

THEORY IS LIKE THE BODY OF A CAR, PRACTICALS ARE LIKE THE ENGINE

By Temana Masekela



» Siphenathi Ralarala, Electrical Apprentice at HG Molenaar in Paarl, Western Cape.

Siphenathi Ralarala compares his work as an electrician to the functioning of a car, saying that you never know how a car works fully until you work on its engine!

Ralarala, who is a first-year electrical apprentice at HG Molenaar in Paarl, explains that he has learnt wirings and everything that must be connected to motors from the more experienced people and mentors he works with at the company, which he believes will adequately prepare him for his trade test. His apprenticeship training is funded by the merSETA.

"As a first-year apprentice, I know more about theory than practicals. So as anyone can imagine, I am excited to put my theoretical knowledge into practice and see things work as explained," says Ralarala.

“**Ralarala is looking forward to his trade test at the end of his training, which he believes he will pass comfortably.**”

Ralarala completed his level 5 Electrical Engineering at Boland College in Cape Town and says he has so far learnt much from his apprenticeship training, such as how and why electrical panels work. Although he has some knowledge of this from theory, he explains that it was exciting to see this work practically. "This is the first time I



» Ralarala demonstrating the functioning of some electrical wirings.



He advises young people, who want to build careers, to stay focused, avoid toxic friends and always find positives in every negative situation. “The only time I pressure myself is when I work towards achieving certain goals.



have ever been or worked at an industrial engineering site and I am looking forward to learning more about electricals,” he says.

Having grown up in a rural area in the Eastern Cape, Ralarala says he was fascinated by all the technology in big cities. “I knew that there were areas in the country that were more advanced, but it was when I first came to Cape Town that I was introduced to electronics and how they operated. Although I’d always wanted to become an electrician, this gave me the eagerness to want to learn more, so that I could perform my work to the best of my abilities. I would like to be the first to introduce this technology to my rural village back in the Eastern Cape,” says Ralarala.



» Workshop tools in use to prepare practical work piece.



» Earth leakage tester in use for single phase plug circuit.



» Isolation resistance tester in use. Testing between electrical motor windings and windings and earth.

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Ralarala is looking forward to his trade test at the end of his training, which he believes he will pass comfortably. “My plan, upon completion of my apprenticeship, is to get permanent employment and study further at a university to obtain an electrical engineering degree,” he says.

According to Ralarala, one of the most important skills an electrician must have is the ability to read and understand diagrams, which he explains provide a basic understanding of electrical components. He adds that an electrician must work with precision because a small mistake may have dire consequences.

He regards this apprenticeship opportunity as a steppingstone for him to launching a successful career and plans to grasp as much knowledge as possible from it.

This ambitious and hardworking young man has remained focussed even in the midst of storms. His family moved to Cape Town in 1999 seeking employment opportunities. His father passed away in 2018, and he could not afford to study further as his mother is unemployed.

However, this challenge did not deter him from seeking opportunities to better his life. “I found the best of both worlds through this apprenticeship, since I can study and get paid at the same time. This has enabled me to



Typical house wire circuit. Day night light circuit with timers.

assist my family financially and I am grateful to the merSETA and HG Molenaar for this opportunity,” says Ralarala.

His father remains his greatest motivation, having taught him the values of hard work, discipline and staying focused on his goals.

He advises young people, who want to build careers, to stay focused, avoid toxic friends and always find positives in every negative situation. “The only time I pressure myself is when I work towards achieving certain goals. I never compare my achievements to those of my peers because we are from different backgrounds, with different circumstances. I know where I want to go and plan to get there, by my own pace, at my own time,” he says.

Ralarala says he has always dreamed of working in the South African Navy or a mine. “I want to delve deeper into my field and grow in it. Although I don’t know what the future holds, I am behind the steering wheel and plan to get myself to where I want to be,” he concludes.



Isolation resistance tester in use. Testing between electrical motor windings and windings and earth.