

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT CONSTITUENCIES DEVELOPMENT FUND AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Fiscal devolution has been implemented across the world in developed and developing countries with the aim of promoting social inclusion, as well as combating social exclusion and poverty. This type of financing has enabled countries across the world to empower communities and address the unique and diverse needs of communities at large. However, in Kenya, the contribution of fiscal devolution to education and its connection to social inclusion have not been fully explored, hence the need for conducting the current research. Major aim for this paper was to explore influence of National Government Constituencies Development Fund on social inclusion in public secondary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Specific objectives were to examine how NG-CDF has influenced social inclusion by the provision of classroom infrastructure, school fees bursaries, and school feeding programs in Embakasi West, Kenya. Research was informed by social inclusion theory and stakeholder theory. Research utilized a descriptive research design. Target population for this paper was principals in 58 public secondary schools in Embakasi West Constituency, the BOM chairmen, and PTA representatives. The study also included the Subcounty director of education and the Subcounty CDF chairperson as key informants. Slovin's formula served to obtain 120 respondents sample size. Stratified sampling was utilized to select the principals, BOM chairmen, and PTA representatives. On the other hand, purposive sampling was used to select the Subcounty director of education and the Subcounty CDF chairperson. The study utilized primary data, which was collected through semi-structured questionnaires and an

interview guide for key informants. The pilot study comprised 12 public secondary school Principals from Lang'ata Subcounty. Data analysis was conducted via SPSS v29 incorporated descriptive as well as inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, means together with standard deviations. Inferential statistics involved Pearson's correlation and linear regression analysis. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed employing content analysis, with outcomes tabulated and displayed in figures. Research outcomes findings indicated that NG-CDF classroom infrastructure has a positive as well as notable influence on social inclusion. It was also established that NG-CDF school fees bursaries positively and significantly influenced social inclusion. Furthermore, a positive together with significant association was discovered amidst NG-CDF school feeding programs and social inclusion. Conclusion was made that NG-CDF investments in classroom infrastructure, school fees bursaries, and feeding programs enhance social inclusion in Embakasi West schools and it does so enhance attendance, retention, and learner participation. Learners from different backgrounds are supported by adequate classrooms that are well equipped. Learners including those with disabilities are also helped with fair and timely bursary disbursement. These factors enable smoother transitions across class levels. Inclusion is further reinforced by school feeding program ensuring all learners particularly most vulnerable are able to consistently engage in learning activities. Research recommends that school administrators and teachers should prioritize creating structured programs that complement

existing NG-CDF interventions. These entail mentorship initiatives as well as peer support programmes that target learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Developing complementary policies should be considered

by MoE to ensure consistent funding and oversight of school feeding programs and bursary schemes so as to minimize variations in implementation across schools.

INTRODUCTION

Fiscal devolution is crucial in disbursing financial resources to promote social inclusion in learning (Dick-Sago, 2020). In policy discourse, efforts to promote social inclusion have arisen from consensus over social exclusion, making it a process and a goal. Decentralized funds like NG-CDF are vital in ensuring that funds are allocated directly to the communities. This ensures that intended beneficial groups of women as well as disabled access essential services and opportunities, which is key in enhancing life opportunities as well as encouraging community to participate in making decisions and distribution of the resources to spur growth and development of the communities (Patnaik, 2021). However, challenges such as a lack of timely allocations, mismanagement, a lack of stakeholder engagement, and demographic characteristics have hindered the full realization of the potential of decentralized funds, exacerbating inequality in education access, thus necessitating such a study.

Decentralized funding models have been implemented across the world in developed and developing countries with the aim of promoting social inclusion (Ozili, 2022). This type of financing has empowered communities and addressed the unique and diverse needs of communities at large. According to Cheema (2020), decentralized funding has improved rural and underserved societies' involvement in choice-making and growth of local economy. It has assisted in promote equal access to healthcare and education. This has improved inclusivity, which is important for societal growth and development through utilization of available opportunities in education.

According to Tonelli and Gibson (2023), a decentralized model is employed by United States to expand access to education. It operates through different channels. Students from low- and middle-income households are supported by federal financial aid programmes, like grants and loans (Brint, 2022). This structure allows wider coverage. However, it also creates differences in access. Outcomes often depend on state priorities and institutional policies. United States case shows that inclusion is enhanced by decentralized educational funding. However, strong coordination amidst actors is required in order to ensure consistency and fairness (Laderman et al., 2023).

In Brazil, the decentralized funding model provides valuable insights into how public resources can promote social inclusion in education (Segatto et al., 2022). Government-managed funds are intentionally allocated to scholarships for students from low-income families (Silveira et al., 2021). This method has permitted marginalized groups to gain access to higher levels of education, breaking barriers that often exclude them. Brazil indicates that decentralized finance models can be effective instruments for alleviating inequality and increasing chances for underprivileged students by focusing on equitable resource allocation (Neves et al., 2021).

In Ghana, decentralized funding model was examined by Be-Ere (2022). They discovered that it is major in strengthening grassroots development and social inclusion. Local governance has been enhanced by decentralization and it guarantees a more equitable distribution of resources amid communities (Adam et al., 2021). According to Dzakaklo et al. (2023), this strategy allows marginalized groups to take part in making choices. It gives them room to comment how money is distributed. Ghana shows how decentralized financing empowers marginalized communities through decentralized funding model. In addition, fair access to public services like education is encouraged by it (Be-Ere, 2023).

Similarly, in Nigeria, decentralized financing has been utilized as an equipment for encouraging social integration together with supporting building of nation (Umoh & Adeyi, 2018). Opportunities have been created by Nigeria to address inequalities amidst diverse groups and that has been met by spreading financial responsibility to various government stages (Ajemba, 2023). In a federal framework determined by local and ethnic diversity, this strategy has proven essential in promoting unity. Decentralized funding in Nigeria if properly managed is able to do more than support service delivery. In addition, national cohesion can be strengthened by it as it promotes inclusion in major sectors like education (Akuche & Akindoyin, 2024).

