

How The Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation is providing access to quality education

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The Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation was formed in 2016 as part of [Standard Bank's](#) Black Economic Empowerment transaction. The foundation aims to uplift communities in South Africa through economic development and alleviation of poverty, by investing in young people from their earliest years in ECD, to schooling and post-schooling.



Schooling is one of the strategic priorities of the foundation and the organisation strives to contribute towards making the educational system more efficient and to produce improved learner outcomes, by providing equal access to quality educational opportunities regardless of one's social economic background.

Through partnerships with various organisations and funded interventions, the foundation has been able to give sponsored learners access to quality education and skill development, which they might otherwise not have had.

Speaking about the schooling programmes that are funded by the foundation are Hlengiwe Mlambo and Entle Mapapu, who are part of the Rhodes Nine-Tenth Mentoring Programme, where senior Rhodes University students volunteer to mentor learners. Alicia Khumalo, who is a recipient of the Foundation's High School Scholarship Programme that offers full scholarships to learners, and Aphiwe Mbokazi who is a beneficiary of the Columba Value-Based Leadership Programme, aimed at developing youth values-based leadership.

Having benefited from the foundation's partnerships with these programmes, these young people give us their views on the education system and recall how the respective programmes that they are beneficiaries of have been instrumental in shaping their educational journeys.

South Africa has a wide gap of education inequality between the privileged and under-privileged communities. "Even though government spends on education, it is not effective because of education inequality and poor learning outcomes. We need an education system that produces skills and teaches learners how to think out of the box. Access to quality education is an issue, and many South Africans are not in the system because they don't have access to funding," says Aphiwe. "In grade 9, I was selected to be part of this leadership development programme and it helped me to integrate a clear vision of where I wanted to be." As a result of her participation in this programme, she has formed a non-profit organisation aimed at creating a sense of love, belonging, and happiness in the everyday lives of youth.

The awareness of educational inequality and lack of access to funding and opportunities is shared amongst these individuals. Alicia highlights her views on how Covid-19 perpetuated the economic challenges South Africa was already facing and how this resulted in even fewer scholarship opportunities. Despite growing up in an environment where there was little awareness about scholarship opportunities, she excelled academically and with the guidance of a teacher was made aware of the High School Scholarship Programme. “I was really proud of myself for breaking the cycle of [lack of access to] prestigious education in my family.”

In South Africa, low quintile public schools lack basic infrastructure. Hlengiwe says, “We need to invest in knowledge value as opposed to ticking boxes. We need to cultivate a culture that invests in quality graduates and scholars as opposed to quantity. In being a mentor, I have learned to see past people’s names, their academic grades, what they look like and their families, it helps to see an integrated person and how much value they are. This has really opened my eyes to the inequality in education.”

The quest for higher education entails accessing opportunities, seeking funding, and excelling academically. Instrumental to academic success is a strong support and guidance system at school level.

“It is crucial for people to have support. You need someone who is in your corner, who is open to walking with you through the trials and tribulations of whatever you are going through,” says Entle. He recalls how he was selected for the programme based on his grade 11 results, “Time has to be the biggest benefit passed down from my mentor to me. My life has changed since joining the Rhodes Nine-Tenth Mentoring Programme. It gave me a sense of direction. It has given me a platform which enabled me to perform at the best level that I could.”

Hlengiwe, Alicia, Aphiwe and Entle’s lives have been changed by participation in schooling initiatives of the foundation. They were fortunate to be beneficiaries of these programmes and have reaped the benefits of access to opportunities which have uplifted them in their pursuit of quality education. The Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation continues to support partnerships with demonstrated impact in providing educational opportunities and funding to marginalised South African youth.

“The core of why we exist is to collaborate with other funders and government to crowd-in significant investments into educational models that influence systemic change in our educational system, so no young person is left behind and denied quality education in South Africa. We also listen to the views of our beneficiaries and young people in general to craft solutions that position their lived experiences at the heart of our strategic imperatives. Their calls for an efficient and inclusive educational system are heard,” says Phumla Hobe-Yabo, head of Programmes and Operations, at The Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation.

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