



**PARENTING  
DICKSON  
TUMURAMYE**

# SKILL YOUR CHILD THIS HOLIDAY

With no classes, no exams and flexible time, a determined young person can accomplish more in six weeks than they realise. The question is not whether there is time. The question is whether we, parents, guardians and the teenagers themselves, will use it wisely.

## WHY SKILLS MATTER MORE THAN EVER

Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world. That is both a blessing and a challenge. Thousands of young people will enter a competitive job market in the coming years, and academic certificates alone will not be enough.

Employers and customers increasingly value practical skills; the ability to do something useful, solve a real problem or create value. A teenager or a youth who learns a skill today is investing in a future that the classroom alone cannot fully prepare them for.

Fortunately, the options are wider than most teenagers imagine. Skills can be digital – graphic design, video editing, social media management, coding or online

freelancing. They can be hands-on like tailoring, baking, hairdressing, carpentry or crafts. They can be service-oriented, such as tutoring younger children, event ushering, car washing or delivery errands. The starting point is not money or connections. It is the willingness to learn.

## STARTING SMALL

Many of Africa's most successful entrepreneurs started with nothing more than a simple idea and the courage to try. A teenager does not need a business plan or startup capital to begin. They need observation; what does my neighbourhood need? What service are people paying for?

A young person who notices that homes in their area need cleaning, that children need tutoring, or that people want fresh juice and snacks in the morning has already done half the work. This means that they are now transferring their school knowledge into practice. They are becoming researchers and thinkers outside the box to solve

societal problems. One teenager in Kampala recently spent her holiday baking *mandazi* and selling them to neighbours.

By the end of the holiday, she had earned enough to buy her own school supplies, and more importantly, she had discovered that she could create income with her own hands. That confidence is priceless. Another young man used free online tutorials to learn basic graphic design and created logos for small businesses in his community. He charged modest fees, built a portfolio and returned to school with a skill he continues to use. Even on campus now, this business has sustained him.

## ROLE OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Parents must not be passive during this season. Rather than simply monitoring screen time or worrying about bad company, get involved. Ask your child what they are curious about. Take them to a market, a workshop or a family business and let them observe how things work. Introduce them to someone in a

trade or profession they admire. A conversation with a mentor can spark a fire that lasts a lifetime. This is what competency-based education is all about – a child who can do something practical on their own.

It is also important to let teenagers make small mistakes in a safe environment. If a young person tries to sell something and fails, do not mock them. Help them understand why, and encourage them to try again.

## ADVICE TO TEENAGERS AND YOUTH

To every young person reading this: the world does not wait for anyone. The friends who will lead industries, start companies and shape communities in 10 years are not waiting for the perfect moment. They are using the time they have right now. You do not need to start something big. Start something real. Learn one skill. Offer one service. Read one book about business or a craft that interests you. Take a step.

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When schools close for the holidays, a familiar scene plays out across Uganda. Our children sleep late, spend hours on their phones and drift through the weeks with little to show for it by the time school resumes. What if you made this holiday season different? What if, instead of idling away, our young people used these weeks to build something; a skill, a habit or even a small business? This is what even the new curriculum is all about. Children should be great thinkers and innovators.

The school holiday is not a gap in a teenager's life. It is an opportunity.