



National Labour Market Skills Project (NLMSP)

Shaping Tomorrow's Skills Today

NLMSP: Combined Report





Executive Summary

The National Labour Market Skills Project (NLMSP) is a project implemented by the Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC), Taiwan Technical Mission, and the Eswatini Economic Policy Analysis and Research Centre (ESEPARC) from 2024-2025 to understand labour market skills demand and supply and anticipate future skills needs for different trades and sectors in the economy. The study further evaluated the impact of the Skills Certification Enhancement Project to understand its impact on the absorption of vocational skills in the country and its impact on the employability of graduates. To achieve these objectives, the study was conducted through four (4) national surveys and a skills anticipation model developed from the country's social accounting matrix. The surveys constituted of a national employer survey, a training institutions survey, a graduate tracer survey, and a trade testing graduate tracer survey. Literature and historic data (macro-economic data) was used to model the skills anticipation.

The study reveals a positive shift in youth employment, which rose from 41.7% in 2021 to 49% in 2025, alongside an increase in self-employment from 8.2% to 13%. Despite these gains, structural barriers hinder sustainable employment. These include delayed graduate absorption, widespread skills mismatches, and limited internship opportunities due to financial and operational constraints. However, the Skills Certification Enhancement Project has improved graduate employability by aligning vocational training with industry standards and enhancing trade testing. Nonetheless, most certifications remain concentrated at lower skill levels, and participation in lifelong learning remains low.

Furthermore, the skills supply system is hindered by outdated curricula, weak employer-training institution collaboration, and insufficient practical training. Graduates often

lack industry-relevant and soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and customer service. Gender disparities persist across all sectors and training, with more women graduating but fewer securing employment. There is also a notable male dominance in vocational trades and STEM fields, while the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market remains limited (less than 2%).

According to employers, while 89% of employees are aligned with their roles, nearly half still require additional training. Skills gaps (over 30%) and shortages (above 50%) are particularly evident in high-level occupations such as professionals, technical associates, and managers. Nevertheless, looking forward, employers anticipate rising demand for high-level specialised skills in robotics, programming, engineering, and digital fields, as well as vocational trades and sector-specific competencies in agriculture, manufacturing, finance, tourism, construction, and healthcare.

Although economic growth is expected to generate new job opportunities, its inclusivity and pace will depend on strategic policy implementation, targeted investments, and robust upskilling and reskilling initiatives. Therefore, the NLMSP calls for coordinated efforts among government, industry, and training institutions to co-create inclusive, flexible, and responsive skills development models. Key priorities include curriculum reform, expanded training and internship opportunities, improved certification systems, targeted support for underrepresented groups, and stronger post-training services. Strategic investments in economic diversification and workforce development are essential to closing existing gaps and building a resilient, future-ready labour market.



1.0 About the project

This project addresses the significant gaps in available research and data on Eswatini's skills landscape, changes in supply and demand, and projections for future needs.

The National Labour Market Skills Project (NLMSP) is a collaborative project between the Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC), Taiwan Technical Mission, and the Eswatini Economic Policy Analysis and Research Centre (ESEPARC). The project seeks to understand the labour market skills demand and supply, and anticipate future skills needs for different trades and sectors in the economy. The study further evaluated the impact of the Skills Certification Enhancement Project, which sought to improve the vocational trade certification system by improving trade testing material, developing occupational standards, capacitating the Directorate for Industrial and Vocational Training (facilities, materials, infrastructure, capacity), and supporting lifelong learning. The NLMSP builds on a foundation of prior research, including the 2021/22 Skills Audit Report, which revealed mismatches between the skills imparted by Eswatini's education system and the needs of its industries.

This project addresses the significant gaps in available research and data on Eswatini's skills landscape, changes in supply and demand, and projections for future needs. The project contributes to Eswatini's social and economic development by informing programming in training institutions and directing investments in specific areas of the economy. It will provide valuable information to both private and public sector entities to inform and direct planning and implementation of development programmes, and to also address the pressing challenges of youth unemployment and the changing industry landscape. This will also inform national policy direction and decision-making.





2.0 Introduction

The misalignment between educational outcomes and labour market needs threatens economic productivity, innovation and social cohesion, thus necessitating proactive and dynamic skills development strategies.

In an increasingly evolving global economy, developing a skilled and adaptable workforce is essential. The Future of Jobs Report 2025 highlights the changing demand and supply for skills in this age and the near future, stating that on average, a fifth (39%) of employees' existing skill sets will be transformed or become outdated between 2025-2030 (World Economic Forum, 2025). The report also highlights the major drivers of change in skills development, emphasising that increasing digital access, technological innovation, and shifting demographic trends are significant drivers. However, many countries are experiencing a growing gap between the skills needed for the labour market and those offered by the workforce. The misalignment between educational outcomes and labour market needs threatens economic productivity, innovation and social cohesion, thus necessitating proactive and dynamic skills development strategies.

As a result, the African Union Agenda 2063 and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Industrialisation Strategy (2015–2063) both highlight the need for a highly skilled labour force, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), to drive industrialisation, enhance economic competitiveness and promote inclusive growth. The UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 4, also emphasise the need for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Therefore, Eswatini, like many other developing economies, seeks to prioritise skills development to improve sustainable economic and social growth. The Eswatini Government Plan of Action 2025-2029 and National Development Plan (NDP) 2023/24 – 2027/28 emphasise the need to improve human capital by transforming the vocational education system. To be precise, the Plan of Action emphasises the need to upgrade vocational training institutions and trade testing to improve the employability of graduates. The NDP 2023/24–2027/28 identifies key growth sectors such as manufacturing, ICT, agro-processing and renewable energy, stressing the need for industry-relevant skills to facilitate economic transformation.

However, the skills development landscape in Eswatini faces major challenges, including inadequate funding for skills training, limited institutional capacity and insufficient employer engagement in shaping education and training programmes (TVET Assessment 2024; Skills Audit, 2021/22; World Bank 2021). The Eswatini National Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy of 2020 also highlights limited industry alignment, outdated curricula, and insufficient infrastructure as challenges for the TVET sector. Graduates continue to struggle with employability, while economic development remains low and inconsistent.



According to the Eswatini Integrated Labour Force Survey (ILFS, 2023), youth unemployment for individuals aged 15-35 stands at 48.7%, with overall unemployment at 35.4%.

To strengthen the TVET sector, the Government of Eswatini through the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, implemented the TVET Enhancement Project aimed at improving the capacity and delivery of the country's vocational education system. As a result of the improvements implemented in this project, the Eswatini Technical and Vocational Skills Certification Enhancement Project was launched in partnership with the Taiwan Technical Mission and the Directorate of Industrial and Vocational Training (DIVT), running from July 2021 to June 2025. This project focused on expanding lifelong learning opportunities, enhancing the accreditation and certification of vocational skills, and aligning trade testing with industry demands to improve graduate employability and mobility.

However, the demand for certified trades in Eswatini remains unclear, and the impact of the Technical and Vocational Skills Certification Enhancement Project is unknown. Hence, the NLMSP sought to address these gaps while providing information on the labour market skills supply and demand for both vocational and non-vocational training. The NLMSP seeks to address the urgent need for aligning skills development with labour market demands, determine the gaps, mismatches and shortages in the labour market and provide statistical information on the future demand for different occupations. The NLMSP seeks to provide evidence-based analysis to inform the development of solutions to address current gaps, emerging opportunities, and strategic interventions required to strengthen Eswatini's skills ecosystem. This will also support the design of responsive policies and programmes that can enhance employability, drive inclusive economic growth, and ensure the country is well-positioned to navigate the future of work.

2.1 Objectives

1. Assess Eswatini's Labour market structure, policies and institutions;
2. Identify and generate numerical data and statistical information on the current skills, skills gaps, mismatches, anticipated skills shortages, redundancies, skills surpluses, future skills, and emerging skills trends;
3. Ascertain the causes of skills shortages by sector and by occupational category;
4. Identify and quantify the skills and trades supplied and demanded in the country with up-to-date data on human resources supply and demand in the private and public sectors;
5. Forecast the skills that will be in demand in the short-term, medium-term, and the long-run to develop recommendations for improving skills development and anticipation within higher education (including on-the-job and apprentice-type training);



6. Identify new and emerging skills and trades in industry, considering the informal, public, and private sectors;
7. Benchmark best practices in skills development, anticipation, and human resource modelling;
8. Analyse trends in technology, industry, demographics, and economic factors to anticipate the evolving needs of the labour market;
9. Evaluate the effectiveness of current education and training programs in meeting market demands and propose a framework for aligning skills development; and
10. Evaluate the Eswatini Technical and Vocational Skills Certification Enhancement Project.

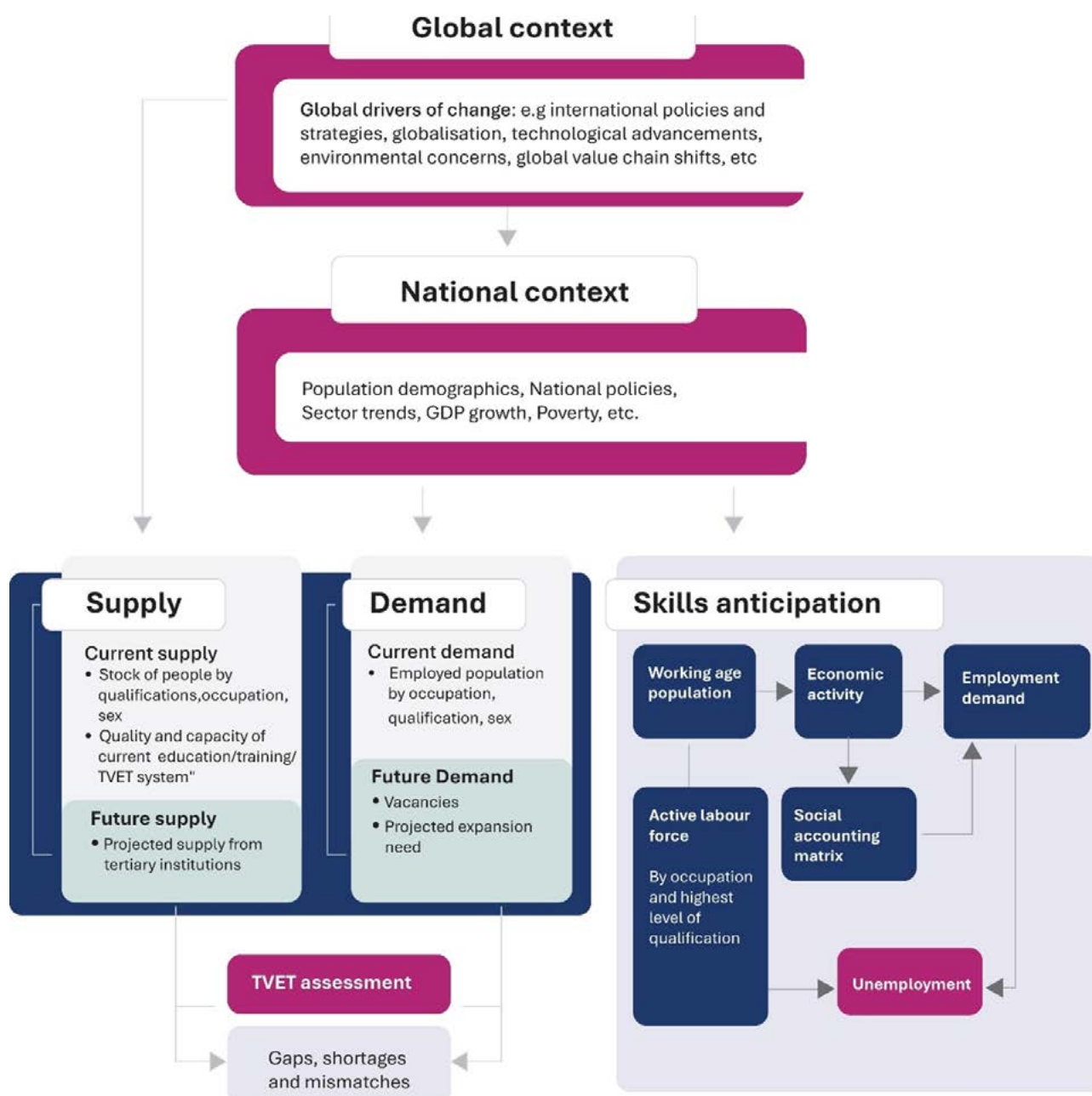




3.0 Methodology

Primary data were collected through key informant interviews and three structured questionnaires administered through Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) for the graduate tracer survey and trade testing graduate survey.

3.1 Conceptual Framework





The *global context* plays a pivotal role in shaping national skill supply and demand by influencing trends, policies, and market dynamics. Global developments—such as shifts in trade value chains, technological advancements, and international policy priorities—directly impact national labour markets. For instance, the growing global emphasis on climate action and environmental sustainability has increased domestic demand for green skills across multiple sectors. Thus, the global context was considered an important driver of change in the skills development landscape.

The *national context* plays a crucial role in shaping both the structural and dynamic drivers of skills development. Determinants such as demographic, economic and social indicators are important to relate skills demand with labour absorption, participation rates, and employment figures were considered. In addition, the direction of national policies and sectoral strategies was a critical input and driver of change in the labour market. Economic growth drivers and macroeconomic trends were an important source of information in projecting future skills and anticipating demand.

The *Skills Anticipation Model* focused on projecting the future skills demand based on the macro analysis of the Eswatini economy and the social accounting matrix of the country. The Skills Anticipation Model used historical data to predict future skills demand based on the prospects for economic development (production) and productivity in the economy. The results of the model provided a nationwide anticipation of future skills demand. The macroeconomic model used survey data collected in this study as inputs to determine the relationship between different elements of the model using coefficients. Input and output data from the 2024 Eswatini Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) and information from the Labour Force

Survey (2023) were used to predict future skills demand based on production and growth trends and patterns.

