

Western Cape launches artisan development programme

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In an effort to address the critical shortage of artisans in the country, the Western Cape provincial government on Monday (19 June) launched its R5.8m Artisan Development Programme, aimed at addressing youth unemployment in the province.



The National Development Plan states that South Africa should produce more than 30,000 qualified artisans a year to meet its skilled labour demands.

Earlier this year, Higher Education and Training Minister Blade Nzimande said that the production rate of qualified artisans in South Africa had fallen far short of the required targets.

He said that according to statistics, South Africa had a shortfall of about 40,000 qualified artisans against the annual production rate of 13,000 qualified artisans.

Speaking at the launch of the Artisan Development Programme, Western Cape finance, economic development and tourism MEC Alan Winde said that the lack of artisans in the country could have a "devastating" effect on the economy as artisans played a crucial role in the delivery of services, especially in engineering trades.

Pilot phase

Winde said the average age of artisans was 55. "This means that within the decade, artisans will be really scarce. If we do not have enough artisans to meet the demands of business, business will go elsewhere."

In the pilot phase of the Artisan Development Programme, which began in July, 200 young people who have theoretical knowledge of apprenticeship but have not been able to find placement at a host company, will be funded to complete the in-service training they need in order to write the national trade test and become fully qualified.

Funding has also been made available to train mentors within the host companies so that they can deliver quality training to

their interns. A total of 72 host companies have agreed to participate in the programme.

The programme is being run in partnership with the private sector, communities, skills education training authorities and further education and training colleges.

"Through this programme, we aim to create a pipeline of qualified artisans who can play a role in growing the emerging sectors of our economy such as oil and gas. This programme also gives young people the opportunities they need to qualify and become gainfully employed," Winde said.

He said that according to the National Development Plan, in order to grow the economy and reduce poverty, South Africa needed to produce 30,000 artisans a year.

"The Western Cape government is determined to play its part in realising this national goal," he added.

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