

Making a quick buck at university

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Making ends meet. Some students have ventured into selling second-hand clothes to their colleagues. FILE PHOTO

In Summary

SURVIVAL. You cannot always live on handouts or whatever your parents can give you. *Phionah Nassanga* sounds out different students on how they make money while at campus.

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By Phionah Nassanga

The time spent at university is usually between three and five years, depending on one's course. This calls for students to enjoy or endure life experiences. Among the difficulties that students usually face is financial crises; failing to raise money for handouts, transport, meals etc. Daniel Mugalu, a lecturer and director of the entrepreneurship centre at St Lawrence University, says landing a job when still a student may not be easy yet as adults each has personal demands and desires.

“With only Shs20,000 one can start up a small on-campus business they can move around with,” Mugalu explains.

Clothes

It is exactly 12pm, a young woman of average height, beaming with a smile, carries a black backpack and makes her way towards the university canteen that seems congested with students. Daphine Wadumaga, 23, a student at International Health Science University in Namuwongo, is one of the few students who have stepped out of their comfort zone to sell second-hand clothes. “Hello!” she greets students seated in one of corners of the university canteen as she asks for 10 minutes of their time.

As she opens her bag, students who know what she is carrying start moving towards her, asking if she has anything trendy. This draws my attention. To me it was only a bag of clothes that one would find around town if they took their time to look around.

“Daphine has nice but cheap items when compared to the boutiques outside,” says one of the students. After two hours of moving around campus, the ambitious young girl prepares for her 3pm lecture.

Realising how much she was spending on taking care of her personal needs and transport daily from Mbuya to Namuwongo, Wadumaga says she came up with this idea because her expenses are not taken care of by her benefactor in Mbale District.

The third year student of Public Health chose to sell clothes because she did not have enough capital to rent a room and buy stock. “I realised that if only I carried my bag with clothes then it would save me from rent and competition from boutiques just outside campus. Competition is stiff, yet moving around the different lecture rooms would not cost me anything,” she explains.

Wadumaga has managed to build a personal relationship with students that keep referring others to her. However, she says, this requires commitment because not all students will pay attention to what you are selling.

She is normally on the move by 5am to be able to beat traffic, and also get nice clothes from Owino market at a cheaper price before Kampala comes to life. “I make lots of profits that have seen me survive through the semester,” she smiles.

Plaiting hair

Dealing with a bad hair day is one thing many students cannot stand. They would rather stay in their hostels or keep at home.

Noella Namukho, a former student of Kyambogo University, took note of this and moved in to solve the problem. She started with her roommates.

Just by her bedside, Namukho says she would plait two to three clients at the weekend.

“Setting my charges between Shs10,000 to Shs20,000 attracted a good number of students, especially those that did not want to spend long hours seated in a salon,” she narrates.

What started as an embarrassing small business she only engaged in during her free time is now Namukho’s full time work after applying for jobs in vain.

Dealing in cosmetics and jewellery

Smelling good is something every campus student wants, regardless of their social class.

Retailing perfumes is a profitable business venture that students can successfully combine with their education as Desire Nalubega, a resident of African Hall at Makerere University, explains.

“I love perfumes and would not mind spending a shilling on the different designer perfumes. But realising that each time I wore a perfume friends would ask me to direct them to where they can

buy them from opened my eyes,” she says.

Taking different orders from more students in her class and her hostel, Nalubega grabbed the opportunity and started with a stock worth Shs50,000, selling each between Shs10,000 and Shs15,000.

“A difference of Shs1,000 or Shs3,000 may seem little when it comes to some students but truth is not many have it,” Nalubega remarks.

On the other hand, Phionah Nabulima, a student at Nkumba University sells jewellery such as necklaces, rings, earrings and bangles, some of which she makes by herself.

She uses some of the money to reinvest in her stock and the rest caters for her needs.

Rather than wait for your parent’s or guardian’s handout, you could venture into what will give you some monetary stability.

Expert Opinion

“If you network well this [small businesses] can always help widen your market base, do not fear reaching out to lectures, starting with those that you know might be a stepping stone to the next leave,” Daniel Mugalu, a lecturer says.