

Job market slightly improved

EMPLOYMENT was up a little in April, showing growth in high-skilled jobs, but declining in those requiring low skills, according to the latest Adcorp Employment Index last week.

"Employment increased slightly, at an annual rate of 1.86 percent, during April," Adcorp said in a statement.

However, unlike March when employment increased across the board, employment growth was "patchy and uneven" in April, the company's labour economist, Loane Sharp, said.

Employment grew fastest in the high-skilled occupations - senior management, professionals and technicians. It continued to decline in low-skilled occupations like domestic work.

This trend has also been noted by Professional Assignments Group (PAG) director Bonnie Currin, who yesterday said the situation in East London reflected the national situation as described by Adcorp.

"PAG has seen an improvement in the employment market within East London over the last couple of months particularly for skilled, qualified professionals," she said.

"Many of these positions were put on hold during the economic downturn, and with the upswing being experienced, companies have lifted the recruitment freeze."

The same, however, cannot be said for the lower skilled South Africans.

"Unfortunately, the unskilled market suffers the consequences of increased living expenses such as petrol and electricity, so many households are avoiding luxury expenses such as, for example, domestic work-

ers," Currin said.

South Africa had some 829 800 unfilled positions for high-skilled workers across a wide range of occupations, the index found.

The categories most short of skills were senior management; professions like medicine, engineering, accounting and law; technical occupations; and agriculture.

Adcorp found a shortage of 432 100 technicians, 216 200 managers and 178 400 professionals.

"In sharp contrast, a total of 967 600 elementary workers are in excess of the nation's needs, as are 247 400 domestic workers."

The skills shortage could limit South Africa's long-term economic growth potential.

"Many existing activities are, given pervasive skills shortages, conducted inconsistently and apparently inexpertly, which is probably a more significant factor in South Africa's low labour productivity by global standards than is widely thought."

Many government skills development initiatives are based on an imprecise idea of the extent of skills shortages, not only in particular occupations, but in the economy as a whole, Adcorp said.

"Sector Education and Training Authorities (Setas) have consistently failed to produce credible estimates of skills shortages in their respective sectors, and probably for this reason the National Skills Fund has failed to disburse more than R3.5 billion in funds available for skills development."

April's index showed the informal sector was still growing faster than the formal sector. The informal sector now employed 6.2 million people, which is 1.5 million - or 31 percent - more than in 1995. — Sapa

workers in April, but for lower

Picture: FILE

for local co-ops

added that response to the fund had been overwhelming.

However, the standard of applications could be improved as well as the rate of survival, which stands at a low seven percent.

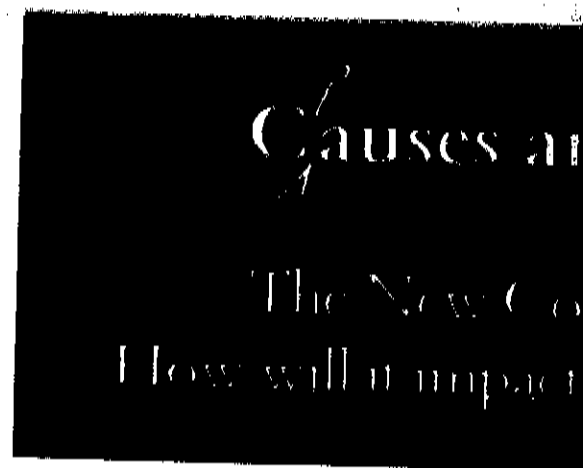
"The morning workshops help applicants work through the areas of greatest challenge, such as the business plan and working through what necessary documentation should accompany the application," says Shenxane.

"It's important that prospective applicants understand the criteria. For example, there are targeted sectors like agriculture, tourism, and the creative industry. Then there are other criteria that the co-operative needs to meet, such as being a registered

entity with the CIPC, having a business plan and they should live in the Eastern Cape," he explained.

The workshops also help with other areas of concern such as governance training, mentorship, access to a market, support with quality and standards, working capital and monitoring. Remaining workshops will take place in Port Elizabeth on May 17, East London on May 19 and Mthatha on May 24. These follow visits to Queenstown, Matatiele and Sterkspruit.

"We have prioritised the workshops to the outlying areas because this kind of support is sorely needed in rural communities. It is also where most of the applications have been received." — www.getnews.co.za



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