



**THIS IS MY  
CAREER, AND  
I NEED TO  
PUT ASIDE MY  
DOUBTS AND  
BE BRAVE**



**NONTETHELELO BHENGU | STUDENT**



**Currently Studying:**  
Electrical Engineering  
N6



**Location:**  
KwaZulu-Natal,  
KwaDabeka



**Age:**  
22 years



**Academic Institution:**  
Elangeni College  
KwaDabeka Campus



### MY JOURNEY INTO ENGINEERING

I always wanted to become a doctor, but my parents encouraged me to do electrical engineering. I even took physical science and life sciences at high school because those are the subjects you need to be a doctor, but my parents thought engineering would be a good opportunity and that the money would be good.

### I HAVE BEGUN TO REALLY LIKE ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

At the start I didn't have any idea what electrical engineering was all about. I also didn't enjoy the course at the beginning, and I was not confident of my abilities. I was just doing it as it was better than staying at home being unemployed and not studying. I decided just to keep going and see where it will take me.

The biggest change is that as I have been learning about how electricity works and how relevant it is to our lives, I have begun to really like electrical engineering. This thing has begun to get in me.

I have been able to put my knowledge into practice and was even able to fix cables and appliances at home after power cuts. That made me realise that I want to go far with this. I sat myself down and told myself this is my field, this is my career, and I need to put aside my doubts and be brave.

### WORKING HARD AND STUDYING ALL DAY

I have had to move away from home to study. At the beginning I wasn't comfortable being away from home,

but I have come to find it works well. At home it's hard to study properly as there are lots of noise and disturbances from family members, so I moved to an area close to the campus and I am renting a room and using my NSFAS allowance to pay rent. Here there is peace and I have a lot of time to study. That's part of the reason I got this far, basically I am just working hard and studying all day.

### A QUALIFICATION IN ENGINEERING WILL HELP ME GET A JOB FASTER

I have now applied for a learnership that is linked to my studies in electrical engineering. If I get this opportunity I am hoping to start when I complete my N6 and through this opportunity I will get industry experience in the Electrical Engineering field and then obtain a National Diploma. I have done some practicals at the college which have given me good insight into what is happening in the industry and in plants and I am hoping to get in-service training when I complete my studies.

I think a qualification in engineering will definitely help me to get a job faster. There is not that much competition, and I think being a female puts me at an advantage because there are not many females in the field.

### INSPIRING MENTORS

What has helped me on my journey is a mentor who supports and assists us in our studies, a professor at UKZN who our lecturer here at the College introduced us to. The professor gives us extra lessons in one subject, and he also sources extra learning materials and videos, and shares these with us on a WhatsApp group. And then he provides information on available learnership opportunities and gives us career advice. He has gone very far in electrical engineering and has sacrificed a lot to be where he is now. I am very inspired by him, and he has shown me that there is nothing I cannot do, and nowhere I cannot reach, in electrical engineering.

### SUPPORT SYSTEMS

My mother is also very supportive. She encourages me to study and checks on me to make sure that I am okay and not stressed. She buys me everything that I need to study, like a cellphone and data which allows me to research things about electrical engineering and connect with other students and lectures. I have also found that us females study together with other male students. We treat each other equally and I find they are very supportive.

### IMPRESSING OTHERS WON'T HELP MY CAREER

My parents are very supportive but some of my friends and other family members don't take me seriously. They come from the mindset that the only proper career choice is to be a doctor, nurse or policewoman. They think that electrical engineering is not a good career for women, and I am just wasting my time.

I think their main issue is that they don't believe I will ever be able to get work as an engineer as they think it is just a man's job. They have this perception that if you are a woman, you must wear high heels, and you won't look good in work boots climbing up to the top to fix some transformer. These views really discourage me and sometimes, when I get low marks, I even wonder if maybe this is not the right career path.

I have had to convince myself that what people say does not matter because at the end of the day, they won't give me what I want or put me where I want to be. Entertaining them and impressing them won't help my career. I tell myself that whatever I want, I want it for myself. Whatever I do, I do it for my own career and my own life.

### I THINK THERE ARE SO FEW FEMALES IN THE FIELD BECAUSE THERE IS SUCH A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

I have realised that most of these negative perceptions from the community come from a lack of knowledge. I wish they could see what I see and that I could help them explore what I am doing so that they see things differently. I think there are so few females in the field because there is such a lack of knowledge. We need to go to communities to teach young girls about electrical engineering and invite female engineers to tell their stories to encourage these young girls.

Engineering is a very good career, and I would encourage anyone to go for it. It's fascinating learning about what happens behind the scenes in order for us to have electricity in our homes.

### I WANT TO BE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL LADY IN THE WORLD

I always tell myself that I want to be the most successful lady in the world. It inspires me every day. If I don't feel like studying, I just tell myself that if I don't study, I won't be the lady I want to be. I motivate myself that I can do anything, I just have to ignore distractions and work harder.



I TELL MYSELF THAT  
WHATEVER I WANT, I WANT IT  
FOR MYSELF. **WHATEVER I DO,  
I DO IT FOR MY OWN CAREER.**

