

How to Choose the Right Degree Programme



By Maputiatota

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It's That Time of the Year Again

Universities and colleges are fighting for bright undergraduates to enroll in their institutions.

So which degree should you do?

In this short e-book, I try to give a good answer to that



UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE



Getting the Right Degree

It is really hard to select the right academic institution and select the degree that best suits you. The reason for this is summed up by this simple statement:

Societal Pressure



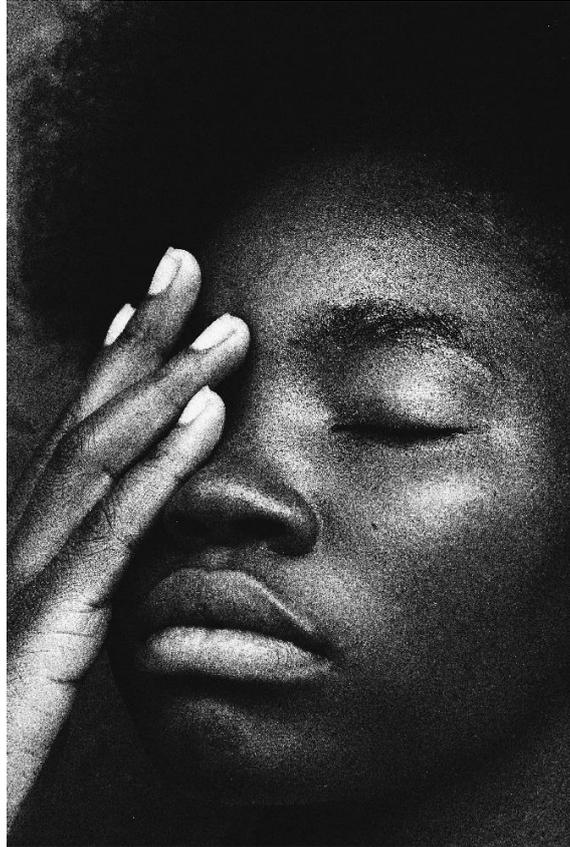
Before we get into the deep questions you need to ask yourself, let's tackle this beast called societal pressure.

Societal pressure forces many people to do degrees they don't need at academic institutions they don't like and end up failing to get meaningful employment.

End result? 5 years gone down the toilet.

Here Are a Few Reasons NOT to Use When Choosing a Degree

Your Parents Really Want You to Do That Degree.



This is a really bad idea – unless if they have a guaranteed job waiting for you. Here's why it's a bad idea.

University, like it or not, is a place where you are taught how to memorize stuff and you are then given a piece of paper at the end which confirms that you're good at memorizing stuff.

In order for you to truly excel and be an exceptional student, you need to be someone who is self-motivated and able to actually understand stuff on your own.

You will need to use that slow university WI-FI to download tutorials that teach you the fundamental concepts and download books that equip you with the knowledge about how stuff actually works.

Doing a degree just because your parents told you will result in you being a student with zero motivation, and this will lead you to get not-so-good grades.

In the end, when you are looking for a job, you will be competing with people who are actually passionate about the same degree that you did, and if you don't have good connections, hard luck!

Your Friends Are Doing That Degree



Let me share a personal story about the subject I chose to do during my early high school years. I feel that this story is very relevant to people who also want to choose the right degree.

It was a regular day. It wasn't too hot, and it wasn't too cold. I was dropped off at school and I was alone. I had no idea who had been accepted from the guys who I went to primary school with and I had no idea how the day was going to go.

A few familiar faces showed up and after an hour or so of waiting, we went into the hall for assembly. The choir at my school was just amazing.

It was led by a big, confident lady who one could clearly see that she had a passion for music. They sang a few songs and I was just blown away.

After that, we Form Ones stayed behind as the teachers allocated classes for us. There were four classes available – North, South, East and West. I was given two classes (by mistake) – Form 1 North and Form 1 West. Most of my old mates were in Form One North and I decided to choose that class.