Decentralized funding is important in advancing fair access to education in Uganda. The introduction of decentralized financing mechanisms supported implementation of Universal Secondary Education (USE) program. USE program was designed to expand opportunities for students from poor households to allow them attend public secondary schools (Fraser & Lockheed, 2021). Doing so lowered financial limitations for less privileged learners and encouraged broader education involvement (Ashaba, 2024). According to Shaft (2021), enrollment rates have been amplified by Ugandan decentralized model. This enhanced social inclusion by bringing resources closer to communities. It also made sure excluded populations gain from public education projects. NG-CDF Kenya is being useful in ensuring that advancement reaches vulnerable and marginalized populations in rural together with urban areas. Established of NG-CDF under Constituencies Development Act occurred in 2003. Revision which was in 2015 was to enhance equitable development as well as limiting poverty in constituencies (Adan & Moi, 2021). NG-CDF has

helped direct funds to community projects like education together with healthcare which are critical in improving people's quality of life.

In Kenya, community involvement on performance of NG-CDF in Teso South Constituency, Busia County was examined by Chelimo and Moi (2022). Educational projects have largely benefited from communities taking part in NG-CDF projects as noted from the findings. Their successful implementation was as a result of community involvement in NG-CDF-funded education projects. Community involvement in NG-CDF projects encourages planning, execution, and monitoring of the projects, which improves the outcomes of the projects, as the projects will be completed to the community's satisfaction.

In Nairobi County, Katonon and Moi (2024) examined the initiatives funded by NG-CDF to determine the effectiveness of resource utilization in Embakasi South Constituency. The study revealed that stakeholder involvement in the NG-CDF initiatives, such as school construction, was important. It indicates that engaging stakeholders secures essential support for the initiative and contributes to enhanced transparency. This involvement helps ensure accountability, which is crucial for enabling the project to achieve success.

The previous research done has mainly examined social inclusion and the reduction of economic disparities while promoting a more inclusive society (Adan & Moi, 2021). Further, Abisai (2023) examined the impact of community involvement in the NG-CDF projects in Elgeyo Marakwet County (Marakwet West Constituency). According to the study, community participation in NG-CDF-funded projects has contributed to ensuring that these projects are well-implemented, thereby promoting social inclusion. Community involvement in NG-CDF projects also helps to reduce corruption or misappropriation of funds. Community involvement facilitates a sense of ownership, which is important to ensure that projects are well-monitored to completion. The study by Katonon and Moi (2024) examined NG-CDF initiatives and resource utilization, but it primarily focused on stakeholder involvement and did not explicitly address other critical aspects, such as classroom infrastructure, school fees, bursaries, and school feeding programs, regarding access to secondary education and the promotion of an inclusive society. Examining NG-CDF and social inclusion will give insights that are critical to knowing whether NG-CDF has had a meaningful impact in addressing the multiple dimensions of exclusion, given the diversity of circumstances around the globe.

Statement of the Problem

Fiscal devolution is important in enhancing social inclusion worldwide, such as by improving access to critical social phenomena like secondary education (Dick-Sagoe, 2020). Accordingly, it ensures that schools have a good infrastructure and that children from disadvantaged and marginalized communities get food to keep them in school. Education helps to fill up disparity amongst wealthy and impoverished. It also provides skills, knowledge, and life-changing

opportunities to disadvantaged and marginalized individuals, enabling them to access opportunities and improve their living standards (Abisai, 2023).

The contribution of decentralized funds to education and its connection to social inclusion have not been fully explored, thus the importance of this study. Existing research on decentralized funding has emphasized the importance of community participation but has not comprehensively examined the link between decentralized funding and social aspects like education and infrastructure. While studies by Tonelli and Gibson (2023) in Brazil, Be-Ere (2022) in Ghana, and Umoh and Adeyi (2018) in Nigeria have given some information, differences in governance structures and focus areas limit their application in the context of Kenya.

Government of Kenya has tried to enhance equal access to education via NG-CDF but still existing research under explored outcomes of these interventions. Wambua and Simatwa (2020) together with Gitonga (2021) have focused on other areas besides Nairobi County displaying a contextual gap. Conceptually, few studies like Mwangi and Koskei (2022) have examined how NG-CDF interventions align with principles of social inclusion. In public secondary schools, these ideals include equity, engagement as well as representation for marginalized students. Odhiambo and Okoth (2021) paper relied largely on document analysis or secondary data often excluding lived experiences showing a methodological gap. This study's aim was to bridge the gaps through exploring the influence of NG-CDF on social inclusion in public secondary schools in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine how NG-CDF has influenced social inclusion by the provision of classroom infrastructure in Embakasi West, Nairobi City County, Kenya.
2. To analyze how NG-CDF has influenced social inclusion through the provision of school fees bursaries in Embakasi West, Nairobi City County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section examined the theories forming the foundation of the study, empirical literature and the conceptual framework.

Theoretical Framework

Theories that informed paper were theory of social inclusion and stakeholder theory.

Theory of Social Inclusion

Theory of social inclusion came up as a response to social and economic challenges that became more visible throughout late twentieth as well as early twenty-first centuries. There was increase marginalization to many disadvantaged groups during this period (Van Wart et al., 2023). Major aim of this theory is to reduce social exclusion. It focuses on ensuring that all people have equal

access to opportunities, resources together with essential services. This applies regardless of a person's socio-economic socioeconomic class, sex, handicap, or background (Brix et al., 2021). Importance of individual capabilities and active participation was stressed by scholars like Amartya Sen (1999). They argued that social inclusion is not only about giving people access to resources. It also involves allowing them to participate meaningfully in social and economic development.

Social inclusion theory is important role in shaping policies and interventions that target reducing inequality. It also helps improve participation amongst marginalized groups (Van Wart et al., 2023). Fair distribution of resources across society is also supported by this theory. Brix et al. (2021) demonstrates that it also promotes social unity and helps people feel a sense of belonging in their communities. However, some limitations merge in the theory. It is often difficult to measure the level of social inclusion and challenges also exist in putting inclusive policies into practice effectively.

