

'Thuthuka was the best phone call I ever received!'

By [Lia Labuschagne](#), issued by [SAICA](#)

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CA(SA) trainee, Thokozani Mazibuko, speaks about how Thuthuka changed his life.



The individuals whose lives are touched by a comprehensive educational and support programme like SAICA's Thuthuka Bursary come from all over South Africa and have different backgrounds. Many of them, like Thokozani Nowgli Mazibuko (24) say that they were "always good with numbers", but not all of them knew at an early age that they wanted to become chartered accountants [CAs(SA)] or follow a career that requires the CA(SA) qualification. His story is an example of how someone can find a different direction than an original dream – something that suits them perfectly – when an organisation like Thuthuka believes in them enough to help change their lives.

As a youngster, Thokozani "always wanted to be a teacher. I wanted to help my classmates at school mostly with mathematics and I quite enjoyed it. So, I felt that teaching was the right path for me to take."

One look at his matric results and it is easy to see that he definitely knew his stuff. He matriculated from the Ingula High School (Ladysmith, KZN) with impressive results: 86% for Mathematics, and 90% for Accounting. "I didn't pay much attention to my theory subjects, but got 80% in business studies and 68% in Economics." It was those good marks, that ultimately launched him into a new dream that took him away from teaching.

You see, while he dreamt of going to university finding the money to further his study was another matter. As a member of a large family and a twin – he says his brother "was even brighter than I was at school!" - Thokozani knew he could rely on his very supportive family, but university fees were always going to be a concern. Despite this, "we always did the only thing we could do, namely focus on our studies."

He continues: "I personally didn't know much about the accountancy profession, until we had visitors to our school from SAICA's Thuthuka programme. Lethu Mkhize and the rest of the team gave us insight into what the profession is all about, and how the programme works." That is when his dream changed from becoming a teacher to studying towards becoming a chartered accountant. "I fell in love with the profession during that visit – but to make sure, I also started doing my own research to make sure that I was making the right decision."

Thokozani also discovered the advantages of Thuthuka's comprehensive approach to supporting the students on their programme. He applied and was delighted to be accepted: "With Thuthuka I knew I never had to worry about anything other than progressing from one year to another in my studies. I knew that I never needed to ask for something from my family for that purpose. Tuition, accommodation, books and stationery were covered. Even monthly allowances were sorted out by Thuthuka. I'd say that the call I received from Thuthuka after receiving my matric results is probably the best call I ever received!"

Thokozani comments on some of the challenges he experienced during his years at university apart from the hard work of studying to become a CA(SA): "Honestly, there were no difficulties that were not quickly resolved. Just like any other programme, Thuthuka has shortfalls, but they try to resolve practical problems quickly and also emphasised the importance of us as students remaining a family. For instance, when there were delays with the delivery of books and stationery, Thuthuka sorted it out and also ensured that senior students lent their books to the students in the grades they had already passed."

He praises the individual efforts of Thuthuka staff: "There's the likes of SAICA's Lethu Mkhize, who ensured that my understanding of the accountancy profession was consistently being developed. The university programme manager also scheduled regular meetings to monitor our progress with our studies, and discuss the difficulties we faced. They invited special guests from different organisations to share their insights with us about the profession and how to survive the university phase of our careers. This was very important for me."

Assistance for an entire career path

Thokozani says that his participation in the Thuthuka programme changed more than just his career plans; it changed his life. He explains in more detail: "It gave me more direction and access to resources that were life-changing. It is not every programme that gives you access to resources, but then also provides you with the guidance that ensures you don't lose sight of the bigger picture. In fact, they provide you with a family that can reliably assist you not just with academic problems, but with your entire career path."

He explains that this sentiment goes beyond his own experience: many of his other friends from the programme mention how grateful they are for the opportunities they were given by Thuthuka. He adds that the effect on his own family was huge: "For my family, I cannot even begin to say what a blessing Thuthuka was to us!"

From those humble beginnings, today Thokozani can be found working at Deloitte's Johannesburg office, where he is currently in his first year of training. He says he looks forward to February 2024, when he should be done with training and can continue following his dreams as a qualified CA(SA) – something he is particularly excited about because the accounting profession "allows you to work almost in every industry, business, hospital or government institution or any other sector you can think of. A chartered accountant has the responsibility to maintain accounting records and this is where our opportunities come in. Even if a new industry was to be developed, the legal requirement for maintaining accounting records will be there. Hence, we will always have opportunities as long as we are in this profession."

When talking about young people who are still in the process of deciding the directions for their careers, Thokozani has some specific advice: "I believe it is important to consider your own strengths and weaknesses. In addition, you have to do detailed research into the different career opportunities that are out there and that may interest you. If possible, find someone who is already following the career you are considering. Such a person is likely either to make you love what you are considering as a path, or make you realise that it is not for you."

Because choosing the right career is so important, he wants to contribute towards helping other young people in his community choose what is right for them: "It is important to increase awareness of the many careers available to them. I have begun to realise that most the youth in my area are not aware of such opportunities. As a result, they tend to follow the few career paths that are common and already crowded. So, I believe the responsibility lies with us who have been exposed to more things also to ensure the knowledge passes to the rest of the youth."

Although the road to becoming a chartered accountant can be daunting, Thokozani has a positive view: "I'd say if you want to do it, then go for it! I believe the terms of admission at the universities already take into consideration whether you have the ability to handle the pressure or not. If you know it is what you want, then you just need to believe in yourself. It won't be easy, but it is definitely doable."

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