Skills demand and supply were determined by the current labour market system. Understanding the stock of current skills and the number of graduates produced by the education system provides an understanding of the current supply. While demand was derived from the current levels of employment, detailing the type of skill employed by occupation, qualification and age, job vacancies and future needs.

The *TVET assessment* provided an understanding of the current and future demand of specific trades and an understanding of the impact of trade testing certification on the employability and mobility of graduates.

The perceptions of employers were used to understand the labour market Gaps, mismatches and shortages by assessing job vacancies, the scarcity of obtaining specific skills, skills possessed by employees, skill deficiencies, against the skills supplied by higher education training institutions (HEIs) and skills centres.

3.2 Data collection

A. Secondary data were gathered from national policy documents, labour market reports and previous skills surveys. A document review was conducted to provide the context of skills development in Eswatini, including the country's industrial development, economic trajectory and education and training system. The secondary data sources reviewed included, but were not limited to, regional and global projections on skills development and labour market shifts (e.g SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap (2015–2063), the African Union Agenda 2063, SDGs, World Economic Forum reports, etc).



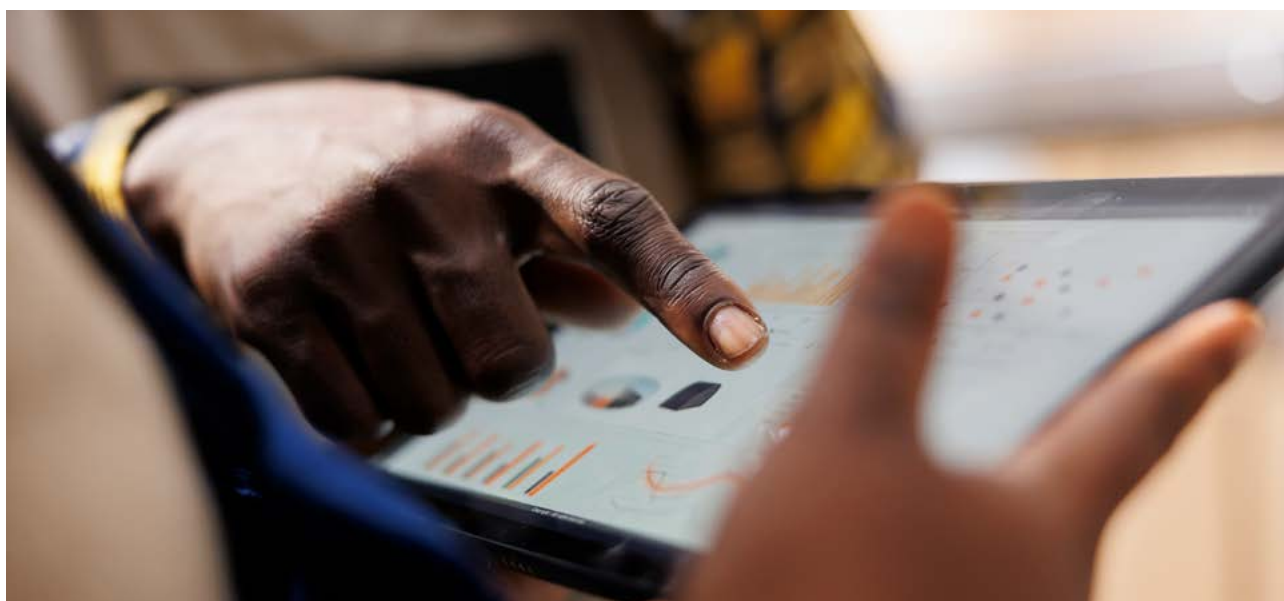
National documents such as the Eswatini Labour Force Surveys, Sectoral policies and strategies, National population census, gross domestic product (GDP) projects, research reports on the skills development landscape in Eswatini, and the National Development Plan, to name a few, were also reviewed.

B. Primary data were collected through key informant interviews and four structured questionnaires administered through Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) for employer survey, training institution survey, graduate tracer survey, and trade testing graduate tracer survey

- **An Employer Survey** was conducted with 1,211 employers in Eswatini, covering the public, private and NGO sectors. The survey sought to understand labour market demand by collecting data on employee numbers, age, qualifications, future skills demand and vacancies.
- **A Training Institution Survey** was conducted with 34 out of 46 institutions in the public and private sector to assess the capacity, operational efficiency and alignment of training institutions

and skills centres with industry skills demand. The survey evaluated key areas, including infrastructure and resources, programme relevance and industry alignment, instructor qualifications and institutional challenges.

- **A Graduate Tracer Survey** of 2,061 graduates from both vocational and non-vocational training institutions was conducted with graduates from 2018 – 2024. The survey sought to examine the career paths and employment outcomes of graduates from Eswatini's tertiary institutions, focusing on employment status and job placement, job satisfaction, career progression and the alignment between training and workplace requirements.
- **A Trade Testing Graduate Tracer Survey** aimed at tracking the career paths and employment outcomes of TVET graduates between 2018 and 2024 was implemented. The survey sought to understand their employment status, job satisfaction, and the alignment between their training and workplace requirements. A total of 224 graduates were interviewed.





4.0 Findings

This calls for the development of a resilient workforce, adaptable to change and embracing lifelong learning and innovation.

4.1 Economic overview

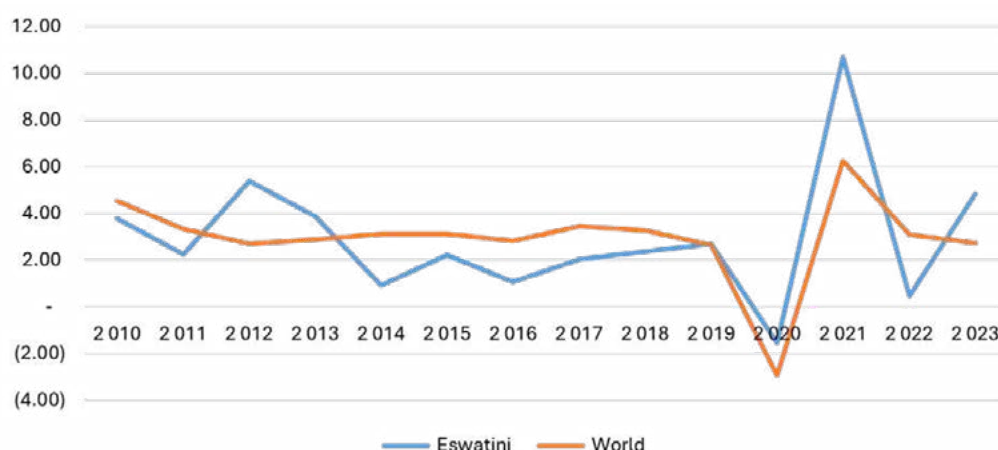
Over time, Eswatini's economic structure has shifted, with the services sector now accounting for more than half of the country's GDP. This shift represents a transition from the country's historic dependence on agriculture and depicts changes in labour market structure and skill demand. Manufacturing remains a critical part of the economy, contributing roughly one-third of economic activity. Key manufacturing industries include textiles, wood products and food processing.

With a population of approximately 1.1 million people (CSO, 2019) and poverty rates at 58.9% (EHIES, 2018), Eswatini faces challenges common to small economies, including limited domestic markets and a high dependency on external trade, particularly with South Africa, its largest trading partner. Emphasising the need for outward-looking skills development policies and initiatives to increase skill export and skill mobility. However, despite these challenges, the

country's economic indicators show signs of resilience. According to the World Bank, the estimated per capita gross domestic product (GDP) for 2023 stands at \$3,823, reflecting moderate growth over recent years. In terms of recent economic performance, Eswatini's GDP growth recovered from a low of 0,5% in 2022 to an estimated 4,8% in 2023 (CBE, 2024).

This recovery was driven primarily by stronger performance in the services sector. Consumption is the primary driver of demand in the economy, making up 84% of GDP, with investment contributing 13% of GDP (African Development Bank 2024). The comparison of Eswatini's economic growth trends with global averages, illustrated in Figure 4.1.1, shows that the economy largely follows the pattern of Global economic growth but with greater volatility in Eswatini's growth compared to the worldwide average. This calls for the development of a resilient workforce - adaptable to change and embracing lifelong learning and innovation.

Figure 4.1.1: Eswatini's GDP growth over the years

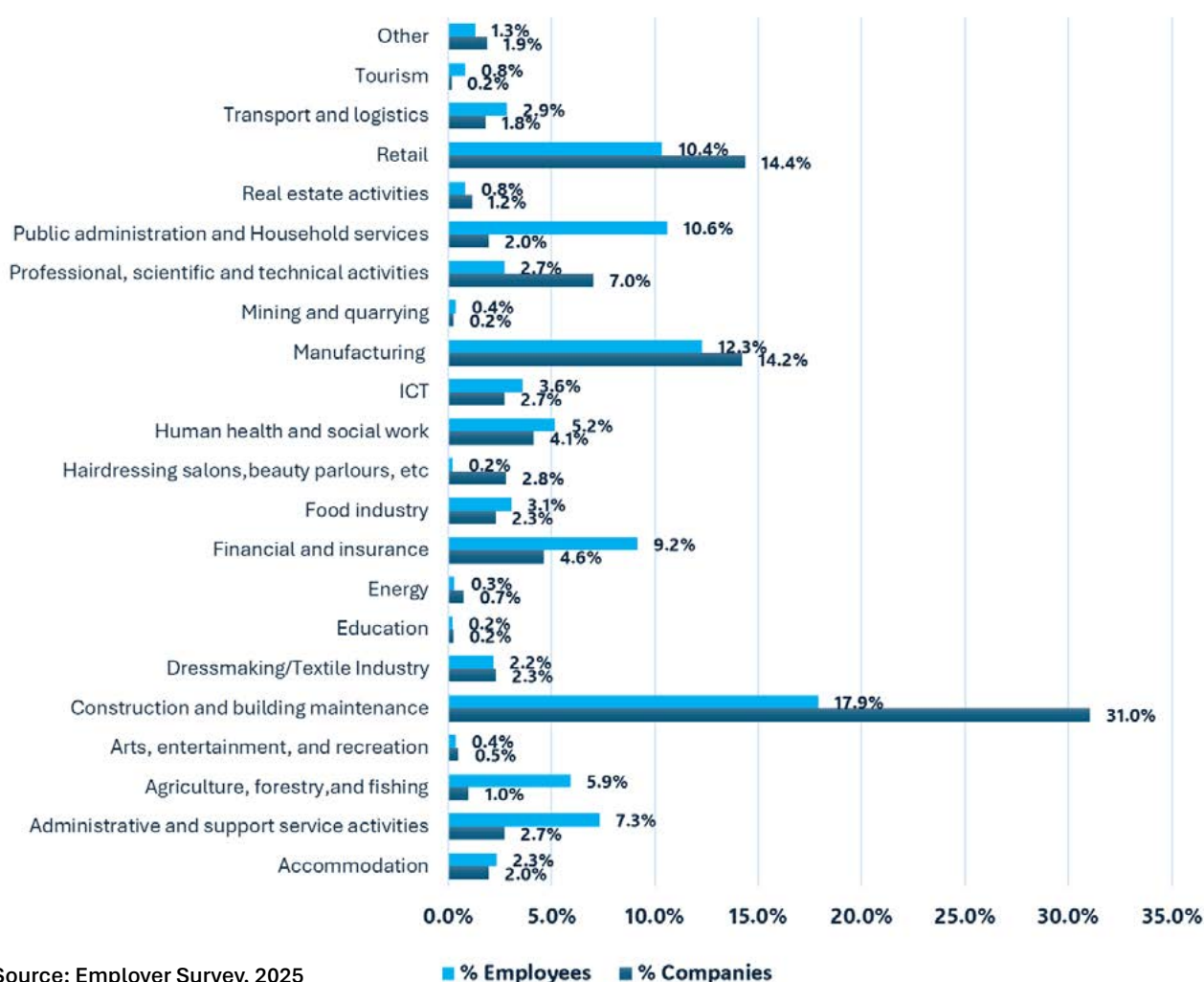




4.2 Industry overview

The NLMSP targeted employers to understand the skills demand landscape in Eswatini. As a result, 70% of participating enterprises were from the private sector, with significantly lower representation from the public sector (26%) and NGOs (3%). The survey revealed that within the private sector, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) dominated, while large enterprises accounted for only 6.9%. This demonstrates that MSMEs still play a pivotal role in employment creation in Eswatini. Among industries, the construction and building sector emerged as the largest, representing 31% of surveyed enterprises and contributing 17.9% of total employment (Figure 4.2.1), followed by retail and manufacturing. However, the representation of male to female employees remains skewed, with males accounting for 61% and females for 39% of the workforce, largely due to the dominance of traditionally male-oriented industries, such as construction and manufacturing. The majority of females are largely represented in domestic work, clerical positions, and service worker/shop market sales occupations.

Figure 4.2.1: Sector representation





The Manzini and Hhohho regions are the economic hubs of Eswatini, providing the largest share of employment and playing a crucial role in enterprise development. They respectively host 50% and 42% of the surveyed enterprises (Table 4.2.1). According to the ILFS (2023), Manzini accounts for 40.4% of the employed population, while Lubombo represents 20% and Hhohho 21.6%, implying that jobs are concentrated in urban than rural areas in Eswatini. However, most businesses in the Manzini and Lubombo regions operate formally compared to Hhohho and Shiselweni (Table 4.2.1).

