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Mining shows the way in staff training

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Resources Editor

THE mining industry in SA has trained a far greater percentage of staff at all levels from unskilled to top management than the average across all industries, the latest survey by executive search firm Landelahni Business Leaders, released yesterday, showed.

The findings contradict criticism by the minerals and energy department two weeks ago, after Anglo American released its transformation report, that there was an "unacceptable" failure in the mining industry, and Anglo American in particular, to appoint black CEOs and senior managers.

Landelahni surveyed 12 of the 18 biggest companies in SA's gold, coal, diamond, platinum and uranium mining sectors, representing 177491 permanent employees, or 57% of permanent employees.

It found black people in top mining management more than doubled in the five years to 2006 to 30,6% from 12,5%, ahead of the average of 22,2% across all industries in SA.

The proportion of blacks at senior management, professional and skilled technical levels was lower than the all-industries average, showing that people were being promoted and there was a need to continue training people to fill top management posts in the future, Landelahni CEO Sandra Burmeister said.

In 2006, 34% of top management in the mining industry received training against an average of 20,9% across all industries, and 99% of unskilled workers were trained against an average of 36,7% in South African industry.

Burmeister said the figures were coming off a low base, since skills development received little attention from the mining industry before 2005, but the industry should receive recognition for its efforts since then.

The proportion of women in top management in the mining industry had shown a significant increase, at least partly because of employment equity legislation, but it still lagged behind the average for all industries.

Only 9,3% of top mining management in 2006 was female, against the all-industry average of 21,3%.

Burmeister said the number of engineering graduates, across all disciplines, had fallen to 11,5% of enrolments, which showed the need for industry to intervene to help at university level.

black engineers had increased sharply after 1999. While the total number of graduates in mining and metallurgical engineering disciplines had trebled since 2003 to about 525 from 160, it was still far too low, she said.

Among artisans, the number of applicants for trade tests had fallen over the past 20 years, at the same time as pass rates had dropped from about 52% to 42%.

SA needed to train not only for growth in the mining industry but also to replace the large number of artisans who were currently between the ages of 50 and 55.

The number of mine manager certificates issued had fallen from a peak of 123 in 1997 to zero in 2003, and returned to 80 in 2006.

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