

Gap in market for youth to pursue artisan careers

According to the expanded definition of unemployment, South Africa's [youth unemployment rate](#) is reported to be at an alarming figure of 74.7%. Letitia van Rensburg, training officer at the Master Builders' Association Western Cape (MBAWC), highlights that a viable option for youth to consider is a career as an artisan in the construction industry.



Letitia van Rensburg, training officer at the Master Builders' Association Western Cape (MBAWC)

"Artisans, by definition, are people who work with their hands and as their skills are generally multi-faceted, they are sought after in a wide range of industries," says Van Rensburg.

Essential skills

"Despite technological advancements brought about by the fourth industrial revolution, which has resulted in an evolving job landscape, these skills remain essential as there is always a need for people who work with their hands," she adds.

Van Rensburg points out that, worryingly, most skilled artisans in South Africa are older than 40. On a positive note, though, this presents an opportunity for younger people to acquire these skills and enter the workplace. "There is a gap in the market for young people to pursue artisan careers such as carpenters, electricians, plumbers and mechanics to address the dearth of competent people required to perform these jobs in order to maintain and upgrade the country's infrastructure."



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To assist the youth in taking advantage of these opportunities, Van Rensburg outlines various steps they can take to upskill themselves:

Enrol in training: "Look for ways to improve yourself through free training courses which are available on online platforms such as Udemy and Youtube. There are also various educational and training programmes as well as apprenticeships offered by various organisations such as the MBAWC," notes Van Rensburg.

For those young people who have not been able to complete their formal academic training, entry-level requirements to study a trade, such as carpentry, requires numeracy and literacy from a Grade 9 level.

"Importantly, candidates need to display a willingness to work with their hands and to do physical labour. They should have a passion for the built environment and be prepared to work outdoors, sometimes in adverse weather conditions, as well as be comfortable working at heights," adds Van Rensburg.

In supporting the development of the industry, MBAWC also provides annual bursaries for tuition for young people engaged in tertiary studies in the various built-environment disciplines.

Work with a mentor: She notes that there are industry experts who are keen to impart their skills and knowledge to youth. “Young people just need to reach out to experts to find out if they will be willing to become mentors. Mentees will then be able to gain first-hand practical experience under their guidance.”

Seek opportunities: “Once you have completed some training or worked with a mentor, be on the lookout for items that may need repair and offer to fix them, even if there is no compensation,” she says. “This is how you build resilience, remain agile and above all, this is how you will aid your own growth.”



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“Having been instrumental in supporting the building industry for many years, we at the MBAWC feel that it is crucial to highlight these opportunities and urge the youth to take advantage of them in order to improve their livelihoods whilst working in a rewarding profession,” she explains.

Van Rensburg concludes by advising young people looking for jobs to focus on what they want to achieve and take advantage of the opportunities they come across. “Young people who are persistent and clearly driven to succeed will find that there are people and organisations that are willing to help them build a future for themselves.”

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