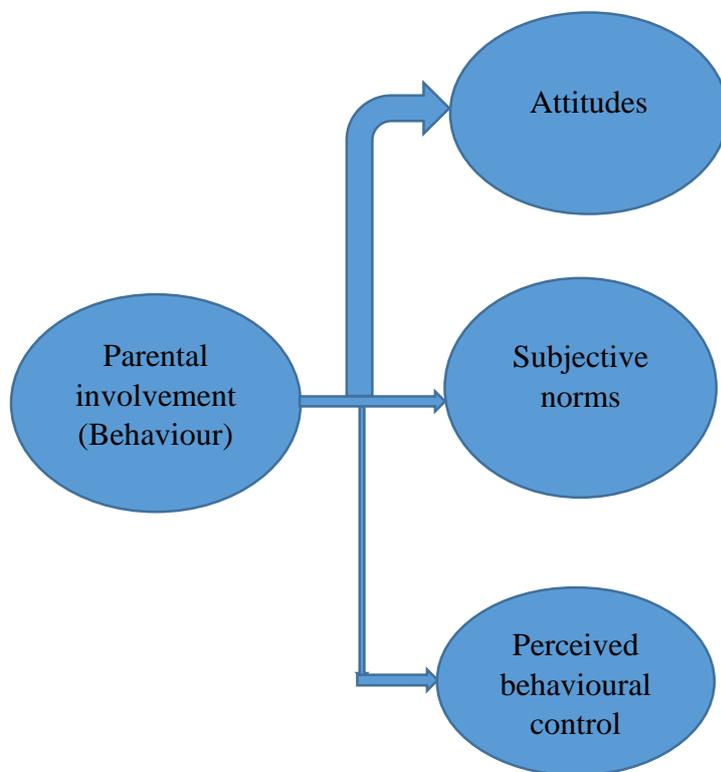
According to Ajzen (1991), the construct of behavioural control is similar to the concept of Self-Efficacy Theory. However, behavioural control differs from self-efficacy in that self-efficacy is concerned with one's perception of ability to perform a behaviour whereas behavioural control is concerned with "perceived control over performance of a behaviour. Behavioural control is impacted by a set of control beliefs. These are beliefs the person has that help or hinder performance of the behaviour (Ajzen, 2002b). That is, they affect the perception of how easy or difficult it is to carry out the behaviour.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour is pertinent to the problem investigated in this study in that the effective achievement of the objective of bursary schemes is dependent on either parents' willingness to participate in the implementation processes of bursary schemes involving their wards or willingness of bursary scheme providers and schools to involve parents in the processes. If parents feel active participation of them in bursary schemes of their children can bring positive results, they will participate. Similarly, if providers of bursaries consider parents as a stakeholder in bursary schemes implementation, they will involve parents throughout.

Therefore, the theory was chosen because it has been found to be successful in enhancing parental participation in school activities (Alghazo, 2016). In agreement with this choice of theory, while researchers have investigated parental involvement through several theories such as identity theory, the paternal investment theory, the theoretical model of father involvement, the conceptual model of responsible fathering, the ecological theory, the role theory and the social exchange theory (Perry & Langley, 2013), Perry and Langley (2013) argue that those theories have “limited applicability with regard to explaining and predicting paternal involvement” (p.181) because such theories assume that active involvement of parents only relies on the parents’ will and desire to be involved in their children’s education. As an alternative theory to help explain and predict parental involvement, Perry and Langley (2013) suggest using Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB); they argue that TPB is “versatile enough to account for the dynamic and complex nature of paternal engagement” (p. 181).

The theory of planned behaviour sets a model for understanding and predicting humans’ intentional behaviours in which intentional behaviour is determined by attitudes and behaviours, subjective norms, and perceived controls. The theory of planned behaviour (demonstrated in Figure 1.) provides additional factors, such as subjective norms, attitudes and beliefs, and perceived control that might also affect parental involvement and explain variations in parents’ levels of involvement. Although it has been most often applied to explain health behaviours including sleep patterns, Perry and Langley as cited in (Kor & Mullan, 2011), binge drink (French & Cooke, 2012), smoking (Ben, Golube, & Shamrai, 2010), and contraceptive use (Suviuo, Tossavainen, & Kontula, 2009), it may also be appropriate for examining parental involvement. The theory assumes that perceived behavioural control has motivational implications for intentions. People who believe that they have neither the resources, nor the opportunities to perform a certain behaviour are unlikely to form strong behavioural intentions

to engage in it even if they hold favourable attitudes toward the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991, p. 133). Thus TPB is an appropriate theoretical lens for examining parental involvement because it accounts for the dynamic nature of parental involvement by addressing the intrapersonal (for instance, attitudes and beliefs), interpersonal (for instance, subjective norms or the thoughts of significant others), and the environmental (for instance, external resources or constraints influencing perceptions about volitional control) factors that shape persons' intentions related to their involvement, as well as their ability to act on those intentions.



**Figure 1:** The Theory of Planned Behaviour

## 2.10. Chapter summary

The chapter has reviewed the literature in relation to the research questions of the study. Specifically, it has looked at the generic meaning of bursary, justification for bursary provision,

as well as how bursary schemes are implemented in different countries. Further, the chapter also discussed the criteria used for selecting beneficiaries of bursary schemes. More so, it has dug into the level of parental involvement in bursary schemes in secondary schools; barriers to parental involvement on the same; and explored on effects of parental involvement in bursary scheme activities. The final part of the chapter ventured into the theoretical framework employed as espoused by Ajzen (1991). Overall, the existing studies have shown that parental participation in bursary schemes in secondary schools is so passive that it negatively affects its smooth implementation.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Chapter introduction**

This chapter discusses the methodology that was employed in this study. It specifically discusses the research approach and design, study area, sampling, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques used in this study. Finally, the chapter focuses on credibility and trustworthiness of the study; triangulation as well as ethical considerations for the study.