The theory appropriate to this paper as it provided a clear way to understand how NG-CDF supports social inclusion in Embakasi West, Nairobi City County, Kenya. It helped to explain how different NG-CDF activities promote inclusion amidst learners. Building classrooms, giving school fee bursaries together with supporting school feeding programs as examples of these activities. Through these efforts, vulnerable and marginalized children are able to access education more easily. Social inclusion theory guided all research objectives. It provided a basis for examining how NG-CDF improves equal access to education and other support services. This made it easier to understand its role in increasing participation and improving social well-being in the community.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory presents a robust framework for analyzing an organization within its broader environmental and social context (Mahajan et al., 2023). The theory shows expanding managerial responsibilities beyond profit-making to include the interests and welfare of all stakeholders, encompassing both stockholding and non-stockholding entities (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022). According to Freudenreich et al. (2019), stakeholders include all individuals or groups with a involved in entity and who can be affected by or can influence its activities.

Major aim of this theory is to enable managers to identify, get clearly and strategically manage relationships with stakeholders. It is valuable because it provides critical insights for ensuring organizational sustainability and long-term success. The theory has been applied across various domains, which has increased its relevance in both management and public sector studies (Mahajan et al., 2023).

Stakeholder theory has been critiqued for over focus, which might make strategic decision-making and goal prioritizing more difficult, despite its benefits (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022). The need to balance multiple stakeholder interests may also have financial and operational implications for the organization. Furthermore, it minimally guides on addressing conflicts between the long-term sustainability of the organization and the immediate needs of stakeholders, showing a theoretical gap in constrained resource environments (Freudenreich et al., 2019).

In this study, stakeholder theory was relevant as it facilitated a better understanding of how NG-CDF management engages various stakeholders to ensure the success of educational initiatives. It supported the study's purpose of examining how NG-CDF influences social inclusion through the provision of classroom infrastructure, school fees bursaries, and school feeding programs in Embakasi West (Nairobi, Kenya). The study used stakeholder theory to evaluate how effective participation and management of varied stakeholders contribute to effective completion of NG-CDF and promote equitable availability to educational resources.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Empirical Review

Social Inclusion

Simorangkir (2021) did research to find out how easy it is to get to facilities and infrastructure in Bekasi, Indonesia's inclusive elementary schools, while also examining educational background of teaching staff and their readiness to adapt to updated information on special needs and disabilities. Qualitative methodology with a descriptive approach was employed. Target population was 4 inclusive schools in Bekasi. The sample size was limited to these chosen schools and purposive sampling was utilized. It was discovered that, not all-inclusive schools had facilities and infrastructure matched with governmental guidelines. This showed a gap in compliance. Only one teacher in the 4 schools had experience operating with special needs students presenting that there are less specialized workers available. Most of teachers were not ready to advance their skills and knowledge either making it harder for them to help children with a wide range of special needs. It conveys the necessity for professionals to keep acquiring knowledge. An empirical gap is demonstrated in this research because there is inadequate proof about how important NG-CDF-funded classroom infrastructure is for social inclusion in Bekasi.

Santos and Capellini (2021) sought to verify the conditions of physical infrastructure in municipal elementary schools in Bauru, São Paulo, with particular attention to students with special needs. It used a qualitative descriptive research design. The data used was a sample of 16 school managers drawn purposively from the municipal elementary school system. Data were collected using observation scripts focused on physical spaces and inclusive resources, alongside interview scripts administered to the managers, and analysis was conducted descriptively. The findings revealed a clear discrepancy between school infrastructure and the perceptions held by managers. Both

perspectives nonetheless converged on the recognition of the urgent need to expand and improve school physical infrastructure to better accommodate special education needs. There was also consensus on the necessity for greater availability of material and adapted resources within common classrooms, to enhance inclusive education practices. A contextual research gap exists, as the study focused on municipal elementary schools in Bauru, São Paulo, yet little is known about how NG-CDF initiatives influence social inclusion in classroom infrastructure within similar or different educational contexts.

Langat et al. (2025) explored the strategies, available resources, and teachers' perceptions regarding the Execution of education for all in schools within Nandi East. Employed was a descriptive research design. It targeted education officers, head teachers, teachers, together with pupils from 51 primary schools. Study area was purposively selected then applied stratified sampling to choose schools. Simple random sampling was employed to assemble subjects. Data assembly involved utilizing questionnaires as well as interviews. Observation checklists were also used. The analysis was done using descriptive statistics. Results indicated that play, discussion, and demonstration methods were the major teaching approaches used in inclusive education. Many teachers had negative attitudes toward learners with special needs. In addition, available support facilities for these learners were generally insufficient. This paper majored on teaching strategies, available resources, and teacher attitudes. It failed to examine how NG-CDF funded classroom infrastructure affects social inclusion in schools identifying a conceptual gap.

Classroom Infrastructure and Access to Secondary Education

Navarro (2022) looked at state of school buildings in Philippines' basic education sector and compared the country's progress to development goals and other countries. A descriptive research design and data from national education systems was used. The sample included combined infrastructure indicators from schools and regions, as well as data for comparing schools and regions around the world. Descriptive statistics were employed. Outcomes showed that classroom overcrowding had reduced in some areas. However, differences between regions were still evident with some schools continuing to experience high student-classroom ratios. Rising enrolment and poor maintenance of facilities made many schools in remote areas not to meet basic quality and safety standards. In addition, Philippines was found to be behind most Eastern and Southeast Asian countries in providing adequate water and hygiene facilities, as well as reliable electricity in schools. There is an empirical gap because this paper only looked at national-level data. There is not much evidence about how specific interventions like NG-CDF affect classroom infrastructure and access to secondary education in local communities in Philippines.

The state of infrastructure in public secondary schools on Lagos Mainland was examined by Oguntolu et al. (2021). Research was done exploiting an ex-post-facto design. The sample came from public high schools, and three schools were chosen using stratified sampling. A total of 30 people answered. Data was gotten by doing case studies and verbal interviews. SPSS was used to

do analysis and find the mean values. It was revealed that public secondary school's buildings on Lagos Mainland were in a poor state. Regular maintenance was poorly done which made facilities wear out quickly. Faster break down because of using facilities too much and taking too long to fix them. Main focus of the research was condition of infrastructure, maintenance practices, together with reasons for depreciation. However, it did not examine how funding mechanisms like NG-CDF influence classroom infrastructure or access to secondary education presenting conceptual gap.

