

AGAINST ALL ODDS, AN ORPHAN BECAME A MECHANICAL LECTURER

By Geozann Matthyssen



» Dimakatso Tsamai.

Growing up as an orphan in a child-headed household would normally be a deterring factor for many young people to finish school.

But Dimakatso Tsamai refused to use this as an excuse. She is now a Mechanical Lecturer at Four Tops Academy in Mogwase in the North West province.

Tsamai's mother passed away when she was four-years-old. Five years later, when she was nine, her father also passed away. This made growing up with her seven siblings, none of whom were employed, an unimaginable difficulty. Luckily, three of her older brothers got jobs and they were able to take care of them.

"My siblings, though older, had no parental skills and although they tried their best to advise me to do better, the decision ultimately hung on my shoulders. I learnt to make

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decisions that would determine my future at a very young age," explains Tsamai.

Tsamai completed her N6 Mechanical Technology at Orbit TVET College in 2017. In 2018, she received a Mechanical Technology

learnership opportunity at Tlhabane Technical High School in Rustenburg, funded by the merSETA.

Tlhabane Technical High School provided her with theoretical knowledge, while she had to do practical lessons at Four Tops Mechanical Engineering Workshop in Mogwase. Seeing her hard-work and resilience, Four Tops offered her permanent employment as a Mechanical Lecturer at their newly established Four Tops Academy, which started operations in the last trimester of 2019.

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Tsamai teaches mechanical subjects at N1 level. She explains that when she chose to study mechanical technology, she was not certain she

would succeed. She soon got into the swing of things and is well on her way to a successful career.

"I learnt to work hard and appreciate every opportunity given to me in life. During practicals, I was always the first to complete tasks and when I felt left behind, I would sacrifice my lunch hour to catch-up. Greater things in life do not come to us because we want them, they come to us because we work for them," she says.

She continues: "Growing up, I was surrounded by intelligent friends who were older and ahead of me in terms of studies. They rarely had time to spend with me because they were busy with their studies. This is when I decided that instead of changing friends, I should align my academic aspirations with theirs, because for me to spend time with them, I had to do what they did."

Tsamai applauds the good work that the merSETA is doing and says she hopes the organisation can reach more young people like herself.

“ I used to hand out pamphlets on the streets promoting products. Had it not been for the opportunity given to me by the merSETA, Tlhabane Technical High School and Four Tops Engineering Workshop, I would probably still be stuck in the streets. ”

This, she says, is because there are many young people desperate to be pulled out of poverty through the



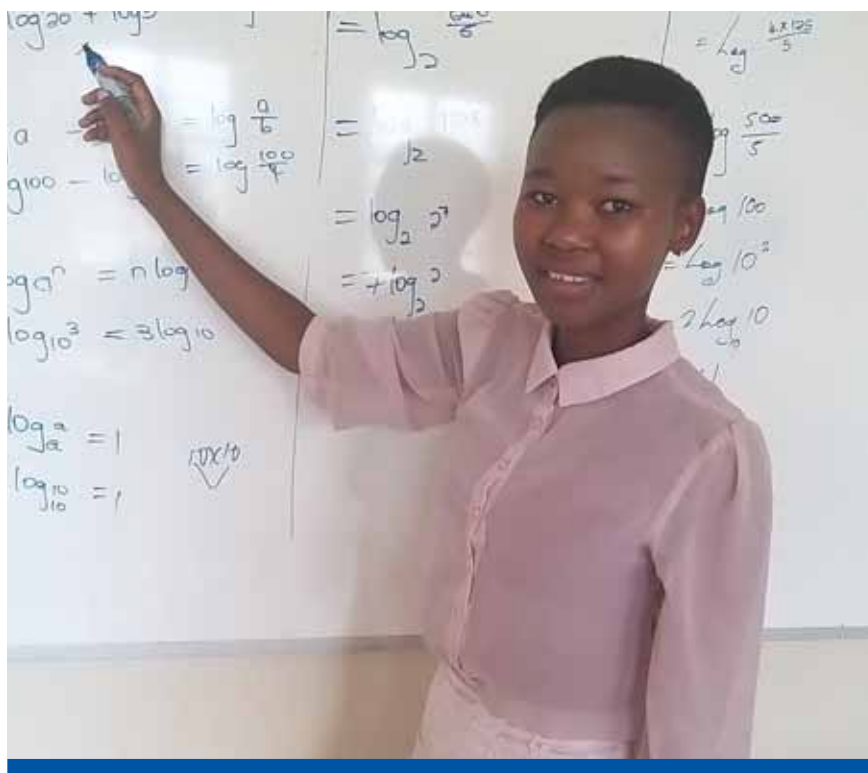
» Tsamai with her Manager, Manaka Mosana.

training opportunity such as the one she received.

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Tsamai advises young women who would like to pursue mechanics as a career to let their passion lead the way. "There is no such thing as a male-dominated field. People should stop making decisions based on societal beliefs and the experiences of others," she says.

She concludes: "One does not choose one's fate. You can only choose where you want to go with the help you are provided by others. Growing up was hard and there were times when I wanted to give up, but I always told myself that I did not choose where my journey in life began, but I am certainly choosing where it is going."



» Tsamai demonstrating how she teaches mathematics to her learners.