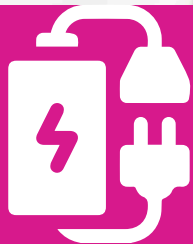




**I BELIEVE
ENGINEERING
IS IN ME**



NQOBILE MBONGWA | STUDENT



Currently Studying:
Electrical Engineering
N6



Location:
KwaZulu-Natal,
KwaDabeka



Age:
22 years



Academic Institution:
Elangeni College
KwaDabeka Campus



ENGINEERING FEELS INFINITE

I always wanted to study engineering. I see it as the backbone of everything as so many things are based on engineering, from medicine to farming. My neighbour is a successful female engineer and she also motivated me as she explained there is plenty of work and many different types of engineering work to choose from. Engineering feels infinite.

Technology advances daily and engineers are needed to make sure everything works. It is all so interesting, and I am the kind of person who likes interesting things. My challenge was that I wasn't sure which engineering to study. I wanted to go to university, but I didn't qualify and so I registered at a college. When I arrived, they explained the different types of engineering they offer. I did my own research to see which one would be best suited for me and I settled on electrical engineering.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

My first year was interesting and not too challenging as I had studied mathematics and physics in high school and the college course started with those basics. In fact, the first three qualifications, N1 (National Accredited Technical Education Diploma) to N3 were easy, but from N4, the subjects became more difficult.

The course introduced the complexities of the industry and there were so many different things to learn. You had to study hard to pass. Fortunately, we get a lot of support from our lecturers, they encourage us and assure us that we have chosen the right field. They even go the extra mile and show us videos of how things work practically.

I am also a hard worker and I work hard to get the marks that I can be proud of. If I don't understand something, I go and get information whether through social media, videos, or Google. I do well academically, and I always get compliments from my teachers.

I BELIEVE THAT ENGINEERING IS IN ME

What motivates me is that I always had a picture of myself working in this industry, I believe engineering is in me. I want to be a female who succeeds in engineering. I have made up my mind that this is what I want, and I will finish regardless of what comes my way.

There is so much I want to learn, and I already have ideas for how to make changes in the world of electricity. It won't be easy for me to give those ideas up. This is why I keep on going. I also want to prove to my parents and my community that even though it is difficult, it is possible.

I do believe the qualification will enable me to get a job, but the biggest challenge is that companies need experience. You apply for an apprenticeship because you need experience, but they need you to be experienced in order for them to hire you.

COMPANIES MAKE IT SEEM LIKE ENGINEERING IS NOT FOR WOMEN

My engineering neighbour has told me that being a woman in engineering is a challenge because the people in charge are all men. Apparently, they believe men lead better than women and so you are always reporting to a man. Even if you have good ideas, the men won't approve them because they think they are better than us.

The people doing the training are also always men and companies promote men more than women. I think companies make it seem like engineering is not for women. And even here at the college, there are still some gender-based challenges. Sometimes the lecturer references our make-up and fancy clothes, saying we don't look like engineering students compared to the boys wearing pants.

It makes it seem like you have to wear certain clothes and change who you are so that you look like someone who does engineering. There also have been cases where the male students tell us we are too emotional and say that we will make lots of mistakes at work.

NOT A CAREER FOR WOMEN

My family was against me studying engineering because they didn't believe it was a career for women. They wanted to know why I didn't study nursing or pharmacy. I explained that I'm passionate about engineering and I would not succeed in anything else because it would not come from within me.

Now they can see how successful I am becoming and so they understand me and my choices better. I am doing well, and they are proud of me. I have also tried to show them videos on the practicalities of engineering to help them understand what I do.

I don't think the rest of my community has changed their perception of me because they are still skeptical of the advice I give them on how to fix their appliances. They would rather ask a man who hasn't studied for assistance, simply because he is a man.

ENGINEERING HAS CHANGED THE WAY I THINK

Studying engineering has changed the way I think and look at things. Communicating with lots of different people through my studies has also changed me. I now know how to be understanding of other people and how to motivate them. I have learnt to identify problems and come up with solutions and now I want to keep changing and improving things.

I CAN SEE MYSELF SUCCEEDING

When I first started, I didn't see myself as being successful, but that has changed. Now I can see myself succeeding as doors are opening, especially now that I am about to finish my studies. I have applied and been selected for a programme, and that shows that anything is possible. I have also gained a lot of confidence because as a woman, I always have to stand up for myself. I am always questioned about my choices and so I have ended up gaining confidence through the process of explaining myself.



MY FAMILY WAS AGAINST ME STUDYING ENGINEERING **NOW** THEY CAN SEE HOW SUCCESSFUL I AM BECOMING AND SO THEY UNDERSTAND ME AND MY CHOICES BETTER.