Table 4.2.1: Regional Distribution of Formal and Informal Enterprises

Region	% companies	Formal enterprise	Informal enterprise
Hhohho	42%	73.0%	27.0%
Lubombo	7%	83.3%	16.7%
Manzini	50%	85.0%	15.0%
Shiselweni	1%	70.0%	30.0%
Overall	100%	79.0%	21.0%

Source: Employer Survey, 2025

TVET Skills absorption in industry

The study finds that industry absorption for vocational skills is relatively high, with 12% of the total employed population holding technical and associate professional skills across various industries, including energy and mining, manufacturing, agriculture and agro-processing, construction, and others. Some of the sought-after skills include automotive engineering, electrical engineering, civil engineering, and plant and machine operators. However, Table 4.2.2 shows that artisanal skills, such as block laying/plastering (20.5%) and electricians (19.1%), plumbing (12.9%), carpentry/joinery (8.0%), and welding/fabrication (7.8%) are among the trades in high demand in manufacturing and construction.

Table 4.2.2: Distribution of TVET Skills by Trade

TVET Skills	%
Motor Mechanic	3.1
Heavy Plant Mechanic	1.3
Carpenter/joiner	8.0
Instrument Mechanic	0.5
Auto Electrician	1.8
Panel Beater	1.3
Agricultural Mechanic	0.0
Plumber	12.9
Pan Boiler	0.5
Turner/Machinist	0.9



TVET Skills <i>Continued</i>	%
Boiler Attendant	1.5
Welder/fabricator	7.8
Block layer/plasterer	20.5
Electrician	19.1
Sewing	1.6
Cook	0.5
Electrical Wireman	6.7
Construction Plant Mechanic	1.5
Fitting	1.5
Radio/TV Mechanic	0.4
Printing Trades	0.7
Upholstery	1.1
Survey Assistant	0.5
Data Processing Clerk	0.4
Other	5.8

Source: Employer Survey, 2025

Employment of people living with disability

The employment of people living with disabilities (PWDs) remains critically low in Eswatini, accounting for just 0.11% of employees in the NLMSP. Similarly, the ILFS (2023) reports that PWDs represent less than 1.5% of the employed national labour force. This highlights a significant gap in workplace inclusion and accessibility for persons with disabilities. This is corroborated by findings from the World Bank (2022), which indicate that 83.7% of PWDs in Eswatini are economically inactive, largely due to limited access to employment opportunities, inadequate workplace accommodations, and persistent social and structural barriers. Nevertheless, Table 4.2.3 shows that among the few that are employed, they occupy higher-level occupations such as legislators, senior officials, and manager positions.



Table 4.2.3: Employment of people with disability by occupation

Occupations	%
Legislators, senior officials and managers	33.3
Professionals	23.3
Clerks	3.3
Service workers and shop, and market sales workers	6.7
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	16.7
Domestic workers	13.3
Other	3.3
Total Number of Personnel	100.0



Notwithstanding, these results still highlight the urgent need for inclusive employment policies, targeted skills development programmes, and stronger enforcement of disability rights to ensure that PWDs can participate meaningfully in the labour market.

4.3 SKILLS SUPPLY

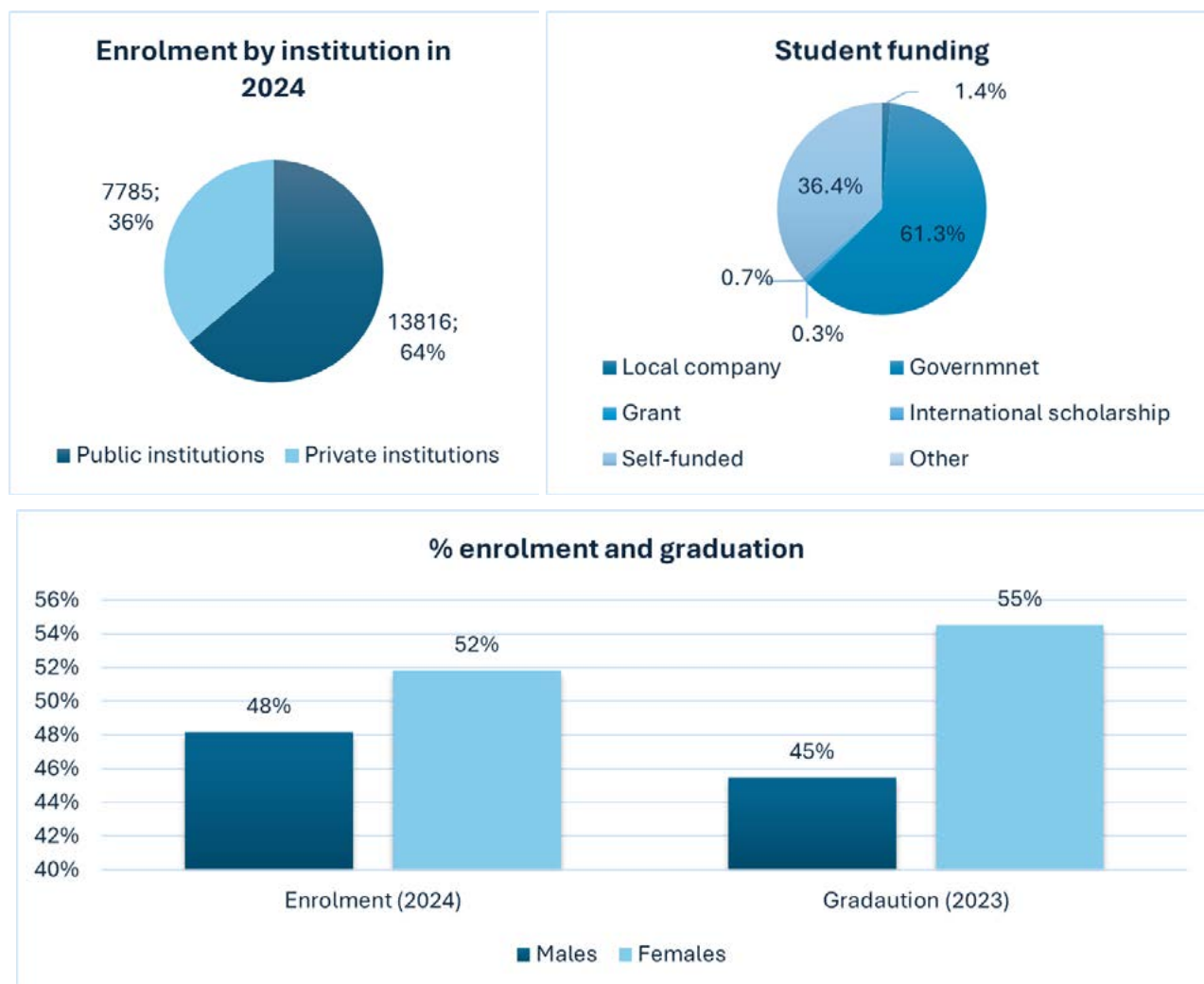
The public sector serves as the largest source of skills development in Eswatini, accounting for over 50% of total tertiary student enrolment (see Figure 4.3.1). In 2024, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) enrolled 21,609 students and graduated 6,429 in 2023 for both vocational and non-vocational training programmes. Meaning that HEIs generally graduate around 6,000 students a year. However, despite having only 13 public institutions compared to an estimated 40 private ones, public training institutions accommodate a significantly larger number of students. This is synonymous with the fact that most learners in public institutions receive government funding, whereas students in private institutions are predominantly self-funded. Figure 4.2.1 shows that more than 60% of learners are government-funded and only 1.4% are funded by local companies, while 36.4% are self-funded.

Figure 4.3.1 also indicates that more females are enrolling (52%) and graduating (55%) from tertiary institutions compared to males. However, labour market employment findings show that more males are employed than females. This highlights the depth of gender inequality issues in Eswatini, particularly in the disconnect between educational attainment and labour market opportunities for women. Driven by persistent gender norms, limited access to technical training for women, and workplace environments that may not be conducive to gender inclusion.





Figure 4.3.1: Skills supply



Source: ESHEC (2024); Graduate survey 2024

The study finds that most skills across the different sectors are provided by local training institutions, excluding specialised areas like mining, aviation, and some components of engineering, specialised law, and programming. Eswatini College of Technology (ECOT), Gwamile Vocational and Commercial Training Institute (VOCTIM), Manzini Industrial Training Centre (MITC) and BSA Training Centre account for the largest share of enrolment in TVET, while the University of Eswatini, Limkokwing University of Technology, Southern African Nazarene University (SANU), and Christian Medical University (CMU) account for the largest share in university and college enrolment.

Table 4.3.1 shows that more qualifications are offered at degree and diploma levels compared to Master's degrees and PhD, which contribute to knowledge generation through research and development and foster innovation. This shows that local training institutions primarily focus on broad-based foundational and intermediate education to meet general workforce needs. Hence, there is limited focus on research and advanced specialised training that support industrialisation and innovation.



This shows that local training institutions primarily focus on broad-based foundational and intermediate education to meet general workforce needs. Hence, there is limited focus on research and advanced specialised training that support industrialisation and innovation. Therefore, there is a need to balance the supply, to address gaps in industry requirements for higher-level qualifications (degree and master's qualifications), and diploma and certificate qualifications that demonstrate specialised competencies and advanced training.

Gender disparities in HE training are also observed in the provision of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education in the country. Table 4.3.1 demonstrates that the STEM fields have an underrepresentation of women, which is also observed in vocational training centres due to several factors, including gender stereotypes, limited access to role models, societal expectations, and a lack of targeted support or encouragement for girls to pursue STEM-related careers.

Table 4.3.1: Enrolment by qualification

Qualification	Enrolment by Qualification	Enrolment by Sex		STEM Subjects by Sex		Completion Rates by Sex		First Year by Sex	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Certificate	2,042	1,044	873	528	259	1,041	707	771	562
Diploma	5,864	2,744	3,110	1,284	751	859	1,267	1,024	1,325
Degree	10,403	4,694	5,709	2,793	2,517	642	952	1,597	2,026
Master's Degree	449	195	254	138	152	18	33	87	102
PhD	39	22	17	22	17	0	1	14	7
Post-Diploma	28	8	20	8	20	4	20	8	20
Associate Degree	2,901	1,223	1,678	700	465	359	429	404	601
Overall	21,726	9,930	11,661	5,473	4,181	2,923	3,409	3,905	4,643

Source: ESHEC (2024)

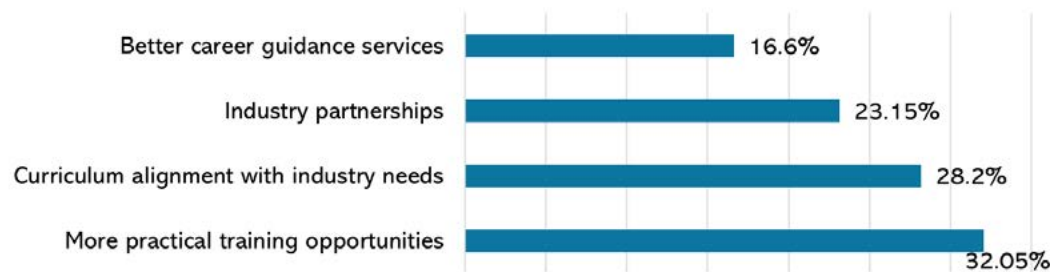
Key barriers to skills development

Eswatini's vocational training institutions and non-vocational training institutions face the following challenges in remaining relevant and aligned to industry needs: financial constraints due to reliance on government funding, staff shortages and a lack of resources to conduct necessary upskilling and workshops for instructors. Key informant interviews identified challenges such as outdated teaching techniques and insufficient exposure to emerging industry practices, particularly in smaller institutions.



Moreover, the study finds that only 36% of employers have established relationships with local training institutions, while the majority (64%) have not. This lack of collaboration contributes to a misalignment between the skills demanded by the labour market and those supplied by training institutions. As a result, critical gaps persist in curriculum development, internship programme support, and the flow of information between those producing skills and those absorbing them. As such, employers suggest the improvements on Figure 4.3.2 to address the pressing supply-demand challenges.

Figure 4.3.2: Suggested improvements for training institutions

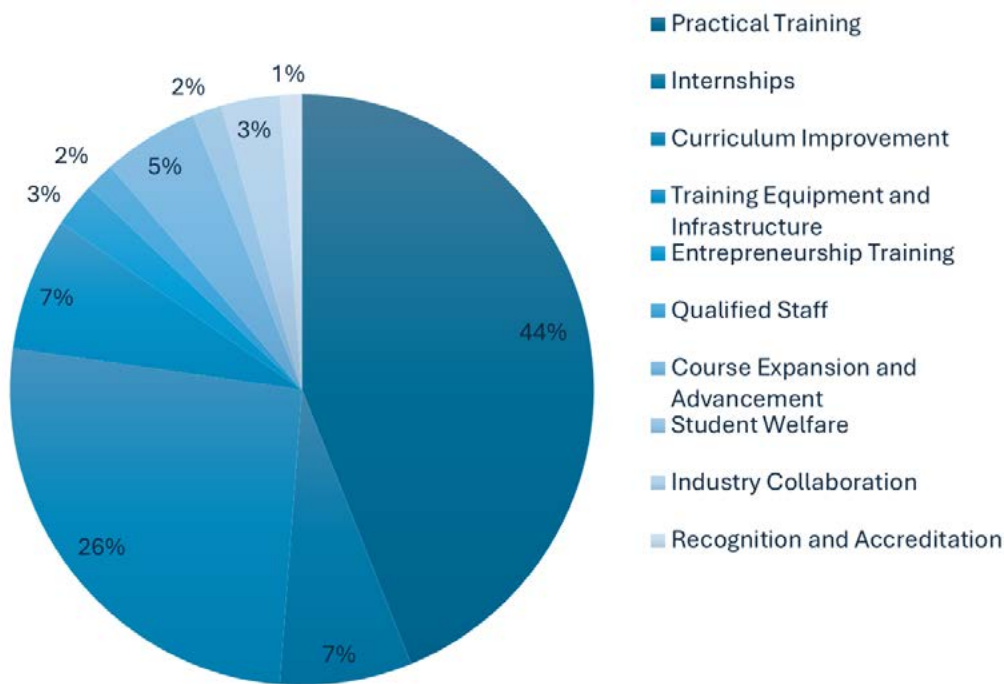


Source: Employer Survey, 2025

Figure 4.3.3 reveals critical gaps in HEI curricula (vocational training and non-vocational training) that need to be addressed in future programme development. Practical training (44%) is a critical concern for the education system, demonstrating a higher focus on theoretical than hands-on applied training. There is also a gap in curriculum design (26%), which needs updating; training equipment and infrastructure (7%) need improving; internship programmes (7%) and course offerings (5%) need to be expanded and advanced to address current market demands and align graduate competencies with industry needs. Currently, outdated training content fails to cover emerging fields such as renewable energy installations, solar panel technologies, and smart grid systems, for example. The programs also lack emphasis on essential cross-disciplinary and entrepreneurial skills needed in today’s workplace.



