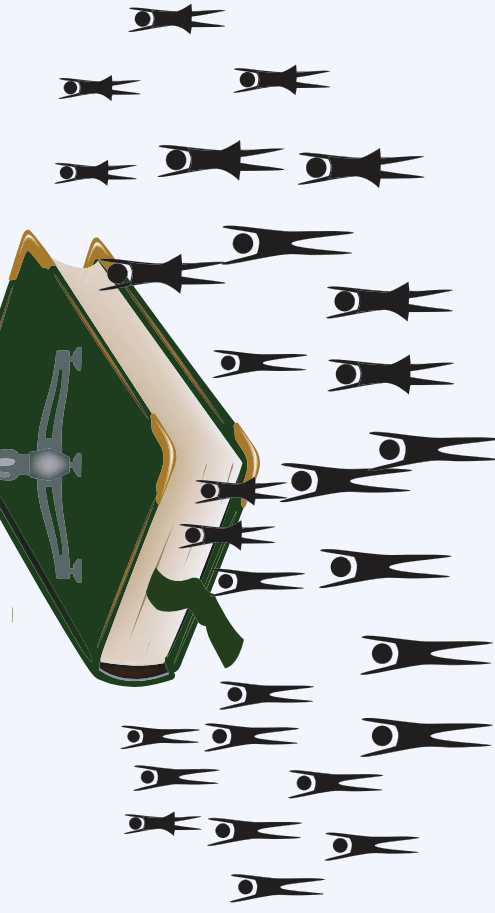


APERSIS I EN challenge

Improving the access of previously marginalised groups (intermediate and high-level) occupations is vital to grow African economy and to make strides towards a labour characterised by less inequality. However, deepening gender language inequalities persist as challenges in artisanal South Africa, explain *Angelique Wildschut* and *Tamlyn*



Being better-educated increases the odds of workers being well matched.

outcomes. Indeed, being better educated increases the odds of workers being well matched. Apart from workers with no formal education, the incidence of over-qualification increases with the level of education completed.

Unanswered questions

Recognising that this study was exploratory, there are still a number of questions that remain unanswered. Which occupational groups are more likely to be mismatched? Are these states temporary or permanent? How long does it take mismatched workers to transit into a better or well-matched job? What are the causes of these mismatches in the South African labour market?

For now, we conclude that whether under-qualified or over-qualified, being mismatched in the labour market can have enduring adverse effects for the

individual, the labour market and the economy. It is therefore critical to achieve a match between workers' skills and job requirements, to avoid human capital wastage and to ensure that workers' skills are appropriately utilised. The study findings include compelling evidence for the urgent need for continued investment in lifelong learning and on-job training programmes, to ensure that skills are kept up to date with what is required in the workplace

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What the numbers say

Levels of inequality have been declining in terms of race; however Africans continue to be slightly under-represented in artisanal employment (Figure 1). The 2015 mid-year estimates put Africans at 80.5% of the total population, while constituting 78% of artisanal employment.

Examining trends in the representation of men and women reveals that gender inequality in artisanal employment not only persists but has strengthened over the last few years (Figure 2).

However, the quantitative picture does not reveal the full story of inequalities in artisanal employment, nor why they persist and may even intensify.

Fig 1 Employment in craft and related trades workers 2008 and 2015 (%)



Source: Labour Force Survey (2008 and 2015)

Fig 2 Employment in craft and related trades workers gender, 2008 and 2015 (%)



Gender inequality in artisanal employment not only persists but has strengthened over the

It is critical to achieve a match between the skills obtained by workers and job requirements to avoid



Miners going underground, planning the work.
Credit: Antonio Muchave@Sowetan/Times Media

The importance of studying occupations and workplaces

As inequalities in workplaces hold implications for skills planning, Wildschut's research argues that we can improve planning for future skills needs by developing a better understanding of the sociological phenomena at play within and between occupational groups in workplaces.

This research reveals a compelling storyline of how skilled occupations continue to monopolise a segment of

Telling testimony of gender stereotyping

Delving more deeply into their qualitative research, findings exposed a predominantly masculine occupational culture. '[I]f we select the wrong people what you will have in the system will always be the wrong people...and we [are] struggling now with the women,' said one respondent, alluding to the perceived inability of women to cope with the demands of artisanal work. Another respondent reflected his perception of women's inability to do

but she was like this [referring to small], now this switch gear that she needs to move is about that [referring to big] size...'

Existing research on how occupations become associated with a particular gender shows that an important basis is a biological discourse that concentrates on women's physical capacities (size, shape, strength) to assert that certain work tasks are more appropriately performed by males. While the extent varied, such a gendered discourse was identifiable across all cases¹ that made up the study.

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Intersections of race, age and language exclusivity

Although the quantitative data reflect a decline in racial inequality measured in terms of formal representation and access to occupations, our qualitative data show how the construction of artisanal work and occupations contributes to persistent racial, age and language exclusivity and dominance. These inequalities overlap and are reproduced in the occupational culture in complex ways.

When reflecting on the attributes viewed as critical for an artisan, respondents tend to portray white and older artisans as more committed, having more pride in their workmanship and delivering better quality work.

is the guys that are qualifying these days a lot of them I'd say they [are] not as good as what I think they should be.'

'Pride of the work I think that's very important and that's what I'm missing with a lot of our youngsters today, they do a job because they get paid for it – you know I always say when an artisan phones me, when I go underground he says, "[M]eneer! Come and look at this installation I've done", I know he is proud [of] that you know.'

Language was found to be critical in supporting this discourse, because

it served as another way in which to portray younger apprentices (invariably black) as less competent, not interested in learning, and lazy. One respondent reflects on the difficulties in communication: '[W]e have a country full of diversity so sometimes things you say in Afrikaans... this guy maybe he is Xhosa he doesn't understand Afrikaans... So communication is coming in between...'

