



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### INTERNET ARTICLE

#### **Lack of water engineering expertise is addressed by the DWS' Learning Academy**

28-01-2015

*A group of the recently qualified water engineers has joined The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) Learning Academy (LA) because they felt it is their duty as people armed with skills to lead from the front.*

*The function of DWS is of great strategic importance to the South African society. The level of productivity within DWS and the water sector as a whole has a direct effect on the South African economy.*

*Raynhard De Lange, who is among a group of newly-qualified young learners to train and work as a water engineer, says South Africa does not necessarily experience water shortages but that the main concern is a lack of skilled people to do work towards providing citizens with good quality drinking water.*

*"My take is that South Africa has lots and lots of bulk water resources and that the only thing lacking is appropriate skills. Capable people lack interest needed to work in the water sector," De Lange noted, adding that the problem has now thrown a challenge to "us young and recently qualified engineers to lead from the front. I and my fellow colleagues around here today are ready to take the bull by the horn".*

*Another learner, Bulelwa Batayi, who described herself as a water analyst, agreed with De Lange. She said it was time for people, in fact all South Africans, to take the provision of drinking water quality as a priority. "Water is life and high quality treatment of the resource should be prioritized", Batayi noted.*

*These engineers are part of a group of ambitious, determined and young qualified engineers who want to work for the water sector and thus be part of efforts to enhance the quality of the resource delivered to citizens. They noted these sentiments at the DWS's Roodeplaat Training Centre, Pretoria East, where they are currently attending induction lectures.*

*One of the LA's main areas of operation which experiences a dire shortage of skills and expertise is the engineering function. However, the academy has made huge strides in attracting young engineers to the department. Its purpose can be summarized as follows: investigate technical and scarce skills development needs within the department; address technical and scarce skills gaps in the overall water supply value chain; address scarce skills gaps in specific technical areas of the department, and build capacity for medium and long-term needs of the department.*

*To boost the programme, 20 recently qualified engineers joined the Learning Academy on 19 January 2015. They are currently completing the Department of Public Service and*



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*Administration's (DPSA's) compulsory induction programme, and will report for duty at their various base stations with effect from 2 February 2015. The group is expected to number 75 by end of February 2015 when a number of scientists and technicians join the fray.*

*To date, 57 young Engineers have been offered an opportunity to participate in the Professional Development programme. Three of these engineers have managed to register as Professional Engineers, while others are on various levels of meeting the required eleven outcomes of the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA).*

*The Learning Academy is an internal structure which was initiated in 2007 as a response to a shortage of specific skills needed to boost the work of the department (and that of the water sector in general) through its technical and scarce skills development programme. This technical structure represents an investment for sustaining the quality of DWS's human resources, raising the level of technical and scarce skills and thereby ensuring that, in the long term, the department remains competitive in terms of delivering on its mandate.*

*The Learning Academy is designed to meet specific organisational requirements and lead a sustained campaign to secure a steady supply of high-level skills in water-related science, engineering, and various technical disciplines. It responds to the imperatives mentioned, with a dual focus of providing aspiring engineers, scientists, technologists and technicians while offering these an opportunity to be exposed to real-time professional and valuable work experiences.*

*The Learning Academy supports the academic development component of participants through bursaries and experiential training. The professional development component forms part of DWS' social responsibility in that it incubates young and inexperienced graduates – offering them an opportunity to receive on the job training and exposure related to their areas of study, while introducing them to DWS' core business.*

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