Besides, people bastardized the words West and Worst so bad that they actually ended up sounding the same. Who would want to be in the Worst Form? Not me!

We were then asked to choose practical subjects. I only wanted computers and was horribly disappointed to realize that they were not an option at this stage.

There were four options that we could choose from – Fashion & Fabrics, Food and Nutrition, Building and Woodwork.

Which subject would you have chosen? I chose Fashion and Fabrics. I couldn't believe it but I actually chose this. I believed that Fashion and Fabrics was for girls (Feminists...I'm not being sexist. That's what I thought).

I have always wanted to become a chef and wanted to do Food and Nutrition. It would have been a good idea to choose it because my sister excelled at that subject and I would have had a wealth of tests and past exam papers. I couldn't join it.

There were only 2 boys and back then I was rather frightened of girls so I chose to let this lifelong dream get put on hold. Building sounded like a very unattractive option and woodwork sounded dangerous.

So why did I choose Fashion and Fabrics? It's because of a guy called McBeeze. McBeeze was one of the guys from my primary school who could make you eat rocks, swim in sulphuric acid and drink poison.

His speech & convincing skills were THAT good. He convinced all the guys to join Fashion & Fabrics and most of us – except for one or two decided to enroll for this class. We joined it and had a good time – life is full of surprises. And yes. I can sew.

This is how most people choose degrees, and how they generally approach life. We were supposed to have a tall, slim lady with a frightening cat who would tell us about the classes present.

She was supposed to tell us that there was no difference between Form One North, South, East and West. She was supposed to tell us the differences between the 4 practical subjects, listing the Pros and Cons of each.

There were supposed to be pamphlets with all this information, or even a detailed booklet. We must have had an opportunity to talk to this lady and hear more about the subjects. None of that happened.

The three things that we used to choose our subjects were:

- Our friend's opinions. McBeeze's opinion won us all.
- Our biased perceptions of the various subjects.
- Our fears. I wasn't the only one who wanted Food & Nutrition but we were too scared to go because there were a lot of girls.
- The name of the subjects.

This also applies to degrees. Many choose degrees for the exact reasons listed above. That's the wrong approach.

So, now that we now know the reasons **NOT** to choose a degree, let's have a look at a few of the **RIGHT** reasons to choose a degree.

You Have Done Your Research



A degree is an investment. An investment of time, energy and money.

Now for a moment imagine this. You are given \$26,280 United States Dollars. Would you give all of this money to some well-dressed guy you've never met before who promises to change your life?

I wouldn't

You would first do your research. You would ask the following questions:

- Who is this guy?
- Why does he want my money and why should I give him?
- What is he offering?
- How is he going to change my life?
- If he fails to change my life what's my plan?

Well here's some news for you. The shortest degrees in Zimbabwe (that I know of) go for 3 years. 3 years is 26,280 hours.

A degree is an investment that you hope will change your life. You need to ask yourself the following:

- What exactly is this degree?
- What will I be doing?
- How is this degree going to change my life?
- If I fail to get a job with this degree then what?

The last question is the most important. Life doesn't always go according to plan. You need to have a plan for what to do if you fail to get a proper job.

Such a plan usually involves using what you've learnt from the degree to start your small scale hustle. It won't be pretty but at least you'll be doing something.

How to Do Research

1. The Mighty Prospectus

Buy a NET*ONE hourly bundle. After that, head over to the university websites. Most universities use their acronyms and end with .ac.zw for example:

The website for Harare Institute of Technology (HIT) is:

<https://www.hit.ac.zw>

The website for University of Zimbabwe is:

<https://www.uz.ac.zw>

Head over to the websites and look for what is called a prospectus. This will take a lot of patience and wisdom as most websites in this country either don't work too good or are incredibly hard to navigate. Shinga mwanangu.