Examination of how differences in infrastructure influence academic performance in Ghana was conducted by Agyei et al. (2024). Ghana Statistical Service's 2018 education data was employed in the research which employed a quantitative research design. ANOVA was applied to compare performance across districts with different infrastructural levels. They GMM was as well used to further explore associations. According to the results, there exist clear differences in academic performance across districts, depending infrastructure level. Previous academic performance had a strong and positive effect on current results. In addition, class size showed a U-shaped correlation with performance meaning, very small and very large classes were linked to poorer outcomes. Secondary statistical data was relied on by the paper to link infrastructure inequality with performance. It did fail to show evidence on how targeted funding interventions like NG-CDF directly influence classroom infrastructure and access to secondary education in Ghana. This shows an empirical gap.

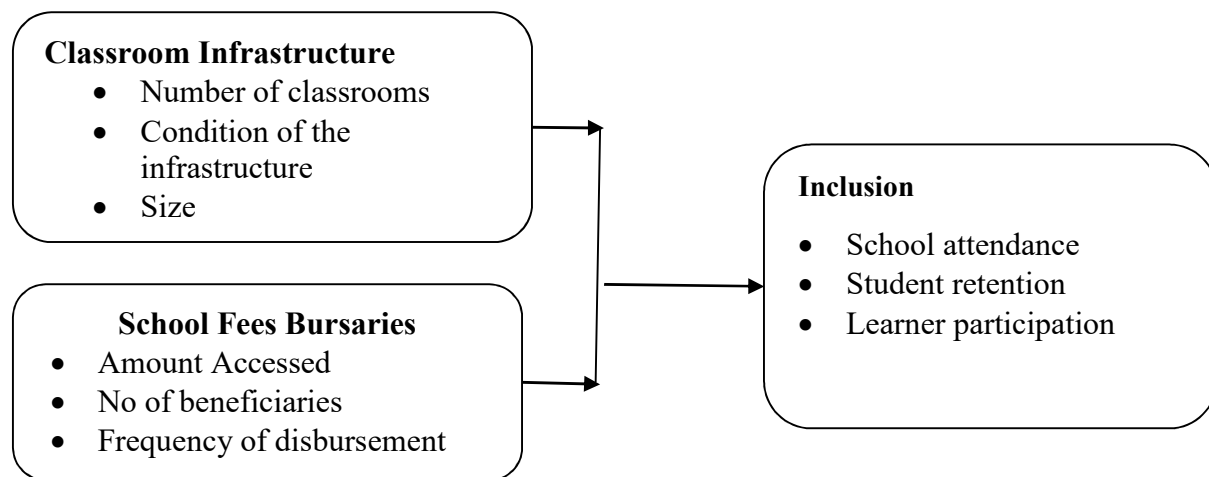
Kariuki and Ndani (2019) did research on whether public pre-primary schools in Naivasha Central, Nakuru County, had enough infrastructure to support quality ECDE. Descriptive research design was utilized. Target population was 40 public pre-primary schools, along with their 40 head teachers and 120 ECDE teachers. Using purposive and simple random sampling, 20 schools were selected, depicting 50% of target population. Questionnaires given to head teachers and ECDE teachers, as well as an observation schedule assembled data. Outcomes were then analyzed with the aid of frequencies and percentages. It was found that lack of money was major obstacle to accessing adequate materials together with equipment. Free Primary Education funding excluded ECDE centres, which left them without enough financial support. Government funding was assumed by many parents that would take care of ECDE costs. This made them to be unwilling to pay fees, which complicated the development of infrastructure and deliver quality education. However, a contextual gap remains as research only majored on infrastructure adequacy in ECDE centres. It dodged looking at how NG-CDF impacts school meals program or access to secondary education in Embakasi.

Study on implication of school infrastructure on implementation of 100% transition policy and student completion rates in public schools in Kitui County, Kenya was done by Mbalaka and Cheloti (2021). Adopted was a descriptive survey design. Data assembled emerged from 164 principals, 17 Parents' Association chairpersons, and County Director of Education. Tools

employed were questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. Assembled statistics was then analyzed via descriptive statistics, thematic analysis, and Pearson’s correlation. Outcomes revealed that many schools lacked enough classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. This limited the number of students who could be admitted and made it difficult to implement the transition policy effectively. Poor sanitation facilities were also identified as a problem. They contributed to dropouts and reduced the number of students who completed school. Additionally, the absence of co-curricular facilities such as playgrounds and equipment caused some learners to leave school. This further weakened both transition and completion rates.

Despite these valuable findings, an empirical gap still exists. The study examined infrastructure challenges in relation to transition and completion rates. However, it did not specifically show how NG-CDF funding directly affects classroom infrastructure or access to secondary education in Kitui County. This leaves room for further research in that area.

Conceptual Framework



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive design. The use of a descriptive research design facilitated the precise characterization of a population, circumstance, or phenomenon. This approach enabled study to examine association amidst variables using quantitative methods and present outcomes clearly (Hassan, 2024). According to Mottus et al. (2020), a descriptive research design helps in understanding variables better and explaining them more clearly.

The target population comprised of Principals from the 58 public secondary schools in Embakasi West Constituency, the BOM chairmen, and PTA representatives were the target population. Principals are the main administrators in their schools. They are directly involved in managing NG-CDF-funded projects like classroom construction, bursaries, as well as school feeding programs. This gives them direct knowledge of how these projects are implemented, problems

encountered, and outcomes achieved. BOM chairpersons and PTA representatives is also important. They participate in decision-making on NG-CDF-funded projects. This makes them well placed to provide information on how the fund affects school development and promotes social inclusion. Subcounty director of education as well as the Subcounty CDF chairperson were too part of the research.

To minimize bias, the principals and Board of Management members were sampled using Slovin's Formula which gave a representative sample of 120 respondents. The researcher collected primary data using semi-structured questionnaires and an interview guide. A structured questionnaire was suitable, as it facilitates the precise answering of specific inquiries that are comparable (Williams, 2024). The questionnaire included structured questions on a 5-point Likert scale to assess various attributes being examined. The questionnaire comprised 3 sections: Section A gathered the respondent's demographic information, Section B included inquiries regarding classroom infrastructure, school fees, bursaries, and the school feeding program, while Section C addressed social inclusion.