#### **3.2. Research Approach**

The study adopted a qualitative approach based on the constructivist worldview to explore and understand the level of parental involvement in bursary schemes offered in secondary schools in Northern Education Division, a phenomena in this study (Gray, 2014). According to Creswell (2014), constructivism, an approach to qualitative research, holds that research is about individuals seeking the understanding of the world in which they live and work. In this study, the approach was informed by a constructivist paradigm to allow the researcher develop subjective meanings about of their experiences about the problem under discussion. A qualitative research approach is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or a human problem (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the problem under investigation is parental engagement in bursary schemes in secondary schools in NED. In this study, data was gathered by talking directly to participants and seeing them behave and act so as to gain a deeper understanding of their perceptions of parental roles in the management of bursary schemes (Gray, 2014).

### **3.3. Research Design**

The study used a case study design to uncover the level of parental participation in bursary schemes involving their children and wards (Ary et.al, 2010). According to Blackwell (2020), a case study design is an in-depth contextual analysis of one or a few instances of a naturalistic phenomenon, such as a person, an organization, a program, an event, a geographical location, or a decision. A case study aims at examining particular or several cases which may be limited to a study behaviour, characteristics or traits, or study a particular programme or situation that is often special or unique. Case studies are used to explore contemporary phenomenon within real life and with real context while describing something in detail or explaining what is happening (Coe, Waring, Hedges & Arthur, 2017). Multiple units were studied as I hold the view that the phenomenon is not idiosyncratic to a single unit and studying multiple units provided better illumination hence, the use of more than one school in the division (Ndevuzinayi, 2019). For Yin (2009), as cited by Gray (2014, p. 266), a case study is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. Therefore, in this study, a case study was useful to gather detailed information of participants’ views regarding parental engagement or participating in bursary schemes in the Northern Education Division.

### **3.4. Study site**

The study was conducted in the Northern Education Division of Malawi which comprise six districts namely Mzimba, Nkhata Bay, Karonga, Chitipa, Rumphi and Likoma. However, the researcher focused on some selected public secondary schools in Chitipa and Karonga. The site was chosen because of the great magnitude of students who benefit from various bursary schemes, hence, the issue under investigation is in existence in the areas. Ritchie & Lewis

(2020) stipulate that a qualitative research is mostly restricted to a small number of geographical community, interest or organizational location, so as to make sure that the context in which the research is conducted is known. The locations are selected on the basis of importance to the subject under inquiry such as the nature of the community, the sitting of specific organization or service (Ritchie & Lewis, 2020).

Four secondary schools, two from each district were involved for the study. These schools were one CDSS and one national secondary school from Karonga district; and, one district secondary school, one national secondary school from Chitipa district. The choice of both a national and a community day secondary school was purposefully done to have comparative data regarding the issue under discussion. Homes of bursary beneficiaries were as well reached or visited to seek parental views on their level of engagement into bursary programs of their children.

### **3.5. Sampling**

The study used purposive sampling to select the schools and participants in the study to make an in-depth analysis of the issue being investigated. This is in agreement to the view by Creswell (2014) that selection of sites, documents and participants in a qualitative study is done purposefully by the researcher to help the researcher understand the problem and the research questions. According to Miles Huberman (1994) a discussion about participants and site might include four aspects namely the setting, the actors, the events and the process.

In this study, the researcher believed that by purposively sampling the schools and the participants, he would gain important information that could not have been gained from other sampling procedures (Gray, 2014). Sampling refers to choosing people to interview or observe

and also choosing specific locations, times of days, various events, and activities to observe in fieldwork (Blackwell, 2020). The idea was to purposely select informants who could best inform the research objectives and who were information rich persons (Cantrell, 1993; and Mertens, 1998). These were people with similar characteristics and experiences who were taking part or had a role to play in various activities involving bursary schemes.

### **3.6. Sample Participants**

The study used a representative sample which aimed at choosing members specifically to replicate characteristics of the larger group (Blackwell, 2020). The study purposively sampled out the head teacher from each selected school or teacher representatives of a bursary committee, 12 students' beneficiaries (3 students from each school and one student from each of the three bursary schemes); 8 parents of the beneficiaries, 2 from each school. Therefore, the total population sample size was 18. The head teachers and the teachers were purposively sampled out because of their level of knowledge and experience regarding management and implementation of secondary school bursaries in the division.

The students were selected using simple random sampling technique to give equal probability to each participants of being selected in the study (Gray, 2014). On the other hand, parents of the bursary scheme beneficiaries were purposively selected because of their inclusion of their children and wards into the bursary schemes. It was therefore, hoped that through the engagement of their wards into various bursaries, the parents and guardians had enough knowledge and experience in bursary issues involving their children and wards.

### **3.7. Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

In this study, multiple sources of data collection were used to enhance collaboration of the findings to ensure validity and reliability of the data collected (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, in this study data was collected using semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews involved a series of open-ended questions based on the topic under study (Ary et.al, 2010). The open-ended nature of the questions defined the topic under investigation but also provided opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, semi-structured interview guide was the major instrument used to collect data here.

In some instances where the interviewee had difficulty answering some questions or provided only brief responses, the researcher used prompts to encourage the interviewee to consider the questions further (Gray, 2014). To ensure reliability of the information gathered, a set of questions were set conveniently for each group of sampled participants. Their responses were recorded using a voice recorder (audiotaping) for a better interpretation. Different authors outline main techniques to be used in using interviews (Cohen et al., 2005; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Yin, 2009). They emphasize on simplicity, appropriateness, clarity, consistency and maintaining moral and ethical standards.

