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Skills development: less talk, more action



Tuesday, November 20, 2012 - 02:00



The technical sector has received a lot of attention as a result of the new infrastructure development plans announced by government. Isaac Boshomane highlights some of the skills development bottlenecks in the industry.

"Career guidance and subject choice guidance needs to be revisited, especially at school level from grade 10.' Technical high schools workshops need beefing up and improving as this is overdue.

Isaac Boshomane is co-owner of Kgabo Cars Training Services CC. The enterprise visited six schools this year alone to motivate and encourage learners to enter careers in the technical field.

"RPL needs to be made easily accessible to ordinary people, especially backyard mechanics who have some sort of skills', says Boshomane.

"I do not believe the notion that we totally lack skills, in my observation this country has a lot of skills at various levels which are not formalized.'

It is the process of formalizing these skills that has hindered growth in the sector.

He believes better mechanisms and tools are required to measure existing skills against future skills demands to formulate training interventions that will effectively close these gaps.

"There are so many training interventions most of which are just training for activity. Our country needs effective and purposeful training which will enable our people, especially youth to become employable or self employed.'

FET Colleges received a R2,5 billion cash injection by the Department of Higher Education and Training to improve the quality of teaching and increase enrolments.

According to Boshomane, a former motor mechanic educator and lecturer, this has been a step in the right direction. However, large corporations need to come on board and assist SMEs in providing work opportunities for new graduates.

Large organizations cannot cater for these FET learners alone considering that a further R1 billion from Setas has been pumped into FET colleges and that learners are redirected from Universities of Technology and Universities and are now being channeled to these institutions.

Learners will need to put theory into practice, gain experience and real-life skills as part of their preparation for the trade test.

officially qualify as artisans or technicians.

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"We need to be pro-active and assist the Minister by creating practical learning and training workplaces."

One of the most disconcerting challenges in the industry are the training providers who are more interested in making money than producing skilled workers.

These organizations and institutions train learners up till NQF Level 2 and then report to the Minister that they have qualified and graduated many learners. However levels 3 and 4 along with the trade test are being neglected. This means learners are not fully equipped to enter the workplace and are rendered un-employable after completing their training programmes.

"We need to stop being selfish and tackle our country's challenges honestly to address unemployment and improve our economy."

Kgabo Cars has helped 12 young people qualify at INDLELA without any financial assistance; it was even before workplace approval. They are now all employed by big companies, three of them are employed by Kgabo Cars and one is self employed and making a difference.

MerSETA workplace approved Kgabo Cars to offer training from NQF Level 2 to Level 4 in Automotive Repair and Maintenance as well as apprenticeships in Automotive Repair and Maintenance from Level 1 to Level 4.

"We are already implementing the seven steps to become an artisan on a small scale and we are encouraging other SMEs to do likewise as this will increase the pool of qualified artisans for big companies to employ."

In 2011, 12 learners sponsored by merSETA were trained by Kgabo Cars on NQF Level 2 in Automotive Repair and Maintenance as a pilot project and they all passed in record time and they will be graduating on 11 December 2012. This year they are already completing their Level 3 before the do Level 4 to enable them to do trade test.

McCarthy Artisan Automotive Academy, who supported Kgabo Cars from day one as institutional partner, can be very proud of this achievement and are the first to support a Township initiative of this nature in the true sense of the word. They sponsored with tools and equipment and paid a fortune for Isaac (Me) to do Business Management Training.

Automobile Association South Africa (AA), seeing what McCarthy has and is still doing, did not want to be left behind. They partnered with Kgabo Cars as an institutionally for the 6 apprentices that have just started in August 2012.

Corporations are perfectly positioned to assist SMEs to establish themselves. "We could not have achieved what we did if companies and government organizations did not assist us. However we had to start, they saw what we were trying to do and they assisted us and are still assisting and we really appreciate their efforts. Thus, I am urging other SMEs to show some seriousness in what they are doing to attract assistance."

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in skills development for the competitiveness and growth of this country.

By Cindy Payle - Skills Portal

What do you think?

Are businesses playing their role in empowering learners and providing work opportunities? If you have any questions about this article please email info@skillsportal.co.za



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