Upon completion of assembling statistics, feedbacks were reviewed for accuracy together with completeness. SPSS version 29 aided in data analysis. Descriptive as well as inferential statistics examined quantitative data. Percentages, frequencies, means, and even standard deviations were component of descriptive analysis, which were tabulated and presented in tables.

Pearson correlation as well as multiple linear regression were utilized for inferential analysis. Association amidst variables was examined via Pearson correlation coefficient (r). This measure depicted strength as well as direction of correlations amongst NG-CDF and social inclusion in education. -1 to $+1$ is the range of r values. According to Schober et al. (2018), an r value of 0.7 or higher indicates a very strong correlation, $0.5-0.69$ a strong correlation, values below 0.49 a moderate correlation, an r of 1 a perfect correlation, and an r of 0 indicates no correlation.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

A total of 106 of the 120 questionnaires that were distributed were correctly filled and returned. This results in 88.33 percent response rate. The remainder which is 14 questionnaires made up 11.67 percent. They were either incomplete or not returned. The response rate of 88.33 percent was considered sufficient for investigation. It is above 50 % level that is generally accepted as adequate for reliable data, as noted by Taherdoost and Madanchian (2025). This high return rate denotes statistics assembled reflects views of target subjects and supports the reliability of paper findings.

General demographic data of the respondents indicated that 55.66% of subjects were male. Female gender were 44.34 percent depicting a slight male predominance in sample. Outcomes discovered that men together with women were fairly represented in the paper meaning views assembled came

from a diverse group of respondents. The balanced participation of male as well as female employees adds to results reliability. Data on highest education level attained indicated that 43.40 percent of subjects has a degree in master. Bachelor's degrees honors comprised 38.68 percent. 12.26 percent held diplomas while certificate-level education owners represented 5.66 percent. Outcomes depicted that most subjects had a higher level of education. This means group was adequately organized for technical and managerial roles. It too shows that they had enough knowledge to give informed and objective responses related to investigation.

Data on designation indicated that 33.33 percent of the respondents were principals, 28.33 percent were PTA representatives, and 26.67 percent were board chairmen. This shows that investigation included people in key administrative and governance roles within the institutions. These groups are directly involved in decision-making, policy development, and oversight. Their inclusion means statistics reflects informed views from those with practical experience. The fairly even distribution across the 3 groups also ensured that both management and governance perspectives were well represented.

NG-CDF and Classroom Infrastructure

The first study objective was to examine how NG-CDF has influenced social inclusion by the provision of classroom infrastructure in Embakasi West, Nairobi City County, Kenya. The researcher required the respondents to express their extent of agreement or disagreement with some statements regarding the NG-CDF classroom infrastructure in their schools. Findings are portrayed in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Results for NG-CDF Classroom Infrastructure

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	S DEV
NG-CDF-funded classrooms are enough to accommodate the number of students.	1.89%	3.14%	17.61%	48.43%	28.93%	3.99	0.88
The NG-CDF-funded classrooms are spacious enough.	8.81%	6.29%	5.66%	41.51%	37.74%	3.93	1.22
The NG-CDF-funded classrooms are well-lit and ventilated.	6.92%	11.32%	6.29%	50.31%	25.16%	3.75	1.16
NG-CDF-funded classrooms are safe and secure	5.66%	6.29%	4.40%	40.25%	43.40%	4.09	1.11
NG-CDF-funded classrooms have functional teaching and learning aids	9.43%	8.81%	6.92%	54.09%	20.75%	3.68	1.18
NG-CDF-funded classrooms have adequate desks and chairs	1.89%	10.69%	6.92%	56.60%	23.90%	3.9	0.95
Average						3.89	1.08

Source: Field Data (2025)

The results show that 77.36 percent of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that NG-CDF-funded classrooms are sufficient to accommodate the current student population, while 5.03

percent disagreed and 17.61 percent were neutral. The mean of 3.99, which is slightly above the aggregate mean of 3.89, and a standard deviation of 0.88 imply that classroom adequacy has been largely achieved in most schools. NG-CDF investments have helped reduce overcrowding in schools as suggested by the results. This has created a more comfortable and effective learning environment for students. Outcomes agree with findings of Dominic (2023), that NG-CDF support has helped ease congestion and improve access to school facilities in urban public schools.

Most respondents, 79.25 percent, agreed that classrooms funded by NG-CDF are spacious. About 15.10 percent disagreed, while 5.66 percent were neutral. 3.93 mean score demonstrate that, in general, schools have enough classroom space. The standard deviation of 1.22 suggests there are some differences between schools. Some may still face small challenges with space and these differences could be as a result of variations in design or distributed of resource. These findings support Oguntolu et al. (2021), who noted that differences in project implementation can result unequal access to quality infrastructure in devolved development programs.

75.47 percent of subjects in terms of lighting and ventilation agreed that classrooms are adequately lit and aerated. 18.24 percent disagreed where as 6.29 percent were indifferent. The mean of 3.75, was below the aggregate mean. Moderate satisfaction was revealed by the standard deviation of 1.16. These suggest that while many classrooms meet the desired standards, others may still lack sufficient natural lighting and airflow. Agyei et al. (2024) claim that differences in school construction quality have an impact on students' comfort and focus levels in public institutions.

Moreover, 83.65 percent of the respondents have admitted that the classrooms provided by NG-CDF are safe, 11.95 percent denied it, and 4.40 percent remained indifferent. The highest score of 4.09 (the largest of all items) and the standard deviation of 1.11 denote that the majority of schools have enjoyed safe and structurally sound classrooms. This means that the NG-CDF has given security and compliance with structural standards of infrastructure development a priority in its infrastructure developments. The finding confirms Kariuki and Ndani (2019) who reported that secured learning environments improve the perception of safety among the students and lead to better academic performance.

