

Skills shortage 'holds back mining BEE'

BLACK representation on the boards of SA's mining houses had increased from zero in 2001 to 37% currently, says a report by research firm Landelahni Business.

"This represents a significant shift since the mining charter was formulated in October 2002," said Landelahni CE Sandra Burmeister. "However, at other levels, representation in the mining industry trails the average across all industries."

The research, covering 80% of the mining sector, was undertaken by Landelahni to provide insight into the progress made in

employment equity at operational and corporate level in the mining industry and to provide guidelines to companies in developing employment equity strategies in line with the requirements of the mining charter.

While the number of nonengineering black and white executive directors in the mining industry grew significantly between 2001 and 2004, the ratio between black and white remained static at about 13%.

Black representation in positions from executive to mid-management level grew from 24% in

2003 to 29% last year.

"At corporate head office and at mining operational level, more than 80% of blacks were in support functions such as human resources, shared services, finance and communications," Landelahni's report said.

At operational level, the research shows that of 100 shafts, there were 11 black mine managers, compared with two in 2001.

The research indicated that, to date, the mining industry had been slower than other sectors to put processes in place to meet transformation requirements.

"However, significant board transformation is a step in the right direction. It is bound to accelerate the process," Burmeister said. "What remains worrying is the downward trend in engineering graduates since 1998, including those with mining degrees.

"There has been a 30% increase in engineering enrolments, but only 5% of first-year students graduate as engineers."

Two main reasons cited for not meeting equity targets were the skills shortage and competition for skills in the country's mining industry. *I-Net Bridge*