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SA facing severe artisans shortage

22 Jul 2008

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

"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 the 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, at least 12 500 artisans should be produced each year over the next four years to meet demand. However, South Africa continues to suffer a severe shortage of qualified, competent and experienced artisans, it said.

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%.

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

Assuming an average pass rate of 42%, some 434 mining artisans were trained each year.

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

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