Through observation, the researcher was able to collect some notes in the field. The researcher closely observed or monitored some phenomena under investigation. Through this method, qualitative data was collected and this relied on narrative or words to describe the setting, the behaviours and the interactions. As an observer of the phenomena in the field, the researcher utilized the use of notes. Direct observation allows the researcher to put behaviour in context and thereby understand it better (Tromp & Kisilu, 2006). Through field observation, the

researcher understood and interpreted the social interactions of bursary stakeholders by looking and listening in a systematic and meaningful way and interacting with them in their social setting. Direct observation of people's behaviour, way of expressing ideas, social setting and their educational landscape helped to establish realistic research outcomes. Field notes taken had preliminary interpretations. This data was interlinked with interview data to achieve a contextual account of the individual response.

The researcher also utilised documents as a data collection method to gain an understanding of participants' views regarding bursary schemes (Ary et al, 2010). In this study, policy documents such as MoEST circulars on bursaries, documents on composition of committee on bursary, bursary files and secondary school bursary management handbooks. Therefore, the information gathered through the analysis of these documents enabled the researcher to cross-check the consistency of the information gathered through the interviews. If the documentary evidence were contradictory rather than corroboratory, this gave the researcher an opportunity to investigate the issue further. When there was convergence of information from different sources, the researcher was confident enough in the trustworthiness (credibility) of the findings (Yin, 2014).

### **3.8. Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis is about making sense of the information provided by the participants during the data collection process. This is done specifically to define situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen, et al., 2009). In this study, thematic data analysis was employed because of its flexibility (Creswell, 2014). In the process, patterns or themes within the generated data were identified and analysed (Gray, 2014). The researcher categorised

schools from where data was collected into Category A (national secondary schools) and Category B (community day secondary schools).

The researcher then coded all interviews that were done with the head teachers and the teachers. All the data collected were summarised and organised under themes. In short, the collected information was subjected to qualitative analysis whereby data was coded to identify broad categories, patterns and themes that will occur in content of data documentations (audio recorded and transcripts). This method was used to analyse and interpret verbatim transcripts of interview recordings. As stated by MacMillan and Schumacher (1993), qualitative data analysis is an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns among categories.

The steps in qualitative analysis included preliminary exploration of data by reading through transcripts, coding the data by segmenting and labelling the text, using codes to develop themes by aggregating similar codes together, connecting and interrelating themes and constructing a narrative (Creswell, 2002). The data collected from the recorded interviews was transcribed into word processing. This was done in order to identify the patterns and organize the data into categories. The notes and transcriptions were read and reread before listening to the audio recordings. This was to help the researcher become familiar with the data by “dwelling with the data” (Burns and Grove, 1998). This aimed at establishing the general sense of the information and reflecting on its overall meaning.

Guided by the conceptual framework and the research objectives, and the related literature, the researcher was able to identify issues that were significant. Issues drawn from all transcripts, were used as themes to structure data presentation in chapter four. Direct quotations from

respondents also helped retain the voice of respondents. Codes were developed whereby similar and related topics were clustered together to form themes and sub themes. The identified themes provided the basis for discussion of findings in chapter five.

### **3.9. Credibility and Trustworthiness of the Study**

It is important to acknowledge that certain psychological factors induce incorrect responses and great care must be taken to design a study that minimizes this effect (Tromp & Kisilu, 2006). Credibility refers to how confident a researcher is in the truth of the research study findings while trustworthiness in qualitative research is about how the research study findings are credible, transferable, confirmable and dependable (Creswell, 2014). Trustworthiness is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

#### **3.9.1. Piloting of research instruments**

To be trustworthy, qualitative studies must satisfy the constructs of credibility, transferability and conformability (Grady, 2014). The researcher conducted pilot of the semi-structured interview guide at two of the selected secondary schools in NED which were not part of the targeted areas in agreement with Yin (2014) who contended that piloting helps to increase the reliability, validity and predictability of the instruments. The chosen schools were from all the two categories under study.

The results of the pilot study indicated that the research instrument was valid for the study and that the majority of the items were well understood by the respondents. It also revealed that there was a need to revise some parts of the instruments. Consequently, two questions were dropped from the semi-structured interview schedule. These questions were found to be redundant as the information sought through them was also being provided by other questions.

After dropping the two questions, the data gathered from the pilot study was then integrated with the data from the other schools for analysis. Administration of the instruments during the pilot study was necessary because it accorded the researcher an opportunity to evaluate the type of responses given and revise as well as adjust questions in the implementation of the data collection phase of the proposed research study.

### **3.9.2. Triangulation**

The face-to-face semi-structured interviews, observation and use of documents were checked for their credibility and dependability through triangulation. In triangulation, I adopted two approaches namely method triangulation and data triangulation (Creswell, 2014). In method triangulation, the researcher used interview guide and document analysis to explore the level of parental involvement in bursary schemes. The same questions in the interview guide were crosschecked for consistency with similar questions in the open-ended questions involving interviews with teachers. In data triangulation, the researcher gathered data from both participants and researcher's experience as a teacher and manager, and the responses recorded were then used to test its dependability by checking on the consistency of responses given (Patton, 2002). The two methods used produced consistency of responses which indicated that the instruments were credible and dependable.

### **3.10. Ethical Considerations**

This is an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the informants (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Neumen (2000) points out that a researcher has moral obligation to uphold confidentiality from others in the field and disguising members' names in field notes. For Creswell (2014), any research study demands research ethics to protect their research

participants; develop a trust with them; promote the integrity; guard against misconduct and impropriety that may reflect on their organisations or institutions; and cope with new, challenging problems. Thus, the study adhered to the following ethical concerns: the rights and anonymity of the participants were protected by keeping their responses confidential. Individual interviews with the respondents were signed fictitious names for use in their description and when reporting results.

Schools that were involved had no fictitious names, only participants were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. It was in this light that all respondents were assured that data collected would be kept confidential and would not be shared with anybody, apart from the researcher's supervisor. Prior to the beginning of each interview, every participant voluntarily signed an informed consent form that provided information on the purpose of the study and anticipated use of the collected data.