Figure 4.3.3: Areas of improvement for programming



Source: Graduate Survey, 2025



4.4 SKILLS DEMAND

Sector Highlights



Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing



Economic Role: One of the largest contributors to GDP



Challenge: Only **20%** of employers are exploring automation



Skills in Demand:

- ▶ Climate-smart agriculture
- ▶ Agricultural biotechnology
- ▶ Value chain management
- ▶ Digital agriculture



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The labour market structure for the sector is characterised by both formal and informal employment and is also dominated by primary agrarian activities. These include sugarcane farming, vegetable farming, sub- tropical fruit farming, livestock production, poultry farming, banana farming and forestry, among others. By assessing the structure of the labour force within the agriculture and agro-processing sectors, the results of the study demonstrate that males made up 62% of the employed in the sector in contrast to females at 38% (Table 4.4.1). This is corroborated by key findings of the ILFS (2021; 2023) reports, stating that the percentage distribution of employed males in the agriculture and agro-processing sector is higher than that of females. Of the total labour force in this sector, 17% were temporary workers, 58% were permanent workers and 24% were engaged on a seasonal basis.

Table 4.4.1 Employee profile (Agriculture and Agro-Processing Sector)

	Indicator	Value
Sectoral Absorption by Gender	Share of Females	37.97%
	Share of Males	62.03%
Employment Age	Preferred Average Age Group	26-30 Years
		36-40 years
	Actual Average Age Group	36-40 Years
Sectoral Absorption by Nationality	Share of Swati Citizens	99.71%
	Share of Foreigners	0.29%
Type of Contract	Share of Temporary Workers	17.21%
	Share of Permanent Workers	58.44%
	Share of Seasonal Workers	24.35%
Workers Living with Disabilities	Share of People Living	
	With Disabilities	0.00%
Qualifications	Minimum Qualifications Preferred by Employers	First stage of tertiary education. 1st degree (medium duration)
	Actual Minimum Qualifications Held by Employees	Certificate



Sector Highlights



Mining and Energy



Gender Representation:

19.27 % Female | 80.73 % Male



Challenge: Among the challenges facing the sector is the shortage of local skills, particularly in technical and industry-specific areas, highlighting the need for targeted short training programmes.



Skills in Demand:

- ▶ Renewable engineering
- ▶ Environmental sciences
- ▶ Geotechnical side of geology
- ▶ Energy management systems
- ▶ Civil engineering



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Shaping Tomorrow's Skills Today





The study finds that the mining and energy sector displays a striking gender imbalance in its workforce composition. The data shows that males constitute 80.73% of the total workforce, while females account for 19.27% of employees in the sector (Table 4.4.2). The national skills audit conducted in 2022 also revealed similar findings. This disparity reflects the traditionally male-dominated nature of the industry, which can be attributed to the physical demands of many roles within the sector. Principal activities in the sector encompass permanent employment arrangements, which account for 82.58% of the workforce, while temporary workers represent 12.25% and seasonal workers comprise 2.83% of the total employment base. The age demographics of the currently employed workforce were primarily centred in the 35–40-year range, aligning with employers' preferred hiring age. However, the 2022 skills audit reported that companies in these sectors had previously preferred employees aged 41–50 years. The shift in age preferences may reflect employers' evolving needs, favouring younger workers who are perceived to bring greater adaptability, energy or technological proficiency to meet current industry demands

Table 4.4.2: Market structure indicators

	Indicator	Value
Sectoral Absorption by Gender	Share of Males	80.73%
	Share of Females	19.27%
Employment Age	Preferred Average Age Group	35-40 Years
	Actual Average Age Group	35-40 Years
Sectoral Absorption by Nationality	Share of Swati Citizens	98.38%
	Share of Foreigners	0.31%
Type of Contract	Share of Temporary Workers	12.25%
	Share of Permanent Workers	82.58%
	Share of Seasonal Workers	2.83%
Workers Living with Disabilities	Share of People Living With Disabilities	0.21%
Qualifications	Minimum Qualifications Preferred by Employers	Bachelor's Degree in Engineering
	Actual Minimum Qualifications Held by Employees	Certificates

Source: NLMSP Employer Survey Data, 2025



Sector Highlights



Manufacturing



Economic Contribution: 37% to GDP
Employment: 16.6% of total jobs



Challenge: Most Eswatini hold low-paying positions



Skills in Demand:

- ▶ Industrial automation
- ▶ Food safety
- ▶ Packaging technology
- ▶ AI-driven quality control



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Regarding the labour market structure in this sector, the study reveals that it is male-dominated, with men accounting for 57.67% of the workforce (Table 4.4.3). This marks a shift from the findings of the 2022 Skills Audit, reinforcing that males are now more prevalent across the sector, particularly in skilled and supervisory roles. Women, by comparison, are more concentrated in clerical, service and lower-skilled occupations. The 2022 National Skills Audit similarly revealed a gendered occupational distribution, with men dominating technical and executive functions, while women were more likely to fill semi-skilled and elementary roles. Furthermore, the workforce is composed mainly of Swati nationals (99.18%), indicating limited reliance on foreign labour and suggesting that domestic training systems are supplying much of the sector's talent. Interestingly, the average worker falls within the 31–35 age group, slightly younger than the preferred 35–40 bracket, possibly reflecting the recruitment of younger, less experienced workers, which could have implications for productivity and the need for targeted upskilling initiatives.

Table 4.4.3: Labour market structure

	Indicator	Value
Sectoral Absorption by Gender	Share of Females	42.33%
	Share of Males	57.67%
Employment Age	Preferred Average Age Group	35-40 Years
	Actual Average Age Group	31-35 Years
Sectoral Absorption by Nationality	Share of Swati Citizens	99.18%
	Share of Foreigners	0.82%
Type of Contract	Share of Temporary Workers	5.46%
	Share of Permanent Workers	94.21%
	Share of Seasonal Workers	0.32%
Workers Living with Disabilities	Share of People Living With Disabilities	0.00%
Qualifications	Minimum Qualifications Preferred by Employers	First stage of tertiary education (short or medium duration)
	Actual Minimum Qualifications Held by Employees	Certificate



Sector Highlights



Tourism



Economic Contribution:

Tourism contributed **23.9% to GDP** (Annual Tourism Research Report 2023).



Challenge: A primary challenge in the tourism sector is the need for training institutions to better align their courses with evolving trends such as digital innovation and sustainable tourism.



Skills in Demand:

- ▶ Digital and Social Media Management
- ▶ Green Hospitality Practices
- ▶ Technology Integration



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The total number of employees in the tourism sector, as per the employer survey, stands at about 900 employees. This workforce is distributed across various occupations, with a gender breakdown of 41.4% male and 58.6% female employees. The data indicates a relatively balanced gender representation, though certain occupations show a higher concentration of one gender over the other (Table 4.4.4).

The tourism workforce in Eswatini is significantly local, with approximately 98.4% being Swati citizens and only 1.6% foreign nationals, which can indicate that employers can find skilled local workers without needing to import much talent. However, inclusivity remains a challenge, as no people living with disabilities were in the survey workforce, suggesting barriers in workplace accessibility and limited targeted hiring initiatives. In terms of employment stability, 82.6% of workers hold permanent positions, while the rest are temporary and seasonal, reflecting the sector's fluctuating demand.

Table 4.4.4 : Employee profile in the Tourism Sector

	Indicator	Value
Sectoral Absorption by Gender	Share of Females	58.61%
	Share of Males	41.39%
Employment Age	Preferred Average Age Group	36-40 Years
	Actual Average Age Group	36-40 Years
Sectoral Absorption by Nationality	Share of Swati Citizens	98.38%
	Share of Foreigners	1.61%
Type of Contract	Share of Temporary Workers	17.22%
	Share of Permanent Workers	82.58%
	Share of Seasonal Workers	0.20%
Workers Living with Disabilities	Share of People Living	0.00%
	With Disabilities	
Qualifications	Minimum Qualifications Preferred by Employers	First stage of tertiary education, 1st degree (medium duration)
	Actual Minimum Qualifications Held by Employees	

Source: NLMSP Employer Survey (2025)



Sector Highlights



Information and Communication Technology (ICT)



Gender Representation:

49 % Female | 51.07 % Male



Challenge: The ICT sector continues to face the significant challenge of graduate unemployment, primarily driven by a disconnect between academic training and the practical needs of the industry.



Skills in Demand:

- ▶ Management information technology
- ▶ Mass media management
- ▶ Programming skills
- ▶ Cyber security
- ▶ Sales and marketing
- ▶ Graphic design



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The ICT sector in Eswatini exhibits a relatively balanced gender distribution, with 51.07% male and 49% female participation, an improvement from the 56.9% male and 43.1% female split reported in the 2022 Skills Audit (Table 4.4.5). The sector remains entirely reliant on domestic talent, with 100% of employees being Swati nationals, indicating no current dependence on foreign labour. Employment structures reflect a high level of job stability, with 89.3% of workers on permanent contracts, 10% on temporary terms and only 0.7% engaged seasonally. However, inclusion of persons with disabilities remains a concern, with representation dropping to just 0.10%, down from 0.49% in the 2022 National Skills Audit. This decline aligns with the UNDP (2024) DRA, which highlights ongoing challenges for people with disabilities, particularly in accessing and using digital technologies.

Table 4.4.5: Labour market structure

	Indicator	Value
Sectoral Absorption by Gender	Share of Females	49.00%
	Share of Males	51.00%
Employment Age	Preferred Average Age Group	31- 40
	Actual Average Age Group	35-40
Sectoral Absorption by Nationality	Share of Swati Citizens	100%
	Share of Foreigners	0.00%
Type of Contract	Share of Temporary Workers	10.00%
	Share of Permanent Workers	89.30%
	Share of Seasonal Workers	0.70%
Workers Living with Disabilities	Share of People Living With Disabilities	0.10%
Qualifications	Minimum Qualifications Preferred by Employers	Bachelor's degree
	Actual Minimum Qualifications Held by Employees	Bachelor's degree

Sector Highlights



Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles



Employment:

The wholesale and retail trade sector in Eswatini accounts for the largest share (17.9%) of the employed population by economic activity; 21.4% of employed females work in this sector (ILFS, 2023).

-Most MSMEs (43%) operate wholesale and trade businesses (FinMark, 2023)



Challenge:

- There were skills gaps in managerial, professional and technical and associate professional positions.
- Women are mainly underrepresented in managerial, professional, technical, craft and trades roles.



Skills in Demand:

- ▶ Computerised Vehicle Diagnostics
- ▶ Inventory Management/Stock Controlling
- ▶ Sales and Marketing
- ▶ Occupational Health and Safety
- ▶ Customer Service Excellence
- ▶ Digital Literacy



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The wholesale and retail sector in Eswatini appeared to be primarily localised, with an overwhelming majority of employees being Swati citizens, with only a marginal number of foreign nationals (Table 4.4.6). The sector exhibits a notable gender imbalance, with males making up two-thirds of the workforce. This suggests either gendered occupational segregation or structural barriers limiting female participation in certain job categories. The average age of employees, ranging from 35 to 40 years, aligned with employer preferences. A high proportion of workers were employed on a permanent basis, although temporary and seasonal contracts remained necessary to accommodate fluctuations in demand, particularly during peak retail cycles.

A more pressing issue emerged around the misalignment between the qualifications employers preferred and those actually held by employees. While employers favoured candidates with first-stage tertiary education, the current workforce largely possessed certificate-level qualifications, exposing a gap that could hinder both career progression and overall sectoral efficiency. Additionally, the inclusion of persons living with disabilities remained minimal at just 0.21%, pointing to the need for more inclusive employment policies and targeted support measures.

►►► **Table 4.4.6:** Current labour market structure

	Indicator	Value
Sectoral Absorption by Gender	Share of Males	66.10%
	Share of Females	33.90%
Employment Age	Preferred Average Age Group	35-40 Years
	Actual Average Age Group	35-40 Years
Sectoral Absorption by Nationality	Share of Swati Citizens	98.63%
	Share of Foreigners	1.37%
Type of Contract	Share of Temporary Workers	8.3%
	Share of Permanent Workers	88.3%
	Share of Seasonal Workers	4.0%
Workers Living with Disabilities	Share of People Living	0.21%
	With Disabilities	
Qualifications	Minimum Qualifications Preferred by Employers	First stage of tertiary education (short or medium duration)
	Actual Minimum Qualifications Held by Employees	Certificates



Sector Highlights



Construction



Gender Representation:

16.84 % Female | 83.16 % Male



Challenge: A key challenge in Eswatini's construction sector is the limited capacity of local contractors to participate in large-scale projects, primarily due to strict qualification requirements, lack of access to capital, and insufficient skills in critical technical areas. This has led to a reliance on foreign contractors, which restricts local industry growth and limits opportunities for skills transfer.



