

Family strategy for secondary education in rural Keya: Interpretations of schooling by dropouts and school leavers

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Schooling has been promoted in international society based on the understanding that education can contribute to diminish poverty. Kenya is one of the fastest countries to develop education sector in Sub-Saharan Africa. The demand for secondary education has been increasing along with the expansion of primary education. However, there are still many people who are excluded from secondary education. Numerous studies analyze obstacles facing educational expansion. Dropout is discussed as an issue to resolve for educational expansion in these studies. However, family in poverty needs to consider the priority of education within siblings. Therefore, dropouts and secondary school leavers are produced in the family's strategy for its welfare.

This paper examines how educational decision is made as a family member especially focusing on youth. Field research was conducted in a public secondary school and its neighboring community in Busia county for a total of five weeks in 2014 and 2015. The study employed participant observation and interviews. The interviewees were secondary school students (13), dropouts (20), secondary school leavers (20) and parents (9).

Field research revealed the following three aspects. (i) Dropping out does not necessarily mean diminishing educational opportunity. It is used even as a way to continue education as a family. Families' supports for educational expenses worked as an investment when students struggled with study understanding family's expectation. (ii) Continued schooling was possible because of getting support/sacrifice by dropout siblings. Consequently, secondary school leavers must respond their family's expectation. However, those who graduated from poor-performing schools are facing difficulties and it made their schooling experience be useless one.

By analyzing the data above, it is pointed out that the ways of investing schooling are different depend on each family's background such as financial condition, recognition toward academic ability and schooling. Schooling experience can be interpreted both benefits and even damages for youth in relation to their family.