Written permission to continue with the study as articulated was sourced from the gatekeepers prior to approaching participants for their informed consent. The research exemption form was filed with the Institution Review Board and a letter from Mzuzu University to the Education Division Manager seeking permission for the researcher to use secondary schools in the division for research. These letters were given to head teachers of the participating schools. Participants were given letters of introduction from their head teachers including the interview questions. This was done to ensure that they were prepared in advance for what they were asked during interviews.

All study data including interview recordings, and transcripts, were kept in a safe place. Participants were told that summary data was to be disseminated to the professional

community, but no individual responses would be traced. Permission was sought first from participants before recording the interview.

### **3.11. Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the methodology that was used to conduct the study. The study employed a qualitative research approach specifically a qualitative case study design. The chapter has also discussed the selection of site, participants, data collection methods and instruments as well as data analysis techniques. The chapter also focused on the credibility and trustworthiness of the study; how and why the research instruments were piloted; triangulation and ethical issues in this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. Chapter introduction

This chapter presents and discusses and interprets the results of the study. The purpose of the study was to assess the involvement of parents in secondary school bursary schemes in Northern Education Division. Specifically, the study sought to answer three specific research objectives as follows: Explore the extent to which parents are involved in management of bursary schemes; Find out barriers to parental participation in bursary schemes; Explore advantages of parental involvement in bursary schemes. The study is informed by Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (1991).

#### 4.2. The extent of parental involvement in bursary schemes

The first research objective was meant to assess the degree of parental involvement in bursary schemes. One sub theme emerged in which all respondents expressed lack of parental participation in selection, implementation and management of bursary schemes. Some respondents said:

“The whole process, be it identification of beneficiaries or management procedures are done here at school. There is no directive or policy that demands us to consult parents. If we do, it's just on humanitarian grounds.” (Head teacher 2, School B, January 2023)

“Nkhamanya kuti mwana wane wali pa bursary apo ba sukulu bakaniwezgera fees iyo nkhalipira term yamala” (I knew that my child is on bursary when the school reimbursed school fees that I paid for last term). Parent 1, School A, January, 2023.

“My progress report goes direct to those who pay fees for me”  
(Student B, School A, January 2023)

“Last academic year, we had a case where a boy failed to write national examinations because the parent failed to pay examination fees arguing that everything is provided by the bursary providers. Such problems would be avoided if parents are informed about terms and conditions of the bursary scheme offered” (Teacher Representative 2, School B, October 2022).

“...it can be drawn back to the role of parents, most parents of bursary beneficiaries do not make follow ups when end of term results are out. But you will see parents who pay school fees by themselves come to office and call their child to advise and encourage when results are out.” (HT 3, School C, October, 2022)

Head teachers, beneficiaries, parents and teacher representatives of various bursary schemes confirmed that parents of bursary beneficiaries do not have roles to play in the management of their ward’s bursary programs and tend not to make follow-ups on the academic performance or progress of their wards. This is because they are given no tasks in the whole process of bursary management which to some extent, contradicts with the advantages and purpose of

bursaries. These findings are similar to a study by Gondwe (2020) who asserts that beneficiaries are identified by form teachers by checking the class attendance and welfare of each individual within the school. In addition, at the school level, Gondwe noted that beneficiaries could also be identified through mere scrutiny of fees payments. However, it is not clear how authentic it is to identify needy students without parental consent. This process of identification was followed by the submission of names to the benefactors through the Education Division office that makes a final recommendation.

The findings indicated that bursaries have created a dependency syndrome or lessened the sense of responsibility in parents towards their children. In some cases, it even costs beneficiaries not to write national examinations due to parents' failure to pay for examination fees. It is noted that the above examination issue arose because parents were not clearly told about terms and conditions of the bursary offered to their children. In other words, parental participation or role was not clearly defined in the implementation process of the bursary scheme.

These findings correspond to the TPB regarding what Ajzen called "subjective norms". Ajzen (2002) contends that intention is influenced by subjective norms which is a perceived social pressure to engage in a certain behaviour determined by normative beliefs. Normative beliefs are the behaviours that we perceive important to people in our lives such as family members, friends or peers, education service providers or others we hold in high esteem expect from us (Ajzen, 1991). As parents, society expects them to perform a positive role towards the education of their children and wards. The findings above contradict the theory in that parents seem not to understand their role towards their wards by not actively following up issues regarding their wards' bursaries. However, it can also be argued that lack of parental

involvement in bursary schemes may not be as a result of lack of volitional control; it may be as a result of lack of willingness by the bursary providers or schools to engage them.

### **4.3. Barriers to Parental Involvement in Bursary Schemes in secondary schools in NED**

This section attempted to answer the second research objective: “Barriers to parental participation in bursary schemes in secondary schools in NED.” The study discovered several factors that hindered parental involvement in the activities of their children’s bursary schemes. These factors were divided into parents’ related factors and school related factors.

#### **4.3.1. Parents Related Factors**

Parent-related factor was one theme that emerged from the data. These factors are divided into several sub themes as follows:

##### **a. Parents’ low levels of education**

“Ine ndine mubulutu. So pala basambizi bakuniphalira yayi ivo vikuchitika ku sukulu, ningamanya chilichose yayi. Ni mwana wane uyo wakaniphalira kuti wali pa bursary” (Parent 2, School B, November 2022).

(I am not educated. If teachers don’t tell me what is going on at school, I can’t know anything. It is my child who told me that he is on bursary).

“Pakuti mwana wane ba sukulu bakumulipilira fees, mbwenu, wasambirenge waka” (Parent 1, School A, November 2022).

(The school is paying school fees, my child should just be learning).