Skills in Demand:

- ▶ Construction Project Management
- ▶ Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- ▶ HVAC Systems
- ▶ Supply Chain Management
- ▶ Safety and Risk Management
- ▶ Quantity surveying



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The sector's labour market continues to be dominated by male employees, with 83.16% male and 16.84% female representation, aligning with findings from the National Skills Audit (2022) (Table 4.4.7). While this represents a significant gender imbalance, it highlights the need for more targeted efforts to increase women's participation in the sector. The preferred employment age group among employers is 30–35 years, yet the actual average age group remains slightly higher, at 35–40 years, suggesting a slower entry of younger professionals into the workforce. The National Skills Audit (2022) similarly found that younger workers (18–25 years) are primarily in elementary roles. Employment remains largely formalised, with 64.18% of workers on permanent contracts and 24.33% on temporary contracts.

Table 4.4.7: Labour market structure

	Indicator	Value
Sectoral Absorption by Gender	Share of Females	16.84%
	Share of Males	83.16%
Employment Age	Preferred Average Age Group	31-35
	Actual Average Age Group	35-40
Sectoral Absorption by Nationality	Share of Swati Citizens	98.85%
	Share of Foreigners	1.15%
Type of Contract	Share of Temporary Workers	24.33%
	Share of Permanent Workers	64.18%
	Share of Seasonal Workers	11.50%
Workers Living with Disabilities	Share of People Living With Disabilities	0.60%
Qualifications	Minimum Qualifications Preferred by Employers	Diploma
	Actual Minimum Qualifications Held by Employees	Certificates

Source: NLMSP Employer Survey (2025)

Sector Highlights



Professional, Scientific & Technical Activities (PSTA)



Gender Representation:

64.5% Male | 35.5% Female



Challenge: Employees in the sector were found to be lacking crucial industry-relevant technical and practical skills (e.g., software engineering, specialised legal skills, ethics and compliance, 3D modelling).



Skills in Demand:

- ▶ Statistics
- ▶ Database Management
- ▶ Business Management
- ▶ Mathematical Analysis
- ▶ Policy Analysis
- ▶ Accounting



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The PSTA sector primarily comprises companies in the fields of engineering, architecture, business development, consultancy, accounting, marketing and design. The representation of gender in the sector shows that a significant proportion (64.5%) of the total number of employees are male compared to 35.5% females (Table 4.4.8). According to survey results from a total of 86 companies, the sector has approximately 757 employees.

Table 4.4 8: Key indicators

	Indicator	Value
Sectoral Absorption by Gender	Share of Females	35.5%
	Share of Males	64.5%
Employment Age	Preferred Average Age Group	
	Actual Average Age Group	36-40 years old
Sectoral Absorption by Nationality	Share of Swati Citizens	97.76%
	Share of Foreigners	2.24%
Type of Contract	Share of Temporary Workers	3.83%
	Share of Permanent Workers	95.77%
	Share of Seasonal Workers	0.41%
People Living with Disability		0.26%
Qualifications	Preferred	
	Actual	Bachelor's degree (46.3%)

Source: NLMSP Employer Survey (2025)



Sector Highlights



Finance & Insurance



Gender Representation:

52.53% Female | 47.47% Male



Challenge: The industry demands advanced financial skills due to rapid digitalisation and regulatory complexities. Skills gaps: blockchain, fintech, financial modelling, risk management.



Skills in Demand:

- ▶ Accounting & Auditing
- ▶ Risk & Financial Analysis
- ▶ Blockchain & Fintech
- ▶ Financial Modelling
- ▶ Business Development
- ▶ Cybersecurity & AI



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The finance and insurance sector demonstrates a slight female dominance, with 52.53% of the workforce being women, compared to 47.47% men (Table 4.4.9). This indicates a relatively balanced gender distribution, although it leans towards a female-majority sector. The age profile of the workforce is notably concentrated within the 36–40 year age bracket, both in terms of employer preference and actual employee demographics.

The sector is primarily composed of Eswatini citizens, who make up 99.76% of the workforce. This indicates a high level of local absorption and limited reliance on foreign talent, which supports national employment strategies.

Furthermore, the sector is highly formalised, as shown by the dominance of permanent contracts, which cover 88.67% of employees. Temporary and seasonal workers constitute 11.05% and 0.28% of the workforce, respectively. This can be indicative of job stability and reflects the structured and long-term nature of roles within the finance and insurance industry. Such stability enhances employee retention and improves institutional knowledge and continuity.

However, the representation of workers living with disabilities is significantly low, at only 0.24% of the workforce. This highlights a significant gap in inclusivity, indicating the need for focused efforts to enhance accessibility and create more employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in this sector. An alignment was noted between the qualifications expected by employers and those held by employees in this sector. Employers in this sector prefer employees with a first stage of tertiary education, specifically a first degree.

Table 4.4.9 Employee profile (Finance and Insurance)

	Indicator	Value
Sectoral Absorption by Gender	Share of Females	52.53%
	Share of Males	47.47%
Employment Age	Preferred Average Age Group	36-40 years
	Actual Average Age Group	36-40 Years
Sectoral Absorption by Nationality	Share of Swati Citizens	99.76%
	Share of Foreigners	0.24%
Type of Contract	Share of Temporary Workers	11.05%
	Share of Permanent Workers	88.67%
	Share of Seasonal Workers	0.28%
Workers Living with Disabilities	Share of People Living	0.24%
	With Disabilities	
Qualifications	Minimum Qualifications Preferred by Employers	First stage of tertiary education. 1 st degree (medium duration)
	Actual Minimum Qualifications	
	Held by Employees	Bachelors' degree



Education



Qualifications:

Primary Level: Out of 8,948 teachers, **80.6%** are appropriately qualified

Secondary Level: **73.28%** of teachers hold the correct qualifications



Challenge:

The education sector struggles with outdated curricula, limited industry engagement, poorly equipped training institutions, and teachers instructing outside their expertise.



Skills in Demand:

- ▶ STEM teachers (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)
- ▶ Qualified ECCDE educators and Grade 0 teachers
- ▶ Horticulture and Financial Intelligence specialists
- ▶ Educational Psychologists and School Counsellors
- ▶ Special Education Needs (SEN) educators



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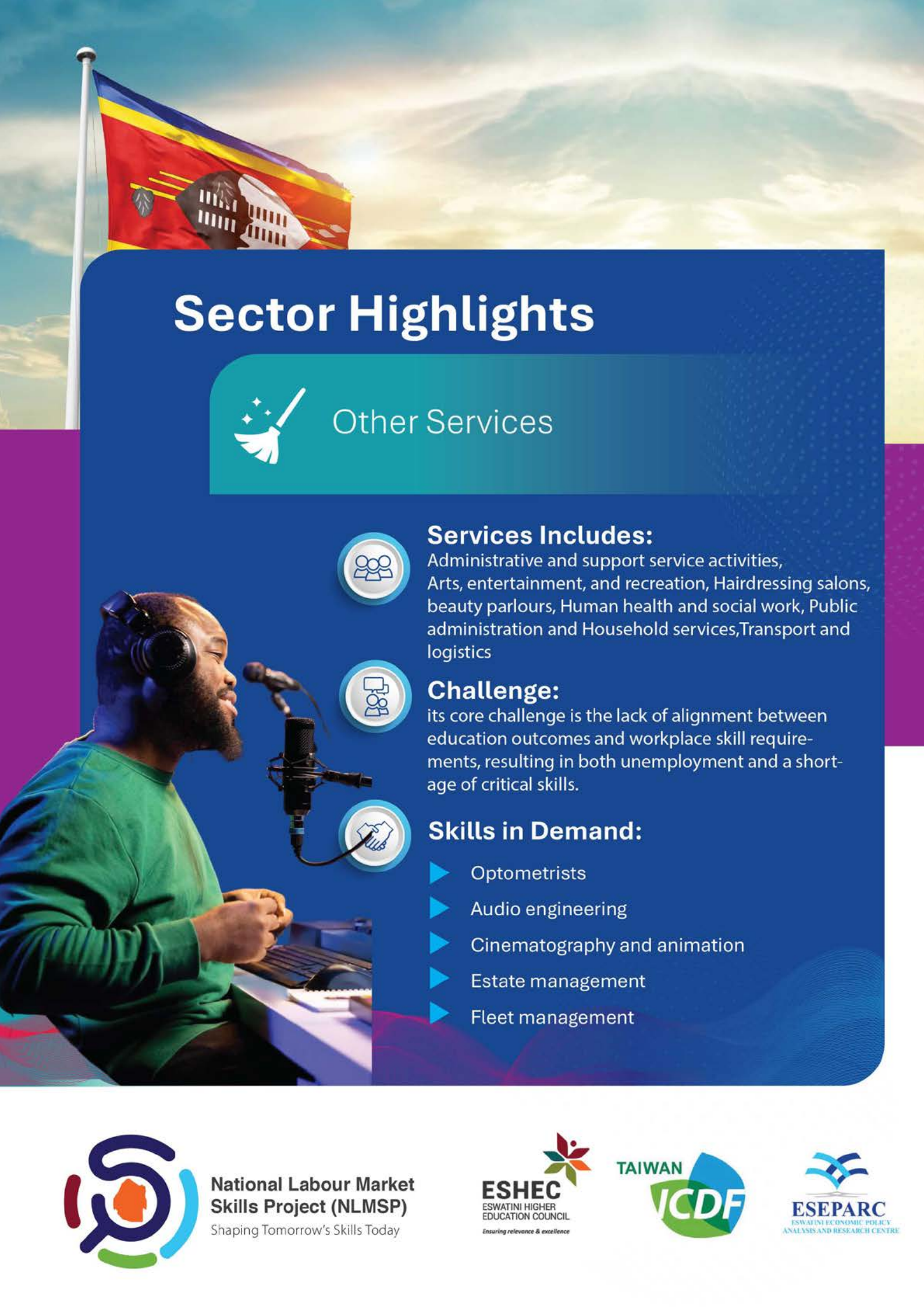


The education sector in Eswatini is a significant source of employment, with a workforce composition that reflects gendered trends across different education levels (Table 4.4.10). At the primary level, the sector is heavily feminised, with women accounting for nearly 70% of the workforce, aligning with global patterns that show higher female representation in foundational teaching roles. In secondary education, gender distribution is more balanced, with women comprising 51.30% and men 48.70% of staff. Interestingly, in higher education, the trend shifts, with male staff making up 55.30% of academic positions, while women are slightly more represented in non-academic roles (44.70%). These figures suggest that while women dominate teaching roles at lower levels, their representation decreases in senior academic roles, highlighting a potential gender gap in career progression within the sector. This distribution also reflects broader labour market dynamics and societal gender roles, with implications for skills planning, professional development and leadership pipelines in education.

Table 4.4.10: Labour market structure

Education class	Variable	Number	%
primary	Male	2711	30.30%
	Female	6237	69.70%
	Total	8948	100.00%
Secondary	Male	3751	48.70%
	Female	3945	51.30%
	Total	7696	100.00%
higher education	Academic staff	1282	55.30%
	Non-academic staff	1038	44.70%

Source: Eswatini Education Census (2021) & ESHEC Basic Data (2024)



Sector Highlights



Other Services



Services Includes:

Administrative and support service activities, Arts, entertainment, and recreation, Hairdressing salons, beauty parlours, Human health and social work, Public administration and Household services, Transport and logistics



Challenge:

its core challenge is the lack of alignment between education outcomes and workplace skill requirements, resulting in both unemployment and a shortage of critical skills.



Skills in Demand:

- ▶ Optometrists
- ▶ Audio engineering
- ▶ Cinematography and animation
- ▶ Estate management
- ▶ Fleet management



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Across the sectors, there was a consistent mismatch between the preferred and actual workforce age, with employers generally favouring younger workers (particularly those aged 26–30 in service-based sectors) but employing older individuals (36–40) in practice (Table 4.4.11). Gender distribution varied significantly by industry. For example, female dominance was most pronounced in personal care services such as hairdressing and beauty, while sectors such as real estate and transport remained male-dominated. Interestingly, even in sectors that typically prefer higher qualifications, such as real estate and logistics, many employees held only certificates, suggesting a potential skills gap or a shortage of appropriately qualified candidates. Administrative and support services employed mostly certificate holders despite the increasing complexity of tasks in that space, possibly indicating underinvestment in training. The presence of foreign workers was highest in hairdressing and entertainment, pointing to local gaps in niche service skills or labour supply. In contrast, sectors such as real estate and public administration had an almost exclusive reliance on Swati nationals.

➤➤➤ Table 4.4.11: Labour Market structure

Indicator	Administrative and support service activities	Arts, entertainment, and recreation	Hairdressing salons, beauty parlours, etc	Human Health and Social Work	Public administration and Household services (cleaning, laundry, etc.)	Real estate activities	Transport and logistics	Other	Overall
Share of Males	61.80%	59.20%	15.40%	51.50%	55.60%	65.30%	63.80%	54.10%	57.40%
Share of Females	38.20%	40.80%	84.60%	48.50%	44.40%	34.70%	36.20%	45.90%	42.60%
Preferred Average Age Group	26-30	26-30	26-30	36-40	36-40	36-40	36-40	36-40	36-40
Actual Average Age Group	36-40	36-40	36-40	36-40	36-40	36-40	36-40	36-40	36-40
Share of Swati Citizens	99.60%	92.20%	80.00%	98.00%	99.20%	100.00%	99.50%	98.60%	98.80%
Share of Foreigners	0.40%	7.80%	20.00%	2.00%	0.80%	0.00%	0.50%	1.40%	1.20%
Actual Minimum Qualifications Held by Employees	Certificate	Bachelor's Degree	Certificate	Bachelor's Degree	Certificate	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Certificate



Vocational Skill Demand

The sectoral assessment shows a high reliance on vocational skills in agriculture, manufacturing, energy and mining, and construction. Some of the skills in demand include automotive, mechanists, mechanical engineers, industrial electrician, welding, irrigation, metal fabrication, plumbing, packaging, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) technicians, power generation technicians, heavy equipment operators, green construction specialists, carpenters, and quality, safety and compliance officers.

