

# AT(SA) gave me the confidence to do more

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

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*"The Accounting Technician [AT(SA)] designation has been an eye-opener for me. I would not be doing this well had I not participated in the SAICA Enterprise Development Khulisa iBiznis programme."*

These are the views of Zezethu Giyose AT(SA) who is currently employed by the Eastcape Midlands College, assisting in the Quality Management Systems and Internal Audit Office work.



Zezethu Giyose

"In my current role, communication skills are very important, especially because I have been doing audit follow-ups and generating reports on management implementation. Internal auditors contribute to the organisation by identifying those parts in the company that need improvement, as well as those that are successful."

The young accountant has come a long way from the small village Tamara in the Eastern Cape where she grew up. "My parents divorced when we were very young. Nevertheless, both my parents and grandmother did a great job in providing for me: they all tried their best to make ends meet. Then, in April 2001 a tragedy struck our family. My sister got badly burnt and when my father rushed to take her to hospital, he was involved in a car accident and was killed. For me, a small girl in Grade 1, it was very traumatic and heartbreaking."

Despite these early tragedies, Zezethu fixed her mind on a better future:

"Nine years later, when I was in Grade 10, my siblings and cousins advised me to choose mathematics and accounting as subjects. It was already very

clear in all our minds that I would become an accountant, since it was the only career that we trusted. I dreamt of becoming a CA(SA) and, in my matric year, I applied to study towards a BCom Accounting at various universities. Sadly, I was rejected because I could not meet the required marks standards."

Then came a positive turn of events and the advice she needed. "In January 2013 I was one of the walk-in students at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) and fortunately someone there was giving career guidance to us walk-ins. I told him about my dream career to become a CA(SA) and he advised me to apply to study for a National Higher Certificate (NHC) in Accountancy because it was in the same stream of education as my dream career."

Zezethu was soon accepted to study for the NHC at WSU. "I had made up my mind to work extremely hard, with the aim finally to become a chartered accountant. My studies led to a Diploma in Internal Auditing as well as a BTech in Internal Auditing. Fortunately, I was also accepted to participate in the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants' (SAICA's) Enterprise Development Khulisa iBiznis programme supported by J.P. Morgan."

She proudly adds: "It also meant at the end of completing the programme, I could write the AT(SA) designation behind my name and could claim SAICA Membership."

To get to that point was not without its obstacles. This included the self-confidence issues with which she struggled while studying at the SA Accounting Academy (SAAA). "I have always struggled to believe in my own abilities. At the SAAA someone told us that the pass mark was 100% and that using vernacular language was prohibited. These remarks made me very scared that I would be among those students who would have to repeat more than once, because I was not an A

student and my communication skills were very poor. Even adjusting to the Johannesburg lifestyle was a struggle. I will forever be grateful to my facilitator Alminah, who instilled confidence in me. She believed in me, so I just couldn't disappoint her!"

Zezethu says the programme taught her discipline, self-confidence, and time management: "In 2020, during my internship with Bryte Advisory I was promoted within three months to a team leader role. For the very first time in my life, I was not scared to take on that responsibility because the programme prepared us well for leadership roles."

Most importantly, it also instilled a life-long learning attitude in her. "I am definitely planning on doing the Bridging Certificate in the Theory of Accounting (BCTA) next year and have already sent in applications to prospective universities. I have come to realise that career development is important in our field to stay relevant and adjust well with the changes in technology."

### **AT(SA) comments and advice**

Zezethu talks about the specifics of the work of accounting technicians: "They play an important role in a business because they track incomes and expenses, ensure statutory compliance and provide investors and management with quantitative financial information which can be used in making business decisions. I would definitely recommend following the AT(SA) route to young graduates, because it's going to sharpen them for the corporate environment. I would also advise them to upskill themselves first and not focus on money. What is particularly important at the entry level is knowledge."

In terms of technical knowledge, it is important that an AT(SA) has some advanced knowledge of software packages such as Microsoft Office, accounting software like Pastel, Xero, or QuickBooks, and how to do eFiling. Non-technical knowledge and skills include being customer oriented, being creative and willing to help others, and also committing to lifelong learning to stay relevant and employable.

"I believe young stars have long sought to change the world for the better. Young people see witness the challenges of today and I believe they are keen to meet them and fix the problems for the better of all. When I approach young people to introduce this designation to them, I stress its benefits: qualifying as a SAICA Associate Member, the incredible skills that come with it and the money you will earn in the end. I strongly believe in the benefits and future of the AT(SA) designation!"

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