In regard to having functional teaching and learning aids available, 74.84 percent has held that it is, 18.24 percent has held that it is not and 6.92 percent has been unsure. The lowest mean of 3.68 and a standard deviation of 1.18 indicate that although most schools have enjoyed the use of the basic teaching aids, the provision also differs among schools. This means that there are schools that do not have teaching and learning aids or the ones that they have are ineffective. According to Mbalaka and Cheloti (2021), physical infrastructure that lacks sufficient learning resources constrains the effectiveness of instruction.

Nearly 80.50 percent of the interviewees responded that NG-CDF classrooms have sufficient desks and chairs, 12.58 percent disagreed, and 6.92 percent were indifferent. Mean of 3.90, a little higher

than the overall mean and standard deviation of 0.95 indicate that majority of schools are well equipped with furniture that improves the comfort of learning and the absence of absenteeism due to overcrowded or inadequately furnished classes. This is consistent with Navarro (2022), who determined that sufficient classroom furniture has a positive effect on learner engagement and teacher motivation.

The average of 3.89 and a standard deviation of 1.08 shows that the respondents had a positive attitude in overall NG-CDF-funded classroom infrastructure and therefore they were perceived to have made improvements in learning environment in the schools in the region of Embakasi West. Nevertheless, differences between the mean scores show that, although certain infrastructural factors, including safety and adequacy of the classroom, have been completely covered, other, such as lighting, ventilation, and instructional aids, should be given additional attention. The long-term education infrastructure development in NG-CDF initiatives increases social inclusion through favorable access to favorable learning facilities in the Kenyan public schools (Oisanga, 2022).

The respondents were further asked to indicate other NG CDF classroom infrastructure amenities available in their schools. Based on the responses, it was noted that much of the schools had been provided with supplementary aid including laboratories, libraries and contemporary teaching tools that enhanced the learning process. According to teachers, the facilities had increased learning opportunities to their students and enhanced the delivery of lessons. Some said that the new facilities had contributed to alleviating congestion though some said that renovation of some of the structures was still necessary. One teacher noted,

“Our school has benefited with new NG CDF classrooms (including science laboratory and library) that have increased the learning opportunities among students.” (Respondent 1)

Another added,

“We were also given modern desks and white boards which give lessons more interesting and orderly.” (Respondent 4).

They were also requested to provide their interpretation of how the NG CDF classroom infrastructure provision can be enhanced in their schools. Based on the responses, it was noted that a significant number of them felt that there was a need to have additional classrooms to deal with congestion during classes. The others elevated the necessity to make timely repairs in order to keep the environment safe and clean, and they thought that this would help foster a better learning environment. Many of the respondents marked the significance of present-day instructional technology, as it would help to increase the participation. Some of them mentioned the necessity of classrooms that are inclusive of learners with disabilities to enable everyone to be engaged in the learning process. One respondent stated,

“More classrooms are required, in order to decongest during lessons.” (Respondent 7)

Another mentioned,

“The classroom should be kept safe and clean through regular repairs.” (Respondent 10)

Another teacher observed,

“Learning would be updated with the installation of smart boards and projectors.” (Respondent 11)

One of the respondents also indicated,

“The learners with disabilities should be provided with more classrooms to enhance accessibility.” (Respondent 14)

They were also requested to explain how the NG CDF classroom infrastructure impacted inclusion in their schools. Based on the responses, it was noted that the enhanced spaces elicited enrollment by learners with various backgrounds and enhanced overall participation. Respondents further reported that ample and well-designed rooms enabled learners with disabilities to move freely that enhanced their involvement in classroom activities. Other people mentioned that the pleasant environment had boosted the attendance and encouraged students to participate more actively in the lessons. One respondent commented,

“The new classrooms have promoted the enrollment of various backgrounds and particularly the students in the informal settlements.” (Respondent 17)

Another said,

“Students with disabilities have found it easier to move freely and participate in the classroom due to the spacious classrooms” (Respondent 19).

Another noted,

“The better environment has led to the rise in attendance and involvement of students.” (Respondent 23)

The same sentiments were received among the key informants and they reported that NG CDF classroom projects have increased access to and participation of learners. Their explanation was that the fund was at the center of enhancing physical learning spaces, which contributed to inclusion. They also pointed out that reduced congestion enabled teachers to give more attention to each learner, which strengthened equality in learning. One key informant explained,

“NG CDF has been instrumental in creating inclusive spaces by funding classrooms that accommodate all learners, including those with mobility challenges.” (Key Informant 1)

Another emphasized,

“NG CDF has reduced congestion by improving physical learning spaces. This allows teachers to offer more attention to each learner, boosting participation and equality.” (Key Informant 2)

NG-CDF and School Fees Bursaries

The second study objective was to analyze how NG-CDF has influenced social inclusion through the provision of school fees bursaries in Embakasi West, Nairobi City County, Kenya. The researcher required the respondents to express their extent of agreement or disagreement with some statements regarding the NG-CDF School Fees Bursaries in their schools. Findings are portrayed in Table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive Results for NG-CDF School Fees Bursaries

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SDEV
The NG-CDF provision of school fees bursaries uses fair targeting to reach students from low-income households.	1.26%	8.18%	6.92%	48.43%	35.22%	4.08	0.93
NG-CDF school fees bursaries are available in good time	2.52%	16.35%	12.58%	40.88%	27.67%	3.75	1.11
The NG-CDF provision of school fees bursaries considers learners with disabilities	5.03%	8.81%	5.03%	47.80%	33.33%	3.96	1.09
The NG-CDF school fees bursaries are adequate to cover the financial requirements of the students.	1.89%	15.72%	8.81%	47.17%	26.42%	3.81	1.06
The NG-CDF provision of school fees bursaries provides a fair appeals process for students who are not selected	17.61%	16.98%	8.81%	37.11%	19.50%	3.24	1.41
The NG-CDF provision of school fees bursaries uses standard application forms that are easy to fill out.	3.14%	11.95%	6.92%	59.75%	18.24%	3.78	0.99
Average						3.77	1.10

Source: Field Data (2026)

From the findings, 83.65 percent of respondents affirmed that the NG-CDF bursary program applies fair targeting to reach learners from low-income households, 9.44 percent disagreed, while 6.92 percent remained undecided. The mean of 4.08, above the overall mean of 3.77, and a standard deviation of 0.93 suggest that most beneficiaries perceive the bursary allocation process as fair and transparent. This means that the targeting mechanisms are fairly useful in recognizing financially vulnerable students boosting educational equity. These results are consistent with those of Gogo (2020), who found that equitable targeting in open bursary plans increases inclusiveness and reduces bias in disbursing benefits to beneficiaries.