Table 4.4.12: Trades Expected to Experience an Increase in Demand for TVET Qualification for the Next 5 Years

Skills	Formal enterprise	Informal enterprise	Overall
Bricklaying	14.4%	14.3%	14.4%
Civil Engineering	9.8%	10.7%	9.9%
Building studies	10.3%	0.0%	8.9%
Welding	5.2%	14.3%	6.4%
Electrical wiring	4.0%	21.4%	6.4%
Electrical Engineering	7.5%	0.0%	6.4%
Quantity Surveying	6.3%	3.6%	5.9%
Electrical trade	5.7%	7.1%	5.9%
Technicians	4.6%	3.6%	4.5%
Carpentry	4.0%	7.1%	4.5%
Painting/spray painting	2.9%	3.6%	3.0%
Plumbing	2.9%	0.0%	2.5%
Motor Mechanic	2.3%	3.6%	2.5%
Heavy Plant Mechanic	2.3%	3.6%	2.5%
Aircon and Refrigeration Techniques	2.9%	0.0%	2.5%
Health and safety	1.7%	3.6%	2.0%
Automotive Systems	1.7%	3.6%	2.0%
Other	11.5%	0.0%	9.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%

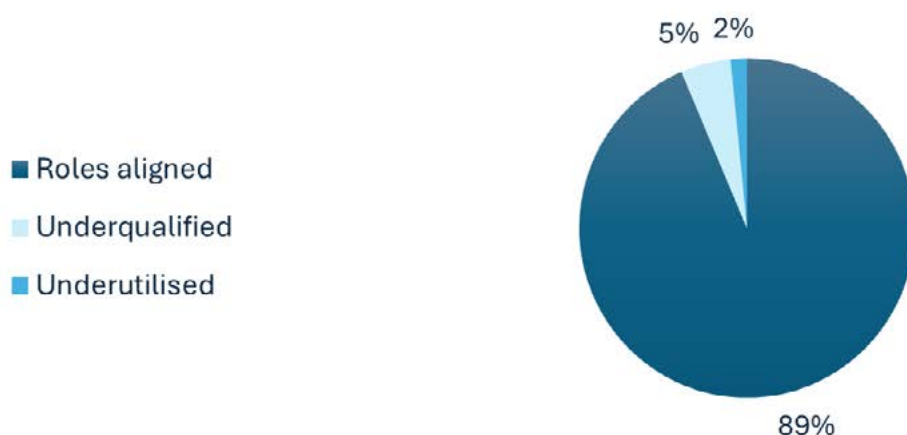
Source: Employer Survey, 2025

4.5 GAPS, MISMATCHES, SHORTAGES, and FUTURE SKILLS

The study found that a majority of employees (89%) across various sectors possess skills that are generally aligned with their job roles. However, nearly half (48%) of these employees required a form of in-company training to achieve full job readiness. While their skills are broadly aligned, the need for additional training increases the cost of onboarding, retaining, and developing employees, as many do not enter the workforce with the necessary foundational skills.



Figure 4.5.1: Employee skills alignment with employer needs



Source: Employer Survey, 2025

In terms of shortages, gaps, and mismatches, among the labour force that is not aligned to their roles, most companies report experiencing shortages (50%) and gaps (39%) across all vacant positions, compared to (11%) who experience skill mismatches (see Table 4.5.1). Professional and technical skills, followed by legislators, senior officials, and managers, experience the highest skill shortages (more than 50%) and gaps (above 30%), relating to a need for specialised competencies, leadership, and managerial skills and higher-level qualifications.

Vacant positions account for 758 roles across the 1,211 companies, representing approximately 3% of the total employed population in these firms. This means that one in every 33 positions is vacant at any given time, suggesting a moderate but persistent demand for labour. It also indicates a steady growth in employment opportunities, particularly for candidates with the right skills, and highlights the importance of aligning training and education systems with labour market needs to reduce shortages and gaps.

Table 4.5.1: Skill gaps, mismatches, and shortages

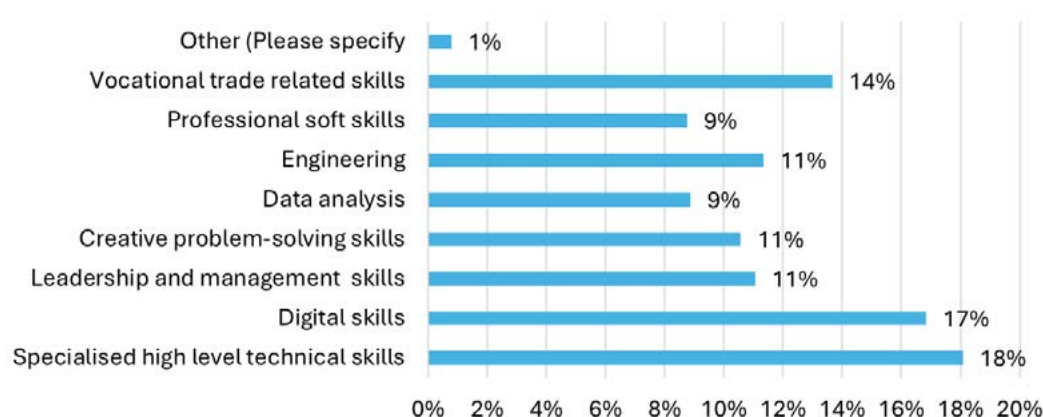
	Vacancies	Gaps	Mismatch	Shortage
Legislators, senior officials, and managers	113	39%	3%	58%
Professionals	369	43%	6%	52%
Technical and associate professionals	135	30%	8%	61%
Clerks	44	52%	11%	36%
Service workers and shop and market sales workers	38	16%	37%	47%
Craft and related trades workers	17	41%	0%	59%
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	42	55%	10%	36%
Total	758	39%	11%	50%

Notes: Skill shortage (Not enough skilled individuals available to fill the role); Skill gap (Employees require further training or development to meet job demands); Skill mismatch (Employees' skills do not align with the requirements of the role).



The study suggests that in the next 5 to 10 years, most employers (18%) will prioritise specialised, high-level technical skills (see Figure 4.5.2). These include areas such as robotics, programming, and precision instrumentation, amongst others. Digital skills (17%) are also in demand across a wide range of sectors, including information communication technology (ICT), finance and insurance, tourism, professional services, manufacturing, and retail. Some of the skills required in this area are digital communication, design, digital marketing, cybersecurity, and software development. Vocational trade-related skills (14%) will also be highly sought after in the next 5-10 years, particularly in the manufacturing and construction industries. These encompass trades such as plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, and automotive repair. Lastly, engineering skills, including mechanical, civil, software, and sound engineering, remain essential. Employers also continue to value creative problem-solving abilities, as well as leadership and management competencies.

Figure 4.5.2: Future skills demand



Source: Employer Survey, 2025

Hiring and retention

The survey further assessed the most common reasons for job vacancies in most companies. The study found that 25.2% vacancies result from employees lacking the relevant work experience the company requires, 7.9% are due to a low number of applicants with the required skills, and 5.6% lack the qualifications required by the employer. This shows that 38.7% of the labour force is not adequately prepared to meet industry expectations, particularly in terms of practical experience and job-specific competencies. This implies that additional training is required not only for new hires but also for existing employees to ensure they remain relevant and productive in their respective occupations. Therefore, more employers need robust staff training and retention policies and programmes that will support upskilling or reskilling employees.

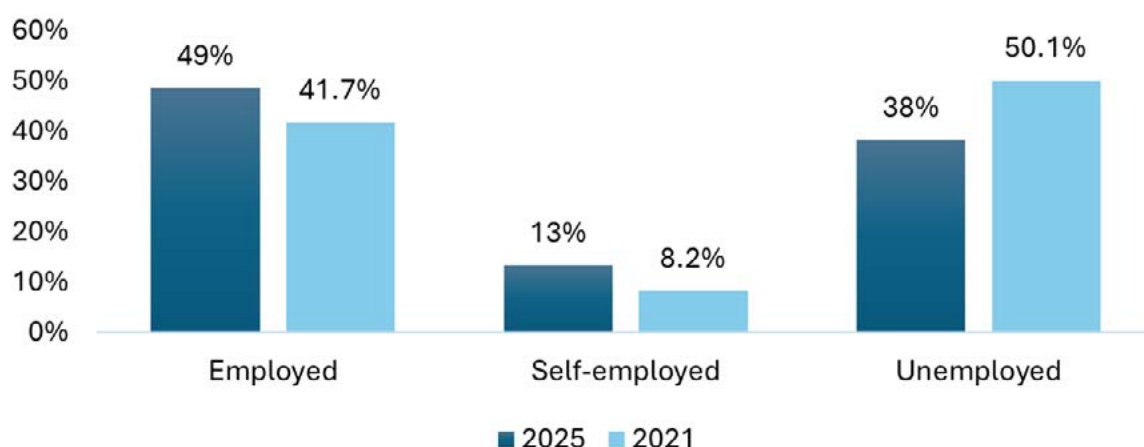
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4.6 THE YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE

The youth unemployment challenge in Eswatini is a significant barrier to development. Driven by multiple factors, unemployment exhibits some structural characteristics that inhibit long-term progress. However, Eswatini experienced improvements in youth employment between 2021 and 2025, largely driven by the post-COVID-19 economic recovery and the implementation of the MoLSS - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) national graduate internship programme. As a result, employment among young graduates increased from 41.7% in 2021 to 49% in 2025 (refer to Figure 4.6.1). A positive trend is also observed in the increase in the self-employed youth between 2021 and 2025, from 8.2% to 13%. Figure 4.6.1 also shows that more people are becoming employed or self-employed and fewer are remaining unemployed, which reflects the possible impact of youth-targeted initiatives and empowerment programmes aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and job creation.

Figure 4.6.1: Graduate employment rates

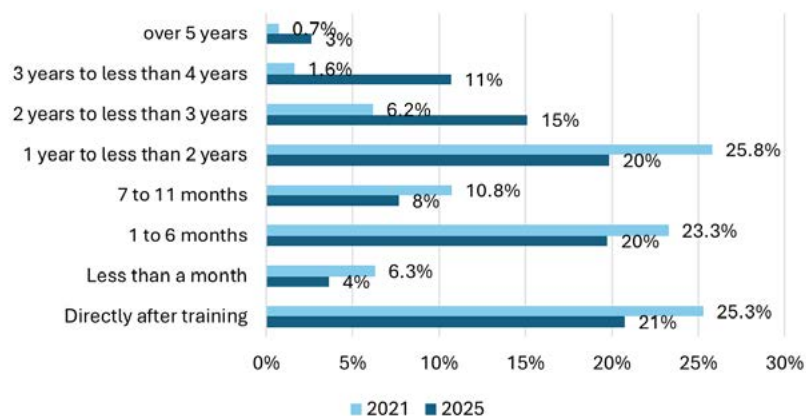


Source: Graduate Survey, 2025

However, the structural challenges persistent in the economy are reflected in Figure 4.6.2, which shows increasing job absorption challenges, inadequate industrial development, and increasing skill mismatches. Figure 4.6.2 suggests that between 2001 and 2025, there has been a rise in extreme delayed employment for graduates across the different sectors of the economy. Graduates are waiting longer periods to find employment than in previous years. This is pointing to the misalignment between graduate skills and job market needs, limited job creation in different economic sectors, and inadequate career support or transition services post-training.



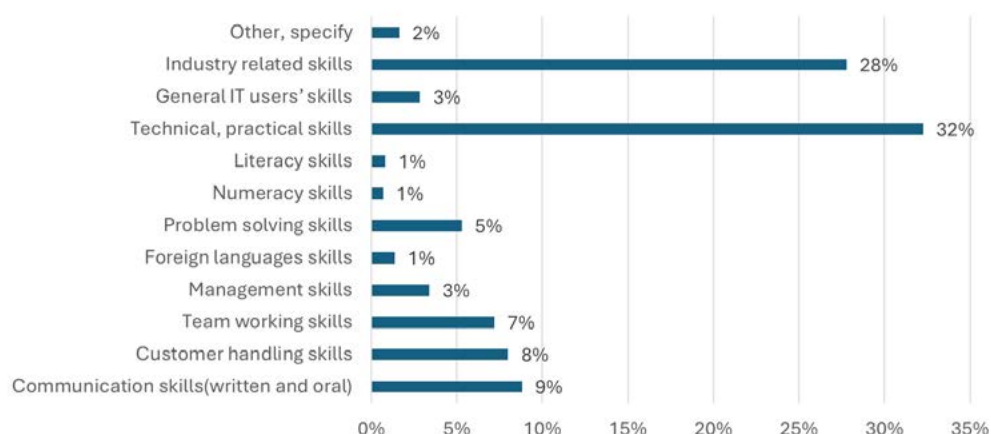
Figure 4.6.2: Time it takes graduates to get employed



Source: Graduate Survey, 2025

Employers have identified several key factors contributing to the low employability of graduates in the country, and among these, their lack of practical technical skills (32%), industry-specific skills (28%), and soft skills – constituting communication, customer handlings and teamwork skills - rank high (see Figure 4.6.3). The soft skills are not only important for navigating the workplace but also play a critical role in fostering a strong work ethic and sustaining a productive organisational culture and work environment. Thus, there is an urgent need for training institutions to create programmes that will support the development of stronger soft and problem-solving skills among graduates, as this will strengthen the propensity for graduates to transition into the employment space.

