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## 'Ageing workforce needs to be replaced'

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South Africa should not only be training artisans for current needs, but also to replace the ageing workforce, a human resources company said in Johannesburg on Tuesday.

"The current artisan population is ageing, with an average age of 50-55 years ... so we should not merely be training for current needs, but also to replace the ageing workforce," said CEO of Landelahni Business Leaders Sandra Burmeister at the release of the company's 2008 mining survey.

According to the government's Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (Jipsa), at least 12,500 artisans should be produced each year over the next four years to meet demand. However, South Africa continued to suffer a severe shortage of qualified, competent and experienced artisans.

The number of artisans tested across all trades increased from 15 000 in 1970 to 26 500 in 1986, while those who passed trade tests increased from 6 000 to 13 500, the survey found.

From 1986, however, the numbers tested dropped to 9 041 and those who passed dropped to a low 3 222, or 42 percent.

The Mining Qualifications Authority (MQA) target registration for artisans in 2008 was 1 766, against 1 034 actual registrations.

Assuming an average pass rate of 42 percent, some 434 artisans were trained each year under MQA auspices with specific qualifications in mining.

"Artisan training requires a significantly increased investment by both government and the private sector," Burmeister said.

The survey also concluded that black representation in the mining industry at top management level more than doubled from 12,5 percent in 2001 to 30,6 percent in 2006, ahead of the all industry average of 22,2 percent.

The single biggest shift occurred at non-executive director level - from 0,05 percent to 37 percent.

The survey also showed that the mining industry had made significant strides in gender equity, with the number of women in top management increasing from 0,01 percent to 9,3 percent between 2001 and 2006, women in senior management increasing from 0,03 percent to 10,1 percent and those in middle management and professional positions increasing from 5,4 percent to 18,3 percent. - Sapa



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