“Of course some parents don’t know that there is more than school fees for a child to be educated” (Teacher representative 3, School C, January 2023)

From the above responses, it is revealed that parents’ educational background affects their participation in bursary programs of their children. The study found that many parents of bursary beneficiaries have low levels of education that affect their participation in their children’s education. Such parents are less-confident and do not know the education system. As a result, they do not have courage or knowledge to probe into education affairs of their children. This is similar to a study done by Magwa & Mugari (2017) on factors affecting parental involvement in the schooling of children. They confirm that the economic status and level of education of parents have a significant effect on children’s education. Such parents fail to help their children with homework or other school related issues because their knowledge is limited. This calls for professional understanding among school administrators to facilitate communication with parents on bursary issues.

#### **b. Family Structure**

“Mwana uyu ni mulanda. Ine khamutola apo wakaba sitandadi 7” (Guardian 3, School C, November 2022).

(This child’s parents died some time back. I started living with him when he was in standard 7).

“My parents died when I was young, I live with my sister” (Beneficiary 2, School B, January 2023)

The study revealed that family structure has another effect on parental involvement in their children's bursary programs. Most parents of bursary beneficiaries were found to be either single parents, step parents or simply care-takers who adopted them. In such situations, students' beneficiaries received less parental support and control in comparison with students who live in two-parents or biological parents' families.

#### **4.3.2. School related factors**

The study found several school related factors that hinder parental involvement in bursary schemes. These factors are divided into the following sub themes:

##### **a. School Culture:**

“Bana bakuwakanizga kuyowoya chitumbuka. Ndipo basambizgi bakukana kuti tiwaone bana, nkhamoza pa term kuona bana. Ntheula, vindandi tikupulika panyengo ya holide. Holide yamala, ndipo mwana wane wakaniphallira kuti wali pa basale” (Parent 4, School D, November 2022).  
(Children are not allowed to speak Tumbuka language while at school. Then teachers don't allow parental visits to school. Visiting children is only once a month. My child tells me school issues when she comes for holiday. It was this last holiday when she told me that she has been put on bursary).

“Parental visit is once a term” (HT 4, School D, January 2023)

On visiting day, not all parents come to visit their wards, it's only those guardians who have the capacity to travel" (Teacher representative 2, School B, January 2023)

The results revealed some school related factors that hinder parental involvement in their children's bursary program. Firstly, some schools have a culture of a very high standard that churns away illiterate and poor parents. For example, in some schools, the only language for communication is English. Illiterate parents fear to visit such schools because they feel they would be talked to in English. Furthermore, visiting children in such schools is done either once per academic year or once a term. As a result, parents just choose to wait for their children during holidays. In such situations, parents or guardians are given no chance to talk to their wards on educational issues during the school period. Jafarov (2015) affirms that the language used at school and environment have influence on parental involvement. He argues that most school staff can be very academic and do not know how to contact parents with a different language background. This shows that teachers' attitude influences the level of involvement in parents.

**b. Favouritism:**

"Even some teachers have a very poor economic status and are struggling to pay school fees. We may call it favouritism or mere consideration but we sometimes consider their wards on bursary. Apart from helping them with fees, they are also motivated and they work harder. If parents were involved such consideration would be objected because teachers are employed and have the means to find school fees" (HT 1, School A, November 2022).

“If we involve parents, some equally needy teachers’ wards will not benefit from bursaries” (HT 3, School C, January, 2023).

“My father is a business man and my mother is a primary school teacher, I was put on bursary because teachers said my performance is good” (Student 2, School B, November, 2022)

“We were asked to write essays of family background. The teacher said my essay was good and I write good English. After a week, I was told that my name is on CAMFED bursary. When I told my father, he was very happy because he is also paying school fees for my brother who is at UNILIA” (Student A, school, December, 2022).

The responses revealed favouritism among school bursary management committees. Respondents revealed that parental role is hindered by school managers who choose to put teachers’ wards on bursary. This might be regarded as favouritism, though in some cases, even teachers’ wards have huge fees balances that make them fall on needy list. Furthermore, school administrators do not contact parents directly to ask their consent on matters of the provision of bursary schemes or provide terms and conditions of the bursary program. These findings compliments a study by Bosire and Othuon (2007) on the extent to which the government bursary was equitably distributed among secondary school students in Busia District of Kenya. Statistically, 44.4% indicated that the criterion adequately targets support to needy students while 55.6% faulted the criteria by indicating that the criterion does not adequately target support to needy students. Therefore, favouritism would be one of the factors affecting proper

administration of bursary schemes and the involvement of parents in the process would combat the anomaly.

**c. Lack of transparency:**

“Mwana ndiyo wakaniphalira kuti bamuika pa bursary, kweni vikaba kuti napelekako kale half ya fees. Wati wamalizga form two, mwana wakaniphalira kuti bati bapelekenge yosecha fees. Bati ise tabapapi tisokhengeko thirty thousand kwacha pa term” (Guardian 2, School B, November 2022). (My child told me that she has been put on bursary. By then, I had already paid half of the total fees. When she finished form two, she was told to inform me to be making a contribution of 30,000 kwacha per term).

“After selecting me, it was that fees for first term had already been paid by my parents. And then after the school refunded the money, my father called, he was like aaah! What is happening? Why am I receiving the money for unknown reasons? That’s when he was informed that I have been put on bursary, which means that you have to take your money.” Several bursary beneficiaries informed their parents during holidays. “After closing the term, when I went home, it’s when I was explaining to my parents that I have been picked on CAMFED bursary” (Beneficiary 3, School C, October, 2023).

The study revealed that there was lack of transparency among certain school administrators. Some bursary schemes required a certain contribution from beneficiaries and parents were not

formally communicated. Other bursary schemes required a refund of fees that was already paid by parents. Such concerns exposed school administrators that they are not inclusive in the management of bursary programs. In other words, school managers do not treat parents as equal partners in selection, monitoring and management of bursary schemes. Gorman (2004) argues that if parents are not informed about their involvement and school expectations for them they cannot effectively participate in school activities.