Figure 4.6.3: Skills that graduates lack

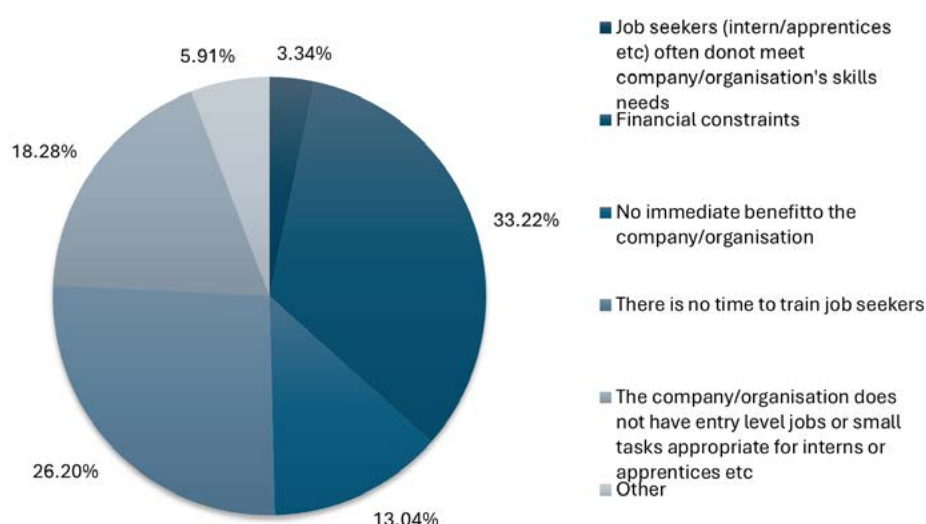


Source: Employer Survey 2025



Notwithstanding the need for graduates to possess practical skills for their employability, the study finds that only 39% of the surveyed companies offer internships, compared to 61% who do not. This is a challenge in closing the skill gap and increasing the employability of young people without their exposure to the working environment. Nonetheless, local companies also face significant financial barriers in offering internships/ apprenticeships (Figure 4.6.4). Some of the most prominent challenges are the lack of time to train interns, and a lack of immediate benefit to the company by having interns within the organisation.

Figure 4.6.4: Reasons for not offering internships



Source: Employer Survey 2025

These challenges call for a closer collaboration between government, industry, and training institutions to co-design internship frameworks. This includes creating training toolkits to help companies design meaningful internship programmes and providing tax breaks or subsidies for companies that offer structured internship or apprenticeship programmes. Furthermore, HEIs can develop dual training models and flexible internship systems such as virtual, part-time, or project-based offerings. This will contribute to creating shared value for the company, government, and the training institution, and provide the required skills and experience for graduates to improve their competencies and increase their employability.



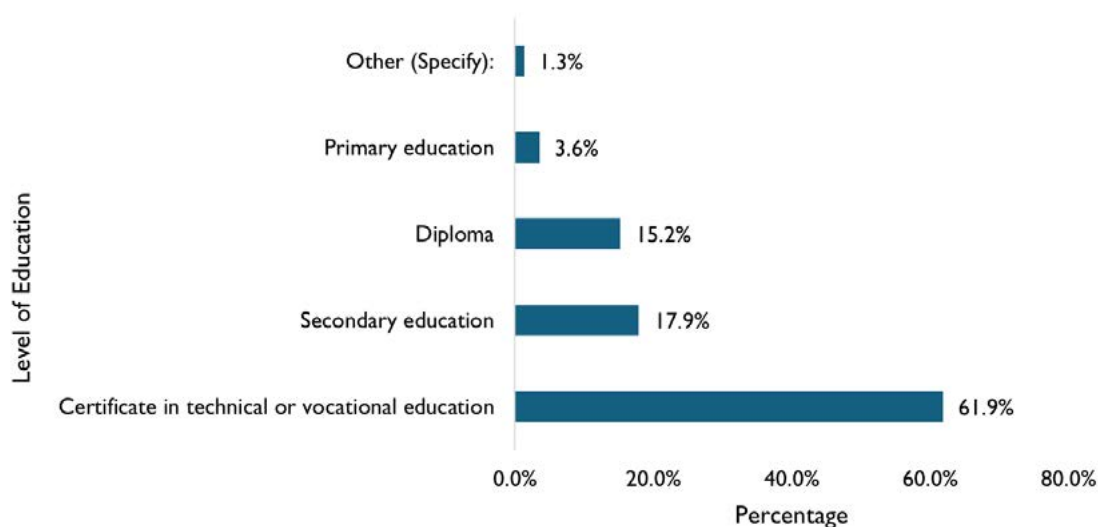
4.7 TVET ASSESSMENT

The Taiwan Technical Mission, in collaboration with the MoLSS Security and MoET, implemented the Eswatini Technical and Vocational Skills Certification Enhancement Project to improve the vocational trade certification system by improving trade testing material, developing occupational standards, capacitating the Directorate for Industrial and Vocational Training (with facilities, materials, infrastructure, training of instructors), and supporting lifelong learning. This section provides an assessment of the project and draws lessons for improving graduate employability through investments in TVET.

The study finds that the vocational training sector is predominantly male-dominated, accounting for 91.1% of those that trade tested compared to 8.9% of females. As a result of the investments made by the project at both ECOT and VOCTIM, infrastructure and equipment upgrades have improved the quality of trade tests administered at these facilities. 52% of trade tests were conducted at ECOT and 32% at VOCTIM. This improvement is particularly evident in trades such as electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, auto repair, and tourism and hospitality, which were specifically supported under the TVET Enhancement Project. Specifically, for trades such as electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, auto repair, and tourism and hospitality, which were under the TVET enhancement project.

Of those who underwent trade testing, 61.9% held a certificate in technical or vocational education, while 15.2% had a diploma. Given that trade testing was previously focused on lower-level skill development, including informal training, this shows an increasing demand for trade test certificates by graduates from training institutions. Figure 4.7.1. shows that less than 25% of the graduates possess secondary (17.9%) and primary school level (3.6%) qualifications.

Figure 4.7.1: Respondent's Highest Level of Education



Source: Trade Testing Graduate Tracer Survey, 2024



Most people who undertake trade tests apply for Grade 3 (38.6%) and Grade 2 (37.6%) level certification (see Table 4.7.1). Trade testing is particularly high for trades such as electrician, spray painting, and block laying. This may suggest that many vocational students are concentrated in entry- to mid-level occupations, possibly due to limited capacity in undertaking Grade 1 certification, lack of industry demand for higher-level trade testing certificates, or the immediate employability associated with lower-grade certifications.

Table 4.7.1: Graduate trades tested by grade

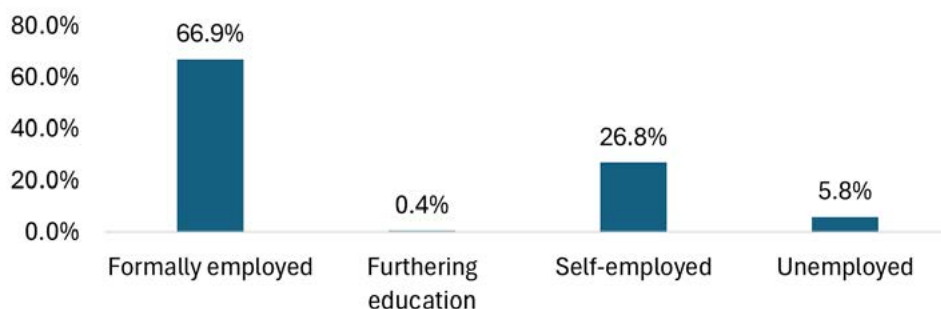
Row Labels	Grade 1 - highly skilled	Grade 2 - skilled	Grade 3 - semi-skilled worker	Grand Total
Auto Electrician	0.79%	0.79%	1.85%	3.44%
Block Layer	2.65%	7.67%	3.17%	13.49%
Carpenter/Joiner	0.79%	0.26%	3.70%	4.76%
Electrician	5.29%	6.61%	5.82%	17.72%
Fitter	3.44%	1.59%	1.85%	6.88%
Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC)	0.00%	0.53%	4.23%	4.76%
Heavy Plant Mechanic/Construction Plant Mechanic	0.79%	1.06%	0.26%	2.12%
Motor Vehicle Mechanic	1.85%	5.03%	2.91%	9.79%
Other (specify)	0.00%	0.00%	0.26%	0.26%
Panel Beater	0.00%	0.53%	0.26%	0.79%
Plumber	2.65%	3.97%	0.53%	7.14%
Spray Painting	2.65%	5.29%	6.08%	14.02%
Welder and Boilermaker (Fabricator)	2.38%	3.17%	3.70%	9.26%
Sewing	0.53%	0.53%	1.85%	2.91%
Surveyors	0.00%	0.53%	2.12%	2.65%
Grand Total	23.81%	37.57%	38.62%	100.00%

Source: Trade Testing Graduate Tracer Survey, 2024

When comparing employment outcomes between trade-tested individuals and higher education graduates, as presented in Section 4.6, the study further confirms that trade-tested graduates exhibit higher (66.9%) employment levels compared to university or college graduates (55%). Moreover, at least 27% of these graduates are self-employed, and less than 6% are unemployed (Figure 4.7.2). This may suggest that vocational qualifications offer more immediate or practical pathways to employment, particularly in sectors with high demand for technical skills.



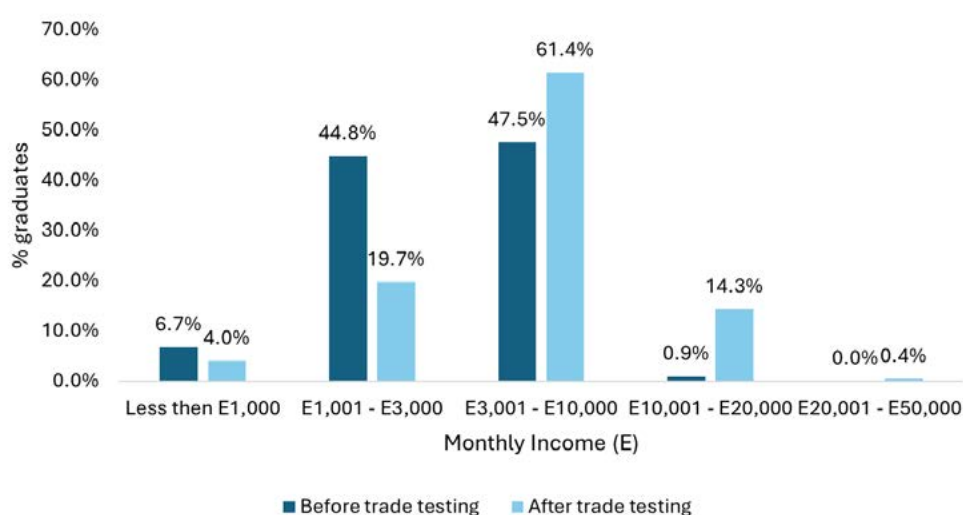
Figure 4.7.2: Graduates' Employment Status



Source: Trade Testing Graduate Tracer Survey, 2024

In addition to increased employability, the survey results paint a compelling picture of income growth following trade testing certification. Figure 4.7.3 shows that before certification, 6.7% of respondents earned less than E1,000.00 — a figure that dropped to 4.0% post-certification. Meanwhile, the group earning between E3,001.00 and E10,000.00 increased from 47.5% to 61.4%, becoming the dominant income bracket. Most strikingly, those earning between E10,001.00 and E20,000.00 increased from 0.9% to 14.3%. This indicates that the employment outcomes of trade-tested graduates improved after the certification.

Figure 4.7.3: Graduate's monthly income before and after trade testing



Source: Trade Testing Graduate Tracer Survey, 2024

When assessing the overall impact of the Eswatini Technical and Vocational Skills Certification Enhancement Project on the livelihoods of graduates, 44.2% reported that they gained a lot of confidence in their trade, 18.5% said the certification helped them secure a job, 15.2% mentioned that it allowed them to take on jobs that their employer previously would not assign to them, and 11.2% received a salary increase after presenting the certificate to the employer (see Table 4.7.2).



Table 4.7.2: Impact of Trade Testing Certificate on Livelihoods

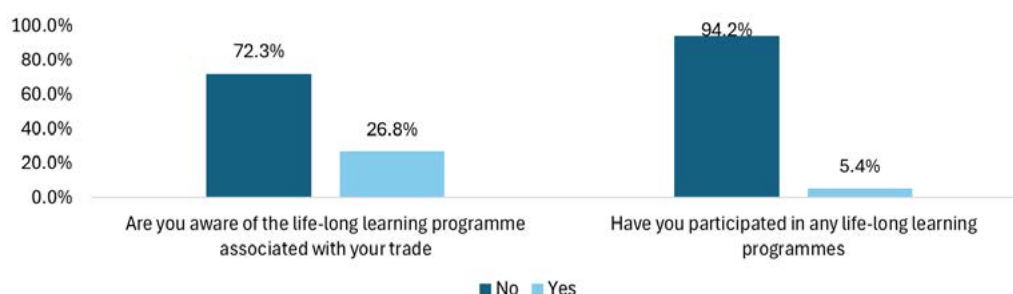
Impact of Trade Testing Certificate on Livelihoods	Percentage
Gained a lot of confidence in my trade	44.2%
Helped me secure a job	18.5%
Allowed me to take on jobs my employer previously wouldn't assign to me	15.2%
Received a salary increase after presenting the certificate to my employer	11.2%
Resulted in a promotion at work	3.4%
Nothing has changed	2.7%
Enabled me to start my own company	2.5%
Encouraged me to resign and become self-employed	1.3%
Other (Specify)	1.1%
Grand Percentage	100.0%

Source: Graduate Tracer Survey, 2024

Lifelong learning

Between 2021 and 2023, the Eswatini Technical and Vocational Skills Certification Enhancement Project facilitated 19 completed upskilling classes, training a total of 293 individuals, with five (5) additional classes currently underway. These programs offered practical, targeted training in high-demand areas. Figure 4.7.4 highlights gaps in the implementation and awareness of the lifelong learning programme. Only 26.8% of respondents were aware of lifelong learning programmes associated with their trade, while a majority, 72.3%, were not. Participation rates in lifelong learning programmes were found to be even lower, with only 5.4% of respondents having engaged in a lifelong learning programme, while 94.2% have not.