68.55 percent of the respondents agreed that NG-CDF bursaries are paid on time, 18.87 percent had the opposite and 12.58 percent were neutral. The standard deviation of 1.11 and a mean score of 3.75, similar to the overall mean, imply that the degree of satisfaction with timeliness of fund release is moderate. This means that despite the overall efficiency of disbursement, there are still instances of delays that can lead to interruption in the normal attendance among students who depend on bursary funds. Any delays in the payment of educational funds may have adverse impacts on retention and performance of learners (Katonon & Moi, 2024).

Also, 81.13 percent of the participants reported that students with disabilities are factored in when distributing NG-CDF bursaries. Those who disagreed were 13.84 percent with 5.03 percent being neutral. The average of 3.96 with a Standard deviation of 1.09 indicates high approval with average variation. This observation also suggests that the NG-CDF program has incorporated inclusive education practices, which make learners with special needs have equal access. This finding aligns with Duflo et al. (2021) who reported that students with disabilities who receive bursaries in

addition to their regular education have an improved social justice and the inclusion of a representative education is a national objective.

Approximately 73.59 percent of the respondents answered that, NG-CDF bursaries adequately address the financial needs of students, 17.61 percent answered that it does not, and 8.81 percent answered that it neither agree nor disagree adequately address the financial needs of students. The average of 3.81 and the standard deviation of 1.06 suggest that the financial sufficiency is generally higher, but some students might have deficits in other expenditures in the learning process. This implies that the bursary program will lessen a huge percentage of the school fee burden but not all the cost of education. Balarin et al. (2019) assert that the provision of school fees incomprehensively contributes to accessing education among disadvantaged background learners. In response to the question of whether the school fees bursary appeals process is fair or not, 56.61 percent of the respondents said that they have a fair review mechanism to the failed bursary applicants, 34.59 percent said no and 8.81 percent were neutral. Its minimum mean of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 1.41 point to the lack of convergent views and more disparity in the perceptions. This indicates that there is a lack of consistency of the appeals system or it is not communicated in a way that would build trust with the applicants. A study by Murphy et al. (2019) found that the fact that the school fees bursary appeals process in the NG-CDF is not very transparent undermines the confidence of the population in the educational funding programs.

Lastly, 77.99 percent of the respondents claimed that the NG-CDF bursary application forms are user-friendly, standardized and easy to complete, which means that the forms are generally user friendly to the applicants. The percent who disagreed was 15.09 percent and those who did not commit was 6.92 percent. The average of 3.78 and the standard deviation of 0.99 means that the application procedure is mostly user-friendly and available. Streamlined operations make it more inclusive as there is less administrative hurdle to parents and students with different backgrounds. This observation is consistent with Blimpo et al. (2019), who observed that simple application processes encourage equity and efficiency in publicly funded education.

The mean of 3.77 and standard deviation of 1.10 signify that the NG-CDF bursary initiative is believed by the respondents to enhance social inclusion because it has enhanced accessibility, equity and simplicity of application. Differences among items, however, illustrate the areas that require improvement, particularly, the appeals and disbursement processes. Ongoing evaluation and process improvement are crucial in maintaining equity and transparency in education funding schemes (Rizqullah, 2023).

The respondents were also to give explanations of the challenges in NG CDF school fees bursaries at their schools. Based on the responses, it was noted that most schools were faced with a tight budget constraint and therefore could not cater to all the deserving learners. According to the respondents, late disbursement usually affected learning since students remained at home awaiting

payment of fees. Other people stated that as much as the process is useful, the issue of transparency occasionally arose, thereby influencing confidence with the process of allocation. One teacher stated,

“There are deserving students who miss out due to the limited funds of the bursary.” (Respondent 2)

Another mentioned,

“Late payments have been known to compel students to remain at home as they await payment of fees.” (Respondent 3)

Another noted,

“There are complaints at times about lack of transparency in the selection process.” (Respondent 6)

They were also requested to outline the ways through which the school fees bursaries in the NG CDF schools could be better. Based on the responses, it was seen that a lot of them recommended that the bursary allocation be increased in a manner that would ensure that it can cover a larger number of learners and be used to cover the entire school costs. Others suggested that the application and processing system must be streamlined to minimize delays. Other respondents believed that the use of digital platforms would enhance accountability and surveillance of the process. One respondent suggested,

“It should be expanded to serve a larger number of students and meet the entire school costs.” (Respondent 8)

Another said,

“The process might be more efficient and transparent with a centralized online system.” (Respondent 9)

They were further asked to describe how NG CDF school fees bursaries had influenced inclusion in their schools. From the responses, it was observed that many respondents felt the bursary had eased financial pressure for learners from poor households and allowed them to remain in school. Others shared that students with disabilities were now better considered during allocation, which improved equal participation. Some noted that the support had encouraged retention and reduced dropout rates for those who would otherwise struggle to pay school fees. One teacher observed,

They were also requested to provide how NG CDF school fees bursaries had impacted inclusion in their schools. Based on the answers, it was found that a number of the respondents believed that the bursary alleviated financial strain among learners in poor families and enabled them to stay in school. Some said that students with disabilities were now taken into consideration more during allocation and thus equal participation was enhanced. Others observed that the assistance had boosted retention and lowered the rate of dropouts among students who would otherwise not be able to afford school fees. One teacher observed,

“According to the bursary, learners in the very poor families have been able to remain in school and get an education.” (Respondent 18)

Another noted,

“The students with disabilities get an equal chance since they are taken into consideration during the allocation.” (Respondent 21)

The same sentiments were received by the key informants who indicated that the bursary program has been significant in ensuring that there is equality and that no one drops out of school. They observed that the initiative reduced the disparity between vulnerable learners and their counterparts that enhanced social inclusion in schools within the constituency. They also explained that the program had created fair learning opportunities by prioritizing needy students. One key informant explained,

