

by Elsarien A Katiti •
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OPPORTUNITIES *in overhauls*

Some of us were not privileged enough to be taught that you don't only have to start making money after years at school or after university (when you're employed).

Twenty-seven boys, including my younger brother, were sent home from school because their hair exceeded the school prescription. He called me to ask for money for the haircut. This took me back to two years ago when I bought him a hair cutter to use to make money from cutting the hair of other boys and not only have pocket money but afford his own haircuts in this way.

As my attempt to empower him had clearly failed I asked him when he intended to start making his own money. He was in Grade 11 at the time and replied that he'll start when he is done with school. Many people in our African cultures have this mindset, "My son will go study and when he starts working, he will make money and support me".

But it is high time we educate our children out of this way of thinking.

My brother shocked me further by explaining that he will actually only start making his own money once he finishes his degree. And we know a degree requires a minimum of three years. He

was planning on studying for 6 years. "Who do you think is going to support your grown @*# for that long?" I asked him if he realised there was no guarantee of a job after completing his studies.

Before me sat a situation. This boy needed some re-education. And fast! I pointed out to him he had lost 26 potential customers that very day. Those boys had a time deadline before they would be suspended. They could have lined up in front of his hostel room. But no. He had 4-7 years to wait before he could pick up that machine and make it generate an income for him.

I asked my brother what skills he possessed. He had to think for quite some time. I eventually pointed out that he is super smart, so he could tutor others for a price. He gets an allowance from me and money from mom so he could lend money and require interest (after all, he lived in boarding school). He could buy a sack of biscuits and sell it for a profit, and importantly he could cut hair and make money.

He had to learn the importance of generating an income for himself. Exasperated, I explained, "you need to manage your skills like a business; whatever advantage you have over others in knowledge or skills, need to make you money."

Some of my friends, of course, thought I was being too harsh to lecture

him at such a time. But this probably did not come as a surprise to my brother whom I'm forever negotiating about the necessity of a "needed" item and his desire to look cool. My heart sinks when I think of all the low-wage earners who buy their children brand names. This makes them grow up entitled and without a sense of power to help themselves. My philosophy is: If you cannot afford an Adidas label, you can't wear it. Period.

My brother wants to wear shoes of N\$1000.00 when his poor mother hardly receives N\$2000 per month. Please. This is madness. But maddest is not the child, but the parent who allows this, raising their child in an unrealistic financial atmosphere.

This makes as little sense as the time I advised another brother to sell vegetables at a stall in the informal settlement where he lived. People had to walk quite some distance to buy fresh produce. His response left me with the impression that becoming a street vendor was beneath him. I was reminded of the phrase, "we miss out on opportunities because they sometimes come in overhauls."

Let us teach our children to generate monetary value from their skills while they are young. ♀