

# Skills shortage far worse than admitted

There are as many as 829,800 vacant positions for high-skilled workers across a diverse spread of occupations in South Africa and this includes a dire lack of artisans, says Sean Jones, co-founder and director of black empowered artisan training academy, Artisan Training Institute (ATI)...



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"Industry pundits have put the artisan shortfall at between 40,000 and 50,000 and, if this figure is correct, we are falling way short of filling this acute gap, something that is bound to effect the performance of the country's economy going forward. It is certainly ironic that while unemployment in South Africa is hovering around 25%, we have a 50,000 shortfall of skilled artisans," Jones says.

The artisan shortfall represents a shortage of boilermakers, diesel mechanics, fitters and turners, tractor mechanics, forklift mechanics, electricians and earth moving equipment mechanics.

According to the latest Adcorp Employment Index, a monthly survey carried out by JSE-listed human capital management group, Adcorp, the skills shortage comes from categories that include senior management; the professions - medicine, engineering, accounting and the law; technical occupations - specialised technicians and artisans; and agriculture.

In terms of actual numbers broken down by occupation, Adcorp believes the skills shortage among technicians is 432,100, among managers 216,200 and among professionals 178,400.

In contrast, however, is that a total of 967,600 elementary workers are over and above the nation's requirements, as are 247,400 domestic workers.

Looking more closely at the statistics, Adcorp's labour economist, Loane Sharp, says: "To a great extent, the shortage of highly-skilled workers has been artificially induced by the Immigrations Act (2002), which makes it exceedingly difficult for foreigners to find work in South Africa.

"The most recent amendments to the Immigrations Act, promulgated in April 2011, prohibit the use of immigration agents and quota work permits, both of which have historically been widely used by South African companies seeking foreign skills," Sharp says.

Adcorp further states that South African citizens' wages in highly-skilled occupations have been significantly escalated, in inflation-adjusted terms, by a whopping 286.4% since 2000, Sharp says.

**Source:** INET BFA

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