“The NG CDF bursary has bridged the gap between privileged and disadvantaged learners by ensuring that no student drops out due to lack of fees.” (Key Informant 1)

Another emphasized,

“The bursary program has promoted equity by prioritizing needy students and those with disabilities, giving every learner a fair chance to learn.” (Key Informant 2)

Descriptive Results for Inclusion

The researcher further sought the perspectives of respondents regarding social inclusion in Embakasi West, Nairobi City County, Kenya, and the findings are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Descriptive Results for Inclusion

	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	SDEV
The learner attendance rate in the school has improved	0.94%	4.72%	6.60%	73.58%	14.15%	3.95	0.70
The student’s retention in the school has improved	1.89%	12.26%	11.32%	50.94%	23.58%	3.82	0.99
Transition of students from one class level to the next has improved	0.00%	11.32%	5.66%	49.06%	33.96%	4.06	0.92
Participation of learners in class activities has improved.	0.00%	4.72%	4.72%	63.21%	27.36%	4.13	0.70
The school participation of learners from diverse backgrounds has improved	0.00%	1.89%	23.58%	32.08%	42.45%	4.15	0.85
Learners with disabilities are well supported in the school	1.89%	20.75%	12.26%	45.28%	19.81%	3.6	1.08
Average						3.95	0.87

The findings indicate that 87.73 percent of the respondents confirmed that attendance of learners had been improved, 5.66 percent said otherwise and 6.60 percent were not sure. The mean score

of 3.95 and SD of 0.70 indicate a high level of agreement that there is an improvement in school attendance among the learners. This suggests that interventions such as feeding programs and inclusive school policies could have promoted regular attendance at learning. This observation reinforces that of Simorangkir (2021), who found that better access to educational support services increases motivation and attendance of learners in the public schools.

74.52 percent of the respondents affirmed that school retention of students had been on the rise, 14.15 percent said no, and 11.32 percent said nothing. The average of 3.82 and the SD of 0.99 depicts a moderate range of variation in answers, meaning that, although the retention has overall improved, still, some schools are struggling to maintain learners during the school cycle. This result is similar to Santos and Capellini (2021), who discovered that learner retention in urban public schools could be affected by socioeconomic differences and resource gaps.

Regarding whether or not student transition between classes of one level and another had gotten better, 83.02 percent of the respondents agreed with that, 11.32 percent disagreed, and 5.66 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. The average 4.06 that is slightly higher than the composite mean and a standard deviation of 0.92 suggest that academic progression has been positively affected by programs promoting continuity in the education process. This implies that grade progression has been reinforced by the interventions that support school attendance, which is in line with the results of Langat et al. (2025), who observed that the smooth academic progression is supported by conducive school environments.

Furthermore, 90.57 percent of respondents affirmed that there was an improvement in participation of learners in class activities, 4.72 percent opposed it and an equal percent were neutral. The average of 4.13 and 0.70 deviation indicates extensive involvement in learning processes. This means that schools have been able to achieve interactive learning experiences in which pupils actively participate in classroom discussions and group activities. These results are in line with the results of Ozili (2022), who demonstrated that participatory learning styles provide both inclusion and academic confidence to learners.

A combined 74.53 percent of the respondents affirmed that there had been an improvement in school participation of learners with diverse backgrounds, 1.89 percent of the respondents disapproved the situation whereas 23.58 percent of the respondents had no opinion. The average of 4.15 which is the highest of the items and a deviation of 0.85 is an indicator that most of the schools have been able to attain diversity. This suggests that the schools have been able to embrace cultural and social inclusivity, promoting equal opportunities for all students. This is in line with the results of Adan and Moi (2021) who determined that diverse schools enjoy higher levels of learning integration and social unity.

Moreover, 65.09 percent of the respondents stated that learners with disabilities were sufficiently supported, 22.64 percent did not concur and 12.26 percent were indifferent. The lowest mean of 3.60 and the standard deviation of 1.08 suggests that there is a difference in the way schools support their learners with special needs. This means that although there has been an improvement in the area of inclusive education, more support systems like assistive learning materials, and special needs educators who have been trained are necessary. This finding is in line with Langat et al. (2025), who highlighted that disability-inclusive education programs are usually affected by the lack of resources.

The overall mean of 3.95 and standard deviation of 0.87 signify that social inclusion is fairly established across schools in Embakasi West. However, the presence of disagreement and neutral stances indicates that inclusion has not been optimal in some of the schools in Embakasi West Sub-County. Notably, the relatively lower scores on disability support point to the need for enhanced inclusivity frameworks. Inclusive school environments enhance equal educational opportunities, reduce exclusion, and contribute to sustainable social integration.

CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Influence of NG-CDF Classroom Infrastructure on Social Inclusion

It was concluded that the fact that NG-CDF-funded classrooms are large enough to fit the number of students is linked to higher attendance rates in schools. It was also determined that the size of classrooms is associated with improved retention of students. Properly-lit and well-ventilated classroom results in easier movement of students between classes of different levels. It was also concluded that safe and secure classroom is related to greater engagement of learners in classroom activities. In addition, it was also concluded that the presence of functional teaching and learning aids is related to the increased inclusion of learners with different backgrounds. Sufficient desks and chairs are also associated with the higher level of support of learners with disabilities, which proves that the overall classroom facilities have a positive impact on social inclusivity in schools in Embakasi West.

Influence of NG-CDF School Fees Bursaries on Social Inclusion

Moreover, it was also determined that, fair targeting of NG-CDF school fees bursaries is linked with better attendance rates among learners. Additionally, prompt payment of bursaries is associated with increased retention of students in schools. It was noted that inclusion of learners with disabilities in the provision of bursary results in less painful progressions between one level of classes to another. Also, sufficient bursary funds are associated with the participation of learners in the classroom. Besides, the application forms that are standardized and easy to fill out facilitate inclusion of learners with diverse backgrounds. Existence of fair appeals process has been linked

to improved support of learners with disabilities which means that the bursary program in general improves social inclusion in the schools of Embakasi West.

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