

Various Aspects of Secondary School Fee Abolitions and Increased Access Opportunity: A Study from an Agricultural Rural Area of the Makueni District in Kenya

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At the beginning of 2008, the Government of Kenya abolished secondary school fees in order to ensure expanded access for primary school leavers. In the context of this significant change in policy, this paper examines the extent to which the abolition of secondary school fees increased access for children who had been previously denied their access. For this to be examined, the study firstly identified 109 primary school leavers who had completed primary school between 2004 and 2006 but had not enrolled in any further education institutions (secondary school or youth polytechnics). The study then traced them after the abolition of school fees in order to examine their responses to the policy. The study found that fewer than one in five leavers went on to secondary school because of the diminished school fees. The study, however, revealed that 20 leavers were still unable to access secondary school due to ancillary costs involved in ‘free’ secondary education. Further, many of the leavers were in fact interested in learning at vocational training centers. By integrating surveys with multiple interviews, the paper explores the reason why the new policy did not necessarily lead to improved access for primary school leavers in the study.