Figure 4.7.4: Awareness and Participation in Lifelong Learning Programmes



Source: Graduate Tracer Survey, 2024



However, all respondents who participated in the lifelong learning programmes reported that the programmes were highly relevant to their trade, underscoring their potential value. These results suggest that while the concept of lifelong learning is relevant, its implementation has been limited. To increase participation and relevance, efforts should focus on raising awareness, making these programmes more accessible, and demonstrating their value in enhancing career development and trade-specific skills. This will ensure that lifelong learning becomes a more integral and impactful component of professional growth in the vocational sector.

4.8 SKILLS ANTICIPATION

The skills anticipation predicts that while economic development may result in increasing job opportunities, the rate at which such jobs are created is dependent on multiple factors, including the implementation of policy decisions to grow certain sectors, increased investments in specific training programmes, and programmes for upskilling, reskilling and multiskilling the current labour force.

While jobs will continue to be created in the next 30 years, the trends shown in Figure 4.8.1 indicate that some sectors will grow faster than others, while some jobs will only be required in small numbers. The forecast indicates continued growth across most professions, with particularly high demand in engineering fields such as electrical, civil, and mechanical engineering. In addition, healthcare professions, including nurses, doctors, and pharmacists, as well as business roles such as accountants, economists, consultants, and legal professionals, are projected to grow significantly. The information technology (IT) sector, encompassing computer programmers and system analysts, is expected to see moderate expansion, while education professionals (in primary, secondary, and post-secondary teaching) are anticipated to experience slower growth.

Figure 4.8.1: Projected employment trends by profession

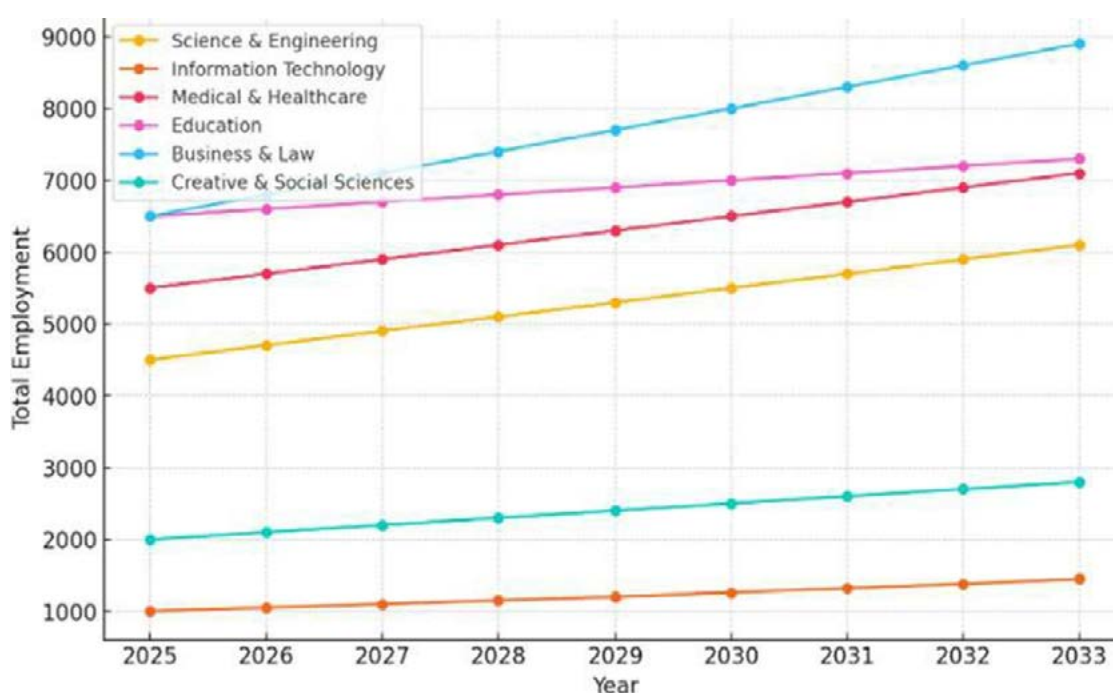
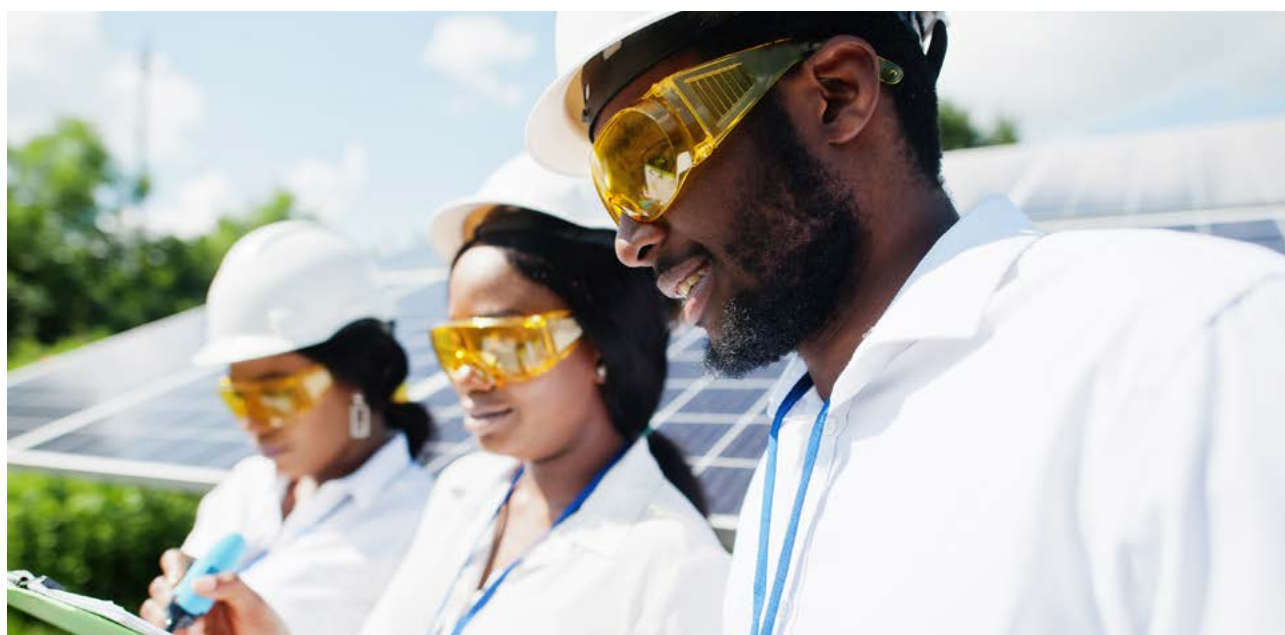




Table 4.8.1 indicates that between 2025 and 2033, there will be an increase in the demand for leadership and managerial skills, covering both operational and production oversight as well as general management functions. This reflects the increasing complexity of organizational structures, the need for strategic decision-making in a rapidly evolving economy, and the shift toward more service- and knowledge-based industries that require strong leadership to drive innovation, efficiency, and workforce development. Specialised roles, such as physicists and astronomers, will only grow marginally, indicating limited expansion in niche scientific fields. However, Table 4.8.1 also shows a gradual increase in unemployment, which could suggest potential challenges in job creation or workforce absorption in the coming years. These trends indicate areas where strategic workforce planning, education, and industry support could be directed to balance growth and opportunities more evenly across sectors.

Table 4.8.1: Projected employment demand by occupation

Category	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Unemployed	135,718	137,100	138,513	139,952	141,443	142,948	144,469	146,004	147,554
Legislative and Leadership Roles	1,055	1,083	1,110	1,138	1,166	1,194	1,223	1,252	1,283
Directors and Executives	2,811	2,877	2,935	2,996	3,055	3,116	3,180	3,246	3,313
Production and Operations Management	4,565	4,684	4,801	4,920	5,039	5,159	5,280	5,402	5,525
Finance and Administration	1,898	1,962	2,019	2,080	2,139	2,200	2,266	2,332	2,403
Sales and Marketing	899	927	951	976	1,002	1,028	1,056	1,083	1,113
Logistics and Computing	847	873	898	924	950	977	1,005	1,033	1,059
General Management	8,929	9,174	9,406	9,648	9,891	10,136	10,388	10,592	10,795
Specialized Science Fields	12	12	13	13	13	14	14	15	15





5.0 Conclusion

The findings of the National Labour Market Skills Project (NLMSP) shed light on Eswatini's evolving skills landscape. This section summarizes the key trends, challenges, and outcomes in youth employment, skills development, and vocational training, highlighting both progress made and persistent barriers to aligning education with labour market needs.

The NLMSP sought to understand the dynamics of skills supply and demand in Eswatini and assess the contribution of vocational skills enhancement in the improvement of TVET skill absorption. Through this assessment, the study reveals changes in the trajectory of youth unemployment in the country. It shows that youth employment improved from 41.7% in 2021 to 49% in 2025, and self-employment increased from 8.2% to 13%. However, structural challenges continue to hinder sustainable youth employment. The persistent delays in graduate job absorption, coupled with widespread skill gaps—particularly in practical, industry-specific, and soft skills—highlight a critical disconnect between education outcomes and labour market needs. Limited internship opportunities further exacerbate this issue, as many companies face financial and operational barriers to hosting interns.

Generally, employers report that most employees require additional training to fully meet job requirements. Notably, of the 89% of staff members who reported to align with their roles, almost half (48%) require additional training. As a result, skill gaps (more than 30%) and shortages (above 50%) are observed in fewer positions, particularly in higher-level occupations such as professionals, technical associates, and managers.

There is also a limited inclusion of people with disabilities across the labour market.

However, the Eswatini Technical and Vocational Skills Certification Enhancement Project has significantly contributed to improving graduate employability in Eswatini by aligning vocational training with industry standards and enhancing the quality of trade testing. The project's impact is evident in the higher employment rates and income levels among trade-tested graduates as well as increased self-employment. However, most certifications are concentrated at lower skill levels, and gaps remain in lifelong learning awareness and participation.

Assessing the skills supply system shows limited collaboration between employers and training institutions, outdated curricula, and insufficient practical training continue to hinder the relevance and effectiveness of skills development. Skills supply lacks sufficient interventions to improve curriculum design and ensure quality in education delivery and training. Of note is the lack of practical and industry-related skills and soft skills (communication, teamwork, customer care) among graduates. The NLMSP also reveals prevalent gender disparities in access to employment opportunities against educational outcomes for men and women, with more men getting employed than women, compared to more



women graduating and enrolling in training institutions than men. These disparities are also observed in vocational trades and STEM education, where there is a higher representation of males than females.

In the future, employers anticipate increased demand for high-level specialised occupations such as robotics, programming, and engineering. There is also expected growth in the need for digital skills, including cybersecurity, software development, networking, digital design, and digital marketing, as well as vocational trades such as blocklaying, electrical work, and plumbing. Sectoral skill demand highlights that modern farming techniques, food safety, and cold chain management will be important in the agriculture and agro-processing industry, while production planning, mechanical engineering, and quality assurance will grow in demand for manufacturing. Fintech, regulatory compliance, and risk management are critical in finance and insurance, while customer handling, digital marketing, and sustainability are critical in tourism. The construction industry requires more green construction, project management, and building information modelling experts, whereas health experts in specialised fields community health and health information systems, are also in demand.

The skills anticipation analysis highlights that while economic development in Eswatini is expected to generate new job opportunities over the next three decades, the pace and inclusivity of this growth will depend heavily on strategic policy implementation, targeted investments in training, and robust

upskilling and reskilling initiatives. Sectors such as engineering, healthcare, business, and IT are projected to experience notable growth, while others, like education and niche scientific fields, may expand more slowly. The rising demand for leadership and managerial skills reflects the evolving complexity of the economy and the need for strategic oversight. However, the projected gradual increase in unemployment signals potential challenges in job absorption, underscoring the importance of proactive workforce planning, stronger education-to-employment pathways, and sector-specific support to ensure balanced and inclusive labour market growth.

Consequently, addressing the challenges presented in the NLMSP requires coordinated efforts between government, industry, and training institutions. These stakeholders must work together to create inclusive, flexible, and well-supported skills development models. Key areas of focus should include curriculum reform, quality training, internships, certification, and career support. It is also essential to design programmes targeting underrepresented groups and to provide post-training support services. Incentive structures should be put in place to increase the potential impacts of work-based learning, lifelong learning opportunities, and employee development training. Investment in diversifying and growing the economy is a critical factor in job creation, labour market productivity, and innovation. Thus, deliberate policy investments are necessary to close the gaps and build on what has been achieved.



6.0 Recommendations

Strategic Forecasting & Planning

Focus: long-term planning, data-informed policies, and economic diversification

-  Labour Market Forecasting – Regularly update forecasts.
-  Targeted Policies – Support emerging sectors, mitigate job losses.
-  Economic Diversification – Invest in resilient industries like tech and renewable energy.

Skills Development & Lifelong Learning

Focus: upskilling, future-proofing, and personal development

Lifelong Learning

Promote ongoing education and digital skills.

Reskilling and Upskilling

For automation-resistant roles.

STEM & TVET

Expand programmes and international exposure.

Education-Industry Alignment

Focus: making education systems responsive to industry needs

-  **Government-Industry-Education Partnerships** – Ensure workforce readiness.
-  **Job Creation and Innovation Policies** – Promote entrepreneurship, attract investment.
-  **Domestic Industry Competitiveness** – Incentivise local business and workforce development.

Inclusive Employment & Green Transition

Focus: youth, sustainability, and inclusive opportunities

-  **Youth Employment** – Create programs and flexible work models.
-  **Green Skills and Sustainable Industries** – Invest in eco-friendly skills and jobs.



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