In relation to the TPB, the above barriers to parental involvement in bursaries show that parents still have intention to actively participate in the activities of secondary school bursaries but that they have limited volitional control over the engagement. Ajzen (1991) contends that attitudes are formed by a series of beliefs and result in a value being placed on the outcome of the behaviour. From literature, it is an undeniable fact that parental participation in children's education is valuable and has positive outcomes. If the outcomes or results are seen to be positive, valuable, beneficial, desirable, or advantageous then parents' attitudes would be favourable with a greater likelihood of them being engaged in their children's bursary programs. This therefore, calls for education practitioners and bursary scheme providers to intensify their willingness to engage parents for better academic results. What is more, there is need for civic education to parents to ensure they all understand their roles in bursary schemes of their wards.

#### **4.4. The value of parental involvement in bursary schemes**

This section tries to answer the third research objective on the value of parental involvement in bursary schemes. The following sub themes were revealed:

##### **4.4.1. Combats favouritism in selection of needy students**

Some respondents said:

“It is better parents get involved so that some irregularities in the selection process would be avoided” (HT 1, School A, January 2023).

“It is not right to put teachers’ wards on bursary. Parental participation will definitely end this practice” (Teacher representative 3, School C, January 2023).

“Some students are considered on bursary not because they are needy but because of their good performance” (Teacher representative 2, School B, January 2023).

Results from various respondents showed that parental involvement would reduce favouritism that exists during the selection process of bursary beneficiaries. The practice of putting teachers’ wards on bursary was judged by school administrators as not right because teachers are paid monthly while bursaries are primarily meant for students whose parents are either dead or struggling to find fees.

#### **4.4.2. Promotes transparency and accountability in schools**

Respondents showed that they support parental involvement in bursaries as one way of enhancing honesty in financial operations among stakeholders. They said,

“...because students are just recipients of the bursary, they sometimes give wrong impression of who they really are. Some deny their actual status by not admitting that they are needy while others pretend that they are needy

when they are not. Some don't even take education seriously because they don't know where their fees is coming from. Some lie to their parents that they do not have pocket money while bursary benefactors give them. Involving parents is better because they may tell us the truth about themselves and we bursary patrons and matrons may even visit their homes just to confirm their family status. Since parents are mature and know how hard it is to find money, they will be able to seriously monitor their children's performance" (Teacher Representative 1, School B, November, 2022).

"Some of us lie to our parents to send us pocket money and yet our sponsors provide us the same" (Student beneficiary1, School A, November 2022).

"Ntchiwemi kuti basambizi batiiphalirenge umo bursary ya bana ikwendera. Nyengo zinyake batichemenge ise tawapapi kuti bana nase tibalimbikiskenge mwakuti bursary ibe ya phindu." (Teachers should be informing me how my child's bursary is administered. They would even invite us so that we also help in advising our wards for bursaries to be beneficial (Parent 1, School A, November, 2022).

"Though the policy is silent on parental involvement in bursary schemes but it's vital to involve them because they play important roles in their children's education and some gaps in communication would be reduced" (HT 1, School A, January 2023).

The above situations as described by respondents show that school administrators are not transparent enough in feeding parents with necessary information about their wards' bursary program. The credibility of the thirty thousand top up and whether the half fees paid by the parent was supposed to be refunded or not, is something that requires further inquiries and clarifications.

Claims by some beneficiaries were further substantiated with the fact that they lie to parents to give them the same school needs that bursary providers give. This shows some administrative irregularities in management of bursary schemes.

School managers clearly acknowledged that there is no directive or policy that demands parental consent or engagement in the management of students' bursary schemes. Even the government form that is issued to needy students to fill in their particulars and answer assessment questions, has no section for parental consent or involvement. This is contrary to what Ceka and Murati (2016) argue about parental role in their children's education. They assert that parental involvement in education incorporates a range of social-pedagogical and educational tasks such as material support, moral values, development or provision of a positive learning environment for children's academic progress. Nevertheless, school managers consented that involvement of parents in bursary schemes would enhance coordination of all stakeholders and in the long run clear some existing irregularities.

#### **4.4.3. Parents would be advisors**

“Sometimes students can hide their true character because they are afraid of school rules, but parents know their children. They can assist in advising these learners to work hard so that bursary fees is not wasted” (HT 2, School B, January 2023)

“Parents are advisors as well as monitors of their wards’ academic progress”  
(HT1, School A, October 2022).

“Bursary providers do not invite parents during camping sessions. Our parents can also be there to guide us and witness the session process. We may really get the advice from the role models but our parents know us better than they do. Parents can advise us better because they live with us” (Student beneficiary 2, School B, November 2022).

Head teachers and beneficiaries consented that, it would be important to involve parents in the whole process of bursary management because they know their children better and monitoring of a child’s educational progress is basically a parental responsibility. Moreover, parental follow-ups on the academic progress of their children motivate learners to work hard, hence making the bursary offered beneficial. Parents have an advisory role to their children and it is assumed that children would listen to their parents more than teachers or bursary providers because of the natural bond that exists between a parent and a child. Durisic & Bunijevac (2017) agree to this by arguing that teachers have a relatively limited influence on children’s conduct while parents maintain a life-long commitment to their children. Academic activities that support parental involvement provide a conducive home-school learning environment leading to students’ academic development. Moreover, Liu and Liu (2000) consent that unlike teachers, whose influence on child’s conduct is relatively limited, parents maintain a life-long commitment to their children. Academic activities that support parental involvement provide a conducive home-school learning environment leading to students’ academic success.

#### **4.4.4. Enhances sense of ownership**

“Parents develop a sense of ownership over their children if they are left with certain tasks to fulfil over their children’s education”

(Teacher representative 2, School B, January 2023)

“Yes, our parents can provide certain things like pocket money”

(Student Beneficiary 2, School D, January, 2023).

“Parents relax because some bursaries provide everything” (HT 3,

School D, January 2023)

Respondents suggested that bursary providers should not take all responsibilities from parents over their children. Certain tasks such as provision of pocket money or groceries should be left with parents to help them assume some parental roles over their wards.

Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behaviour contends that attitudes are formed by a series of beliefs and result in a value being placed on the outcome of the behaviour. If the outcome is seen as being positive, valuable or advantageous, then a person’s attitude will be favourable with a greater likelihood of the person engaging in the behaviour. For example, as per the results above, school managers consented that parental engagement in bursary schemes is good, that it is better for students’ academic progress, the parents’ attitude towards participation in bursary schemes would be favourable. Similarly, if parents believe parental engagement in bursary schemes is good, that it is better for their children’s academic progress, their attitude toward participation in activities of bursary schemes in secondary schools would also be favourable.

#### **4.5. Chapter Summary**

This chapter has dealt with analysis, presentation and interpretation of the findings of the study.

The analysis, presentation and discussion were based on the research objectives as presented

in chapter one. The chapter has revealed findings related to the extent of parental involvement in bursary schemes in NED, barriers to parental active participation in bursary schemes in secondary schools in NED and advantages of parental participation in bursary programs in NED.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1. Chapter Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. The purpose of the study was to assess the engagement of parents in secondary school bursary schemes in Northern Education Division. The study has attempted to answer the three specific research objectives as follows: The extent of parental involvement in bursary schemes in NED; Barriers to parental active participation in bursary schemes in secondary schools in NED; Advantages of parental participation in bursary programs in NED. Furthermore, the study is informed by Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (1991).

#### **5.2. Summary**

This study that sought to assess parental involvement in the administration of bursary schemes has revealed how secondary school bursary schemes are run. It has discovered that bursaries are implemented at school level without parental consent or participation and criteria for selection of beneficiaries is based on learners' consent, interviews and students' behaviour.

Since parents are not involved in management of bursary schemes, there are barriers to parental participation and these barriers are either school based or parents' based. School based barriers include school culture, specifically about the formal language used at school which to some extent, makes illiterate parents feel out of place and eventually, impedes them from visiting their wards. Moreover, some schools have restricted parental visits to either once a term or once a month. As a result, parents simply choose to wait for their wards when schools close which to some extent hinders parents from involving themselves into their wards' education.

Lastly, favouritism by some school managers who sometimes prefer putting teachers' wards on bursaries or selecting beneficiaries basing on other reasons other than being needy. On the other hand, parental based barriers include illiteracy of some parents, family structure and poor economic status of most parents of bursary beneficiaries. These conditions naturally keep parents at bay from participating in school affairs of their children.

Nevertheless, parental participation in a school system is viewed to be of great importance to the academic development of learners. Firstly, parents are advisors of their wards' academic progress and it is believed that children can listen to their parents' advice better than school managers or teachers. Secondly, parents can speak the truth about their social status which would be the best determining factor of students' financial or economic status. School managers would even visit parents' homes to confirm financial status before final selection on the bursary scheme. In order to enhance a sense of ownership and responsibility of parents over their wards, bursary providers should not be shouldering all school needs for the beneficiaries. Some responsibilities such as school uniform, pocket money and other needs should be given to parents. Since parents are mature and know how hard it is to find money, they will be part of their wards' academic growth and seriously monitor their children's performance. If parents are given roles in their wards' bursary program, justice and fairness in selection of needy students would be promoted while favouritism would be discouraged. Implementation of some or all the above bursary program management processes would enhance unity of all stakeholders and in the long run, improve academic performance of bursary beneficiaries.

The study has therefore revealed that management of bursary programs need parental participation that would help and contribute to students' academic success and reduce school dropout. School managers being mediators between bursary providers and beneficiaries have a duty to initiate parental engagement by involving parents or guardians in the management process of bursaries. Since bursaries have increased students' access to secondary school

education, the collaboration among stakeholders would enhance academic performance and in the long run attain educational goals.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

From the results and their interpretation, the following conclusions are being made as per each objective:

#### **The extent of parental participation in secondary school bursary schemes:**

It can be concluded that there is no noticeable parental participation in the management activities of bursary schemes. Selection, monitoring and administration of secondary school bursaries is done at school by school managers and bursary providers. Parents are simply informed either by their wards or at times they discover by themselves. As affirmed by the literature, school managers consented that the Ministry of Education's guidelines for management of secondary school bursary schemes does not clearly stipulate the roles of parents. As a results, they are left out, that's why parents don't make follow ups on the academic progress of their wards.

#### **Barriers to parental participation in secondary school bursary schemes:**

The study concludes that there are parents related and school related barriers to parental involvement in management of bursaries. On parents related, many guardians of bursary beneficiaries have low levels of education and poor economic status that affects their participation in their children's education. In addition, parents misunderstand a relief from financial pressure as a relief in overall responsibility over their wards. Finally, most guardians of bursary beneficiaries are not biological parents which leads to deliberate negligence and lack of enthusiasm in monitoring of their wards school progress. On the other hand, there are also school related barriers to parental participation in bursaries. The first one is school culture that does not accommodate parental visits to schools and language barrier between school

management and parents in which schools prefer to communicate to illiterate parents in English. These practices reduce parental interest in probing into their wards academic affairs. Favouritism is another barrier to parental engagement in bursary schemes. Some school managers choose to put teachers' wards on bursary schemes which if parents were involved, they wouldn't acknowledge such a practice.

### **Advantages if parents were involved in management of bursary schemes**

Parents and guardians of bursary beneficiaries would act as advisors of the academic progress of their wards. Moreover, parents can honestly talk about their social or financial status, hence help school managers in the process of selection of needy students. This would prevent students lying about their financial or economic status. Parental involvement would promote justice and fairness in moments of favouritisms by school management during selection process of needy students. If these two parties work collaboratively, there could be home visits to assess and confirm what was verbally said by students about their economic status. Financial misconceptions and irregularities would also be cleared if parents were formally informed.

