

SAICA

YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY: SOLVING SA'S SKILLS SCARCITY CRISIS STARTS AT SCHOOL



WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY GRADUATION: WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY'S FIRST THUTHUKA BCOM ACCOUNTING GRADUATES

Youth unemployment is a colossal problem. The latest youth labour statistics show that at 38.8%, only one in four of the country's working-age youths (15 to 34 years) is employed. No wonder "not being able to find a job" is among their top three fears.

Choosing a career where skills are in short supply enhances the likelihood of finding employment. Take chartered accountancy, for example. Not only is South Africa in desperate need of more chartered accountants [CAs(SA)], but employment studies show that they are among the top 10 vacancies employers battle to fill.

But why is there such a big disparity between youth unemployment and scarce skill career shortages? One of the underlying problems is not taking the right subjects at school.

GOOD GRADES AND THE RIGHT SUBJECTS OPEN CAREER DOORS

Take the financial, engineering, scientific, architectural or medical sectors, for example.

To study a career in these fields, learners must take pure maths at school and pass it well. Yet, far too few learners do so. Indeed, 2017's matric results revealed that not only did significantly fewer matric learners write the end of the year national maths exam but, out of those who did, only half (51.9%) achieved more than 30% to pass.

It should therefore come as no surprise that, whether it be competitiveness surveys run by the World Economic Forum, or the results in the Trends in International

"TEUF IS ALSO BUILDING CAPACITY AT SA'S HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED INSTITUTIONS TO HELP RURAL COMMUNITIES ACCESS THE SAME QUALITY OF EDUCATION AVAILABLE IN THE REST OF THE COUNTRY."

Maths and Science Study (TIMSS), South Africa's maths performance continues to be ranked among the worst in the world.

This is a matter of national concern. As most of the scarce skills jobs call for a background in pure maths, this does not bode well for SA's unemployment rate. In addition, studies show that young black South Africans face greater hurdles to success than their white peers do, thanks to shortcomings in our education system.

Yet, bridging these shortcomings requires more than government intervention – it takes the co-operation and support of all the role players in the broader national economy.

THERE ARE REMARKABLE PROJECTS MAKING GREAT STRIDES IN EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION

One of the purposes behind the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants' (SAICA's) Thuthuka Education Upliftment Fund (TEUF)

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is improving the quality of the country's maths. This project has a single-minded objective to transform the demographics of the CA(SA) profession by providing educational support to African and coloured learners and university students. While benefiting the profession, this also helps to uplift disadvantaged communities.

Established in 2002, TEUF started in the Eastern Cape as a single project. Today, TEUF runs more than 45 mathematics, science and finance literacy school programmes annually, and across all nine provinces. These projects include, among others: Development camps and supplementary classes (in mathematics, accounting, English and responsible leadership); career-awareness programmes; and accounting Olympiads.

TEUF is also building capacity at SA's historically disadvantaged institutions (HDI) to help rural communities access the same quality of education available in the rest of the country. To date, TEUF's HDI capacitation programme has



THUTHUKA LEARNER: SBONGAKONKE NTSELE, KZN'S TOP ACCOUNTING LEARNER UNDER ADVERSITY CELEBRATES HER SEVEN DISTINCTIONS WITH SAICA PROJECT MANAGER, LETHUKUTHULA MKHIZE

seen five out of six of South Africa's HDIs gain SAICA accreditation for their BCom undergraduate CA-stream accounting degrees, with three of these also having received accreditation for their postgraduate programme.

Plus, through SAICA's Thuthuka Bursary Fund, the programme is increasing the number of African and coloured CAs(SA) by annually funding the university studies of around 900 aspiring CAs(SA) from previously

disadvantaged communities.

The results are remarkable: together, these projects have taken CA(SA) black membership from a mere 1 352 members in 2002 to 12 448. To date, the Thuthuka Bursary Fund has produced 1 023 qualified CAs(SA) with a further 1 958 aspiring African and Coloured CAs(SA) currently in various stages of the CA(SA) qualification route.

This is a significant win for youth employment – and only possible because of funding partnerships from business, government and civil society.

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UNIZULU ACCREDITATION: CELEBRATING THE UNIVERSITY OF ZULULU'S BCOM (ACCOUNTING SCIENCE) SAICA ACCREDITATION. FROM LEFT: SIZWE NXASANA, THUTHUKA BOARD MEMBER; CHANTYL MULDER, SAICA; MIA NOSIPHO MAKHANYA, BANKSETA; XOLISWA MTOSE, UNIZULU; AND SPEHLELE KHOSA, UNIZULU