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Artisan Training Institute hosts ‘live’ skills show at Local Manufacturing Expo

[JOHANNESBURG]

As the pressure mounts on President Cyril Ramaphosa’s administration to resuscitate the South African economy, the question is shifting from what he plans to do to *how* he plans to do it.

A sure-fire way to catalyse South Africa’s economy back into growth is to invest in local manufacturing and skills development, says Sean Jones from the Artisan Training Institute (ATI).

ATI demonstrated a live skills exhibition at the Local Southern African Manufacturing Expo (LME) that took place at the Nasrec Expo Centre from 21-23 May 2019.

The expo was the brainchild of the South African Capital Equipment Export Council (SACEEC), the first of its kind in South Africa to promote only locally manufactured products and services.

Charlene Hefer, portfolio director for the Expo’s organisers, Specialised Exhibitions Montgomery, says: “There is no doubt that the Southern Africa manufacturing sector is characterised by a pioneering spirit, and both the innovation and quality of locally produced goods is exemplary. We strongly believe that this message needs to be conveyed to those people responsible for the procurement of goods within organisations. The Local Southern African Manufacturing Expo created a fertile environment for visitors to find the right BBBEE and technology partners.”

SACEEC CEO Eric Bruggeman shared startling statistics on the number of jobs that could be created if South African businesses increase its focus on exports.

“South Africa doesn’t have an unemployment problem, it has an import problem,” said Bruggeman at the event. “The South African economy imports close to \$83.2-billion each year. If only 50% of import spending is redirected to local manufacturing and skills, about 13-million jobs could be created,” he says.

“Over the years, growing middle income economies have achieved sustained growth by increasing export capacity and global competitiveness,” says Jones. “However, they rely on skills to enable this. The growth of the South African export market therefore depends heavily on the availability of the right skills to support local manufacturing”.

Through a strategic partnership between ATI and SACEEC, established in November 2018, the two organisations are working closely together to ensure a better fit between skills demand and skills supply, matching some of the industry’s core skills gaps with that of ATI’s artisan throughput.

“We need to understand what kind of skills are in high demand from South African manufacturers in order to respond appropriately,” says Jones.

LME presented an opportunity to demonstrate some artisan skills at the ATI Skills Development Zone and in such a way gain better insights into industry's artisan training requirements.

The Skills Development Zone, a 40m² exhibition space, comprised live demonstrations in an interactive workshop setting. Some of the engineering skills on display included fitting and turning, fabrication, welding, boiler making, electrical & instrumentation, as well as pneumatics, hydraulics and electro-pneumatics.

The exhibition demonstrated the different training options available to industry and served as an encouragement to companies to invest in artisan training, while also motivating young people to consider artisan training as an attractive career opportunity.

ATI has partnered with a few of its clients to give life to the skills exhibition. SMC Pneumatics has made available equipment to the value of R1.5-million to display its advanced processing and instrumentation technology in the form of process plant scale models. MicroCare demonstrated some of its alternative power equipment. ATI is currently providing short courses on alternative electricity circuits.

There were also live fitting and turning skills on display. Busisiwe Malatji enrolled on a fitting and turning qualification in 2016 under the Rand Water *War Against Leaks* programme.

In June, she will write her trade test to qualify as a fitter and turner. Malatji was at the exhibition showcasing the skills she gained on the engineering lathe during her apprenticeship at ATI. She is one of many young women whose fitting and turning competencies will open new opportunities in a career that was previously dominated by men.

"The exhibition brought together manufacturing heavyweights, all from Southern Africa," says Bruggeman. "With thorough export strategies and adequate artisan training skills, we can turn the South African economy and unemployment around," he concludes.

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Caption 1:

SACEEC CEO Eric Bruggeman and Chief Financial Officer Hugh Saunders, with managing director of the Artisan Training Institute, Sean Jones

Caption 2:



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SA CAPITAL EQUIPMENT

EXPORT COUNCIL

Busisiwe Malatji enrolled on a fitting and turning qualification at ATI in 2016 and will complete her trade test in June

Directors: Mr S.D. Jones (CEO) & Mrs M.D. Nyathikazi (Exec Dir)

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