

WAITHOOD... THE PERIOD OF WAITING

One of the things that bothers Basotho in this current economy, is the fact that young Basotho are finding it very difficult to [find employment](#) after they have completed their tertiary education.

Past generations have brought up their children on the idea that

education is the answer to poverty . We were brought up to believe that we must complete our primary education and secondary education very well so that we could have an opportunity at tertiary education. It was as if completing tertiary education was a guarantee not only at a job, but a well paying “professional” job.

Unfortunately this is not the case. There are many students who have completed their tertiary education and have only managed to get employed in jobs that a few years ago were meant for those who did not go on to tertiary education. In some instances they do not even manage to get these jobs.

In the past the cycle of life was that one went through primary school, secondary school, high school and then tertiary. They then got jobs through which they could support themselves and help the family where they could. After this they would marry and move out of home and establish their own families. Or they could move out of the family home to a set of two rooms while they set up their own households. This was the defining moment. A moment that they could now be referred to as adults. They would now command respect, and they would stop being referred to as Abuti or Ausi to Ntate or ‘Mé.

This dynamic has changed to a situation where graduates still live at home with their parents. Not only because they are not married, but because they simply cannot afford to leave home. If they are lucky enough to have jobs, they do not earn enough in this economy to establish homes. In many cases they do not have jobs at all, and are still requesting money for parents to take care of their basic needs. Parents of this generation have the responsibility of not only taking care of their own parents but of their children as well.

It was a great relief for me to learn that this is not a concept that affects us in developing countries only, but those in the so called developed or first world too. In fact there is a name to this idea. It is called Waithood. Waiting to get a job. Waiting to get married. Waiting to move out of home. Waiting to buy a car. Waiting to move into adulthood. The concept was coined by Dianne Singerman in 2007 in her work with youth in the Middle East. It has subsequently been used by students of social dynamics (sociologists, anthropologists etc) to refer to the period that graduates wait after graduation to get into employment)

It can be expected that waithood can last a few months, or even one year. The reality though is that in some cases it can last 5 or even 10 years. In my line of work I have come across too many CVs of people who completed their tertiary education in the first decade of this century, but have yet to be employed for more than 6 months from time to time or have yet to the coveted desk job

The question I want to pose to employers and government is, How long should Basotho wait in Wait hood. I am aware of the efforts that large private sector organisations are making towards promoting an entrepreneurial generation. I am aware of the efforts that government has made to advance the same. I do not decry these. Unfortunately I am also aware of the fact that these same bodies contribute to the decrease in wait hood years for South Africans by using the services of South Africans for services that are available or could be available here at home.

Basotho beso ba khoebong, I would like to encourage you to inform these young hopefuls before apathy reaches them of the things that you require, so they might provide them, or learn to do them

Basotho are renowned for their brilliant thoughts and ingenuity. Many a discussion have been held on what could be done to address this issue. But these discussions always end up academic or hypothetical. In government they are bogged down by bureaucracy. In large organisations they are slow to fruition as they do not contribute directly to the bottom line. It is time for private organisations to take the bull by the horns.

But why should the private sector have to move harder than others? Because ultimately, these people who are waiting cannot be spending. And as soon as their parents retire and cannot support them, they will not have money to buy clothes and cell phones or airtime at your shops. They will not be able to afford to get their hair done at your salons. Their diet will be limited to papa ka moroho oa jareteng, no more pizza or makoonya, let alone fried chicken. The bottom line will be affected. While I can not claim to be an economist, that seems very cut and dried to me.