

**Rethinking Parents' Engagement in Teens Post Secondary School Transition Planning**  
By Joy Amanabo



*Image Source: LEAP Africa*

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*Freke: Madam, it seems my parents are joking with my future.*

*Me: Why would you say that?*

*Freke: I want to study Food Science in the University, but my father wants me to either study Nursing or Education, to become a nurse or a teacher.*

*I mentioned to them that I would love to learn how to bake while I wait for my admission into the University, but my parents would prefer that I learn a skill in tailoring or hairdressing.*

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This is one of the many conversations I have had with the youth beneficiaries of LEAP Africa's iLEAD Programme, post-secondary school.

Among others, I find this particular case quite interesting. Both parents and child have fine aspirations. None of their choices are necessarily limiting, however, from findings, I figured out that her parents' choices were as a result of the need within their immediate environment, while her choices had gone past her community.

Here is what I discovered:

In that community, the organizations that seem to thrive are either in the health sector or education sector. They have a general hospital within the community, and pockets of pharmacies. There is also the presence of schools owned by either the government, the community or individuals. Other sectors, for instance the financial, legal and technology sectors do not seem to thrive in comparison. The community has very few cyber cafes and no ICT hub.

Here is more:

According to her, neither her parents nor their friends have celebrated birthdays with a cake. She says she doubts that her dad had eaten a cake outside of wedding cakes.

So, her parents' logic behind their choices could be (this is my guess):

"Who eats cakes? They are expensive and only needed for weddings which happen occasionally. However, a lot of people need clothes. Everyone sews clothes even if they are occasionally sewn but it is a more general need, plus it is affordable.

Hairdressing is also lucrative; almost every female within the community gets their hair made as frequently as they can afford to".

Here is the punch:

Her parents were both born in this community, they were raised there (school, church, etc) they got married there, had kids there, currently earn a living within the same community and of course, assumed that their kid's life will revolve around this community.

Consequently, if their child would thrive within the community, she would have to become a nurse or a teacher, and gain a skill in tailoring or hairdressing.

Freke on the other hand, as a result of the exposure she had gained from the programme, envisions a life outside of the community. She sees herself thriving in a community outside of her state of origin. She sees the possibilities and opportunities that abound outside of her immediate environment and these have spurred her passion.

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The choices of both parents and child are really good choices, however, while the former is hinged on their day-to-day reality, the latter is as a result of opportunities along the lines of her passion which are not necessarily obtainable within her community.

Considering the essential role parents play in their children's successful post secondary school transition, here are a couple of questions to guide parents/guardians in rethinking how to better position parents to effectively play this role:

- How do we enlighten parents from underserved and low income communities about the possibilities and opportunities that exist outside their reality?
- How do we get these parents to see and embrace the dividends of the 21st century?

- How do we expose parents to happenings outside their communities so that they can begin to make informed decisions that are not limited to the realities they are familiar with?