At the same time, the very real implications for full participation and access to artisanal training are highlighted. Here a respondent shows how Afrikaans continues to be a dominant language and often the medium of instruction, which can make learning difficult:

Social differences continue to em

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FUTURE HOLDS



Artisanal work is becoming more complex.
Credit: Guy Stubbs

read claims of a shortage of artisans in South Africa. While agreement that artisan development is crucial, there is little the scale and nature of the demand, or about the nature

a 21st century artisan require? What would a 'good artisan training system' look like? What would artisanal work of the future look like?

To assist policy-makers in their attempts to plan for future skills, this study looks at work itself – investigating its organisation and the diagnostics and problem-solving skills required in the work of artisans and technicians. It is a demand-focused study that has the changing nature of work as its central theme and seeks to contribute to labour market intelligence by putting forward an evidence-based argument for how to prepare artisans and technicians to be work ready.

We studied the sites in which artisans and technicians work in four sectors of the economy – boat builder and repairer in the boat-building sector; mechatronics technician in the engineering sector; camera assistant in the film-production sector; and confectionery baker in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Research covered four key themes of interest: company futures, workplace culture futures, work futures and qualifications futures.

Company futures

According to business leaders we interacted with, the state of the global economic climate, regional and local political stability, and market volatility were the three key drivers of change in their companies. These dynamic structural factors, all beyond the control of companies, were viewed as potentially having the highest impact on future growth.

Business leaders were, however, positive about

forecasts, linking these projections to business strategies such as local and international diversification of products in both niche and mass markets. For example, companies in the baking sector which were oriented towards mass markets based their positive predictions on the constant growth experienced to date, while those oriented more towards niche markets used the steadily growing demand for artisanal breads from a greater variety of outlets as the basis for their prediction.

In the domain of employment, business leaders were clear that practices such as subcontracting, outsourcing, decentralisation, casualisation of work, temporary contracts and seasonal work fluctuation will affect future employment flows and movements of staff. The anticipated impact of these factors differed by sector and size of the firm. Small sites displayed a tendency towards predicting seasonal work fluctuations and temporary contracts, and larger sites tended towards predicting outsourcing.

Workplace culture futures

The complexity of work can be captured by two opposing concepts: certainty and risk (Figure 1). When the end result is continually at risk during the process of making, producing, or maintaining, we talk about work of risk. All workplaces try to reduce risk

Table 1: Work as a continuum of 'certainty' and 'risk' (Pye, 1996)

Work of certainty	Work of risk
Routine work	Mostly
Narrowly specified tasks	Expert
Predictable problem solving	Complex
Simple task subject matter	Complex
Technique-focused	Concentrated
Supervised work	Autonomous

On-job training and informal learning remain the dominant modes of education and training

education and training to remain up-to-date, will contribute significantly to what counts as future 'technical competence'.

These trends hold implications for the future of training and development but current trends in the provision of qualifications for intermediate-level work should also be taken into account.

The future of qualifications

There is a general perception that there is very little training available for artisans and that 'down-skilling' will be the future trend.

The research found that in some cases formal qualifications are, and will be, an entry requirement for work, while a strong in-house and/or on-job training culture persists. On-job training and

informal learning remain the dominant modes of education and training, with supplier-provided training on specific equipment or technology identified as a growing practice.

Each sector has a range of formal qualifications registered on NQF Levels 2 to 6. But there is little systematic evidence of delivery and take-up of these courses by the artisans, technicians, and companies (Table 1).

training and development opportunities in four sectors

Entry qualification required	Relevant qualification(s) registered on NQF	On-the-job training	In-house courses	Short courses (external)	Supplier training
	National Certificates (Various) NQF Levels 2 – 4	✓		✓	✓
	National Certificate NQF Levels 2 – 4	✓	✓		✓
	FET Certificate (NQF Level 4)	✓		✓	✓
✓	National Certificate (NQF Level 5) National Diploma (NQF Level 6)	✓	(medium and large firms)	✓	✓
	FET Certificate (NCV Level 4)* merSETA Mechatronics Learnerships NQF Level 4 (Trade Worker) and NQF Level 5 (Technician)				
✓	National (Professional) Diploma (NQF	✓		✓	✓

with resultant lack of qualification development. Second, qualifications have been developed and registered on the NQF, but their impact on the development of artisans was perceived as negligible.

Four key trends for skills planning

Sector and company futures

Business unease about the connection between the global economic climate, regional and local political stability, and market volatility, linked to employment trends that anticipate a reduction in permanent or core staff and a drive towards cost-savings through subcontracting, outsourcing and casualisation, do not paint an overly optimistic picture of sectoral intent to invest in training and development.

Sound technical

vocabulary to talk about work, and the capacity for ongoing self-education and training to remain up-to-date, will contribute significantly to what counts as future 'technical competence'.

Workplace culture futures

Shifts to a 'low-risk' workplace culture are predicted, and attributed to the increasing routinisation and standardisation of work arising from mechanisation, automation and digitalisation.

Sound technical vocabulary to talk about work, and the capacity for ongoing self-education and



Work futures

Two opposing work change trends are found: a shift towards predictable standardised work and a shift towards predictable risk work. Because sectors and workplaces can only either move in one direction, or display both trends simultaneously, both up-skilling and down-skilling of the work of artisans and technicians can be found.

The implications for training are that different levels and types of apprenticeships will be required to serve the simultaneous coexistence of 'high-risk' and 'low-risk' work.

Qualifications futures

On-the-job training and informal learning remain the dominant modes of education and training, with supplier-provided training on specific equipment or technology identified as a growing practice.

Formally registered and recognised short courses

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