2. Ask!

Look for people who have done the degree you want to do and ask them. Remember that people have different opinions so try to get a large sample.

Get a few successful people, a few average ones and a few unsuccessful ones. They will all have gems for you.

You get such people through networking. That's where your brothers, sisters, and your mother's never-ending list of cousins come in.

Here's a sample message that you can use:

“Hi, My name is Bhorongi Bharangizha. I recently passed my ‘A’ Levels and would like to research on the best programme for me to do.

I have heard that you’ve done Mechanical Engineering and would love to know more about this degree and it’s potential prospects. Please do share any relevant information that you see fit.”

This is a well thought out message that absolutely **no** sane person would say no to.

Alternatively, you can check out twitter & Facebook.

On twitter there’s mentorshipzim

<https://twitter.com/mentorshipzim>

On this page, various professionals share their experiences. You can hunt them down over there.

3. Go in Person

You are going to spend at least 26,280 hours. The least that you could do is do your research. Use your parents for this.

Get a nice good list of questions and try to organize a meeting with one of the lecturers in the field you would want to do.

Lecturers will find it hard not to give them the information you need. Take note of what they say and most importantly what they don’t say.

Career Prospects



The main aim of getting a degree is usually to get a good job which will allow you to get married, buy a nice house and get a cute dog that messes up your yard every day.

You need to ensure that the degree you are going after offers such prospects. It's no point going after a degree that leaves you doomed as soon as you start it as it has no meaningful prospects.

For this, you also need to do research. Don't just google which jobs you can get with your degree. No.

Take it a step further. Look for online job boards and enter your degree. See what kind of jobs pop up and have a look at their requirements.

A good example of such a place to start is LinkedIn. Create a LinkedIn profile and start searching for jobs.

Also look for other job boards. Google and Wisdom will guide you here. Look for international boards. See which jobs you can get in the following countries:

- South Africa
- United Kingdom
- Australia
- United States of America
- Dubai

All of this should give you a good idea of the options your degree will offer you.

Life After University

Begin with the end in mind. You will finish that degree and after that you will face life.

This is a very good time to start planning for what to do after you finish school. In my opinion, it is best to do a degree that teaches you stuff that you can use whether or not you get a job.

Let's have an example.

Africa. Mama Africa. She is so fertile. Her land produces food so good that it feeds other continents. You decide to do a degree in Agriculture. You have done your research and have seen that the job prospects look quite good.

You want to eventually get a job at a big company - like SeedCo. You do your research and find out what you need in order to get a job at such a company.

You then do everything in your power to get a job there, but, this doesn't work.

You hoped this wouldn't happen, but made a good contingency plan. Your grandparents have a nice portion of land in Domboshava. You already made plans with them explaining how you would start to rear chickens and do a bit of maize farming.

You start to use your limited capital to start your business and slowly but surely (and painfully), you start to earn a living.

This is what this world needs.

Here's something that nobody tells you. When you finish school (University), all that airtime you get will disappear. All those

allowances you get will vanish into thin air. Your friends will vanish...because you'll be the poor guy nobody wants to hang out with.

You will become that “kid who does nothing” and will become “employed” as a messenger wherever you live.

You will get endless “advice” and stuff forwarded to you – links of jobs that expired 6 months ago, jobs you're not even qualified for and jobs that you really wouldn't want to do.

Don't be that kid. **Do your research now.**

CONCLUSION

Choosing the right degree from the right institution is quite difficult. Research makes the process much easier and brings about a ton of clarity.

If you loved this ebook and would love to get one just like this made for you (at a fee of course), send me an email on the following address:

contact@charakupadesigns.co.zw

I also make good websites. Head over to

www.charakupadesigns.co.zw to see more books and the amazing websites I've made for happy clients.

Not interested in any of the above options : (

It's okay.

You can head over to twitter [@maputiatota](https://twitter.com/maputiatota) and follow me.

That would be quite lovely.