

From cradle to corner office: Saica's holistic approach to learning and development

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In a landscape where challenges exist in mathematics as a gateway subject, the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (Saica) recognises the imperative role education plays in shaping the future of chartered accountancy. As the primary destination for qualified candidates, Saica is not only committed to addressing the decline in the pool of potential candidates and fortifying the profession but also making a difference through its transformation initiatives to ensure that the country's unequal socio-economical backdrop is not a barrier to access.



The dwindling mathematics matric pass rate poses a significant challenge and threat to the profession, limiting the number of learners eligible to qualify for accountancy studies. Saica acknowledges this predicament and strives to continue to bridge the gap through its robust learning and development initiatives. At the core of these programmes is the commitment to providing accessible and high-quality education for aspiring CAs(SA), AGAs(SA) and Afs(SA) by nurturing pipeline talent from diverse backgrounds at a grassroots level through Saica's learner initiatives aimed at improving mathematics results such as the development camps. The impact of these camps can never be overstated; amongst the country's top achievers were matric learners who attended the Saica Development camps sponsored by the Finance and Accounting Sector Education and Training (Fasset) in 2023. The Saica Development camps are a collaborative effort between the Provincial Departments of Basic Education, Saica and Fasset. These camps were established to harness learners' academic potential and to achieve the results needed to pursue careers in professions of high demand while also addressing critical skills shortages in South Africa. Not only does this ensure a steady influx of qualified individuals into the chartered accountancy stream but also fosters diversity within the profession. The silver lining? Some of the country's top performers from the class of 2023 come from these development camps.

Patricia Stock, Saica chief executive officer reaffirms Saica's allegiance to the cause of empowering aspiring chartered accountants. "We believe in investing not just in education, but in the human potential that drives our profession forward. Through our learning and development initiatives, we are not only addressing the challenges posed by the mathematics matric pass rate but also nurturing a diverse and resilient pool of talent. Our commitment is not just to produce chartered accountants; it's to empower individuals to make a lasting impact in the world of finance, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for both the profession and our nation", Stock explained.

As Saica takes up a substantial portion of the qualified learner pool, it faces the responsibility of not only maintaining but expanding its impact on the profession. Furthermore, Saica invests in continuous professional development programmes to keep its members abreast of industry trends and changes. This commitment to lifelong learning not only enhances the skills and knowledge of existing professionals but also instils a culture of adaptability and innovation within the chartered

accountancy profession.

Robert Zwane, Saica executive director for Learning, Development and National Imperatives, highlights that the premeditative decision for Saica's corporate strategy is to ensure that no learner with potential gets left behind. "By actively addressing the barriers to entry, Saica's Thuthuka Education Upliftment Fund (TEUF) ensures that deserving candidates, irrespective of their background, have access to the education and resources needed for a successful career in chartered accountancy. The TEUF was designed to identify and support promising learners, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder their pursuit of a CA(SA) qualification; this not only widens the talent pipeline but also fosters diversity and transformation within the profession", Zwane explained. "The need for sustainable partnerships with industry, decision-makers in business, government and educational institutions can never be overstated to achieve growth in the pool for qualified learners to study in the field of accountancy."

Saica's commitment to being the world's most trusted CA institute underscores its dedication to upholding the highest standards of professionalism and ethical conduct.

In the realm of maintaining professional integrity, Saica's disciplinary processes, as outlined in its By-laws and Code of Professional Conduct, play a pivotal role. These processes serve as a cornerstone for ensuring that chartered accountants adhere to the highest ethical standards, thereby safeguarding the trust placed in Saica as the world's most trusted CA institute. Saica regularly updates its disciplinary process to ensure a fair legal process for all parties involved. This is evident in the revised Disciplinary Code that was introduced in June 2020, and the most recent updates to the code in March 2023. Saica conducts its disciplinary processes in terms of the Saica By-laws and Disciplinary Code. The general robustness of the Saica Disciplinary processes speaks for itself; from January to December 2022, Saica finalised 207 cases before the Professional Conduct Committee and 2 cases through the Disciplinary Committee. From January to September 2023, Saica finalised 1 case through the Disciplinary Committee and a further 127 cases were finalised through the Professional Conduct Committee. Accordingly, Saica finalised more than 337 cases between 2022 and 2023. Saica's website has detailed information on its [disciplinary process](#) as well as the [outcomes](#) of the relevant hearings.

The concern over chartered accountants leaving the country is a shared challenge across the industry. Saica, as a global beacon for excellence, actively works towards retaining its members by fostering a supportive professional environment. This commitment not only bolsters the national talent pool but also contributes to the global reputation of South African chartered accountants.

While the industry has voiced concerns about the shortage of chartered accountants, it's essential to view this issue from a Saica perspective. Saica's proactive measures in learning and development, global reputation management, reciprocity membership alliances and transformation initiatives like Thuthuka collectively contribute to a sustainable future for the profession in South Africa.

Saica's multifaceted approach, spanning education, global reputation, inclusivity initiatives, and robust disciplinary processes, positions it as a leader in addressing the challenges faced by the accounting profession in South Africa. Through these concerted efforts, Saica is not only responding to the immediate concerns but is actively shaping the landscape for future generations of chartered accountants while actively making a difference by shaping a resilient and proficient cadre of chartered accountants in South Africa.

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