In order to enhance a sense of responsibility over their wards, bursary providers should not shoulder all the responsibilities of beneficiaries. Parents of bursary beneficiaries must be given certain material or financial tasks so that they assume ownership and a sense of belonging. Parents would also give consent as to whether their wards are to be put on bursary or not.

#### **5.4. Recommendations**

Based on the major findings and conclusions, the study makes a number of recommendations.

1. Firstly, the Ministry of Education to review its policy on the guidelines for selection of bursary beneficiaries to ensure that parents or guardians of beneficiaries are involved in the management of bursary programs.
2. Secondly, every bursary scheme should have a written document of terms and conditions to be given to beneficiaries as well as their parents as a formal endorsement of the program.
3. Furthermore, parents of bursary beneficiaries should give a consent and be visited by either school management or bursary providers before putting their ward(s) on the bursary scheme.
4. Moreover, there should be a continued civic education for parents and guardians of beneficiaries and school managers on the role of parents in the management of bursary programs.
5. Finally, parents of bursary beneficiaries should be encouraged to develop interest in their children's academic development even when school fees and other needs are catered for by bursary providers.

### **5.5 Areas for Further Study**

The study has identified some areas for further study that can further enrich the literature in this domain.

Firstly, since the study was done in secondary schools, a similar study should be carried out at university level involving the MoE.

Secondly, this study focused on the involvement of parents in management of their wards' bursary schemes. A similar study would be developed with focus on school bursary committee. The study would be: Effectiveness of a school bursary committee in management of students' bursary schemes.

Finally, an assessment of other bursary stakeholders such as bursary providers in selection, monitoring and management of bursary schemes would be done.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Interview Guide for the School Head Teachers**

1. How would you describe parental involvement in the administration of their children's bursary schemes in this school?
  - If poor, why?
  - If good, what indicators are there?
2. What guidelines does your school have on parental involvement in their children's bursary programs?
3. What criteria do you use for selection of bursary scheme beneficiaries?
4. According to your experience, what are the barriers to parental involvement in bursary scheme management in both positive and negative ways?
5. What are the advantages if parents were involved?
6. Any other information or comments.

## **Appendix B: Interview Guide for Parents of Bursary Scheme Beneficiaries**

1. How would you describe your involvement with the school?
2. Why was your child selected to be in the bursary scheme?
3. How was your child selected to be in the bursary scheme?
4. Do you have forums where you meet the school leaders on issues concerning the bursary scheme of your ward?
  - If yes, what issues do you discuss?
  - If no, what are the reasons?
5. What are the barriers to your involvement in the bursary scheme of your ward?
6. From your experience, what challenges have you faced as you participate in the bursary scheme of your child?
7. In your opinion and experience, what can be done to curb the challenges and improve management of bursary schemes?
8. Why do think you should get involved in your child's bursary management?
9. Do you have any comment or other information?

## **Appendix C: Interview Guide for Students' Beneficiaries**

1. How were you selected to be in the bursary scheme?
2. How and when did your parents know that you are in the bursary scheme?
3. What roles do the following people play in your bursary scheme:
  - Parents
  - School administrators
  - Benefactors
4. What challenges do you face?
5. What are your roles as beneficiaries?
6. In which areas of bursary management process do you think your parents can get involved?
7. Do you have any comments, suggestions or recommendations?

## APPENDIX D: Letter of Introduction to Institutions



**MZUZU UNIVERSITY**

Department of Teaching, Learning and  
Curriculum Studies

Mzuzu University  
Private Bag 201  
Luwingu  
Mzuzu 2  
MALAWI

Tel: (265) 01 320 575/722  
Fax: (265) 01 320 568  
[mdolo.mm@mzuni.ac.mw](mailto:mdolo.mm@mzuni.ac.mw)

**27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2022**

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

#### **LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MR MADALITSO MBALAZADA**

Mr Madalitso Mbalazada is a registered Master of Education (Leadership and Management) Program student at Mzuzu University. He has been cleared by the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) to collect data for the research study he is conducting as a requirement for the program.

Kindly assist him accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

**Dr Margaret M. Mdolo**  
**Program Coordinator**

**APPENDIX E: Letter of Introduction Education Division Manager (North)**

Telephone: +265 1 312144/107

+265 1 310833

Fax: +265 1 312640



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER (NORTH)

P.O. BOX 133

MZUZU

MALAWI

19<sup>th</sup> September, 2022

To Head teachers;

Chitipa SS

Kaseye Girls SS

Karonga CDSS

St Marys Karonga Girls SS

**LETTER OF AUTHORISATION FOR MADALITSO MBALAZADA TO COLLECT DATA FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES**

The bearer of this letter has been cleared by the office to collect data in your schools in partial fulfillment of Master of Education Degree (Leadership and Management) with Mzuzu University.

Please accord him with the assistance he may require.

Yours faithfully,

Handwritten signature of Rosario M. Soko in black ink.

Rosario M. Soko

Chief Quality Assurance Officer



**For/ EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER (NORTH)**

## APPENDINCE F: RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL



# MZUZU UNIVERSITY

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Mzuzu University  
Private Bag 201  
Luwinga  
Mzuzu 2  
MALAWI  
TEL: 01 320 722

### MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)

Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/36      12<sup>th</sup> April, 2022

Madalitso Mbalazada,  
Mzuzu University,

P/Bag 201,

Mzuzu.

Email:

[mbalazadamadalitso@gmail.com](mailto:mbalazadamadalitso@gmail.com)

Dear Madalitso,

**RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR  
PROTOCOL REF NO: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/36: AN ASSESSMENT OF PARENTAL  
INVOLVEMENT IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THEIR CHILDREN'S BURSARY  
SCHEMES: A CASE OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF NORTHERN  
EDUCATION DIVISION**

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalised, you are required to furnish the Committee with a final report of the study. The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this

## Committee Address:

*Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwinga, Mzuzu 2;  
Email address: [mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw](mailto:mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw)*

approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,



**Gift Mbwele**

**MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR**

**For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC**