

Upskilling vital to construction industry

By [Anthony Keal](#)

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According to the recently released *Quarterly Labour Force Survey* by Statistics SA, 40.1% of people between the ages of 15-34 were not in employment, education or training in Q4 2019, highlighting the fact that skills development is more important than ever. Amid positive job creation news, it is now especially vital for the construction industry to adapt to advancing standards and adequately train the emerging workforce.



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The construction industry currently contributes 8.3% to total employment numbers and has shown a positive uptick in job opportunities according to the recently released Career Junction Index - which revealed a notable increase in hiring activity in the construction and building sector.

Opportunities for SMMEs

The opportunities for small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs), or subcontractors, have been growing over the past 20 years, especially as large contractors subcontract out the majority of their work, with their main aim being to ensure the employment of site supervision to manage risks, quality and productivity.

However, SMMEs in the building sector often do not have the continuous workload required to place young people on apprenticeships. In addition, due to the casualisation of labour, small businesses also cannot sustain employment over long periods.

As such, it is great to see that in the past year, many centres of specialisation have been established in the hope that many more young people strive to become artisans of the future.

The Department of Higher Education, through the Quality Council for Trades & Occupations (QCTOs), has also embarked on developing skills programmes. These skills programmes often are not scoped by experts in the industry but by instructors from technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges. Once published, these skills programmes will become part-qualifications. This system suits the Collective Agreement as our T4, T3 and T2 will be formally recognised.



Construction body calls for urgent meeting after CETA placed under administration

6 Feb 2020



MBAWC Skills & Education Trust

We are proud that the Master Builders Association in the Western Cape (MBAWC) has a Skills & Education Trust that runs free courses for those already involved in or wishing to enter the construction industry. These skills programmes assist with growing the workforce in the construction industry. The trust will issue a certificate of receipt of donation and these receipts are recognised by all South African National Accreditation System (SANAS) approved verification agencies.

Another advancement for growing access to higher education in South Africa is the new Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Codes of Good Practice amendments which came into effect in December 2019. The amendments have introduced a new scorecard indicator whereby employers can now provide bursaries for tertiary education to students and claim points. We urge any corporates in the industry who are able to provide this opportunity to please do so.

In order for the construction industry to survive and thrive it is vital to invest in the future workforce by way of upskilling and continued learning. It is important to note that ongoing training should be considered a key performance area for each site. If the variety of construction enterprises make every workplace a training area, we will see an improvement in quality and productivity. The MBAWC suggests that each business sends at least one supervisor on a mentorship programme in 2020.

As an industry, it is necessary for members to take up the role of being leaders in training construction supervisors, health and safety officers, and apprentices, as well as upskill their workforce through numerous short skills programmes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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