

Does free secondary education enable the poor to gain access? A study from rural Kenya

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Abstract

This monograph looks at free secondary education and the way it influences access to education for the poor in rural Kenya. Data collected after the introduction of free secondary education show that government schools continue to levy fees for lunch, school buildings and boarding equipment. Households are also expected to provide non-discretionary items such as school uniforms, sports uniforms, books, stationery etc. The study found that the costs of the first year preparation for day secondary school are about eight times the monthly income for employed parents, 12 to 17 times for self-employed parents and 19 to 20 times for peasant parents engaged in casual work. In the case of boarding schools, the costs of the first year preparation for boarding school are 15 times the monthly income for employed parents, 23 to 33 times for self-employed parents and 38 to 40 times for peasant parents engaged in casual work. The study found that poor households continue to face significant challenges in meeting the costs of 'free secondary education'. Moreover, government bursaries for secondary education are awarded to children enrolled in boarding secondary school only; children whose households cannot raise the initial and ongoing costs required for even lowcost day secondary schools face substantial challenges in accessing secondary education. The paper concludes that government policies aiming to expand access to secondary education for the poor must strive to identify and target socially disadvantaged children who are in need of financial help to access secondary education.

Full text:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08b77e5274a27b2000b69/PTA21.pdf>