

Rebosa calls for simplification of estate agency qualification framework

The Real Estate Business Owners of South Africa (Rebosa) has called on government to urgently regulate a revamp and simplification of the estate agency qualification framework as the current requirements are an obstacle to transformation of the industry.



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According to Jan le Roux, chief executive of Rebosa, there are currently 25,000 intern agents, representing half of all individuals in the industry, many of whom already exceed the maximum two-year period to qualify, with some exceeding six years.

Le Roux says further that 33% of interns are BEE candidates and many might end up leaving the industry. Additionally, very few will go on to complete the NQF5 qualification to become principal agents or business owners due to the cost, time and cumbersome requirements of the current framework.

Current framework counter-productive to industry, transformation

Samuel Seeff, a director of Rebosa and chairman of the Seeff Property Group, says there is an inordinate amount of paperwork, duplication and time wasting under the current educational framework.

An agent must register with an estate agency as an intern, complete a 12-month internship under active supervision of a principal or full status estate agent, submit a portfolio of evidence (logbook), complete the NQF4 Real Estate qualification and then pass the PDE4 professional designation exam. To qualify as a principal, you need to pass the PDE5 exam. It can take a few years and entrepreneurs from other industries shun the profession because of this, says Seeff.

While the original objective was and is laudable, Seeff says it has not produced the desired results. There is a lot of duplication between the NQF4 and logbook and both take up substantial time which could be more productively spent. Although logbooks serve a purpose, it has become practice for interns to copy logbooks. The submission, storage and the evaluation of logbooks are equally problematic.



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Seeff says further that the PDE4 subject matter to test competency is deficient and only requires a low pass across three sections. More appropriate content could better prepare agents for a career in real estate.

Additionally, adds Le Roux, there are significant assessment challenges and bottlenecks caused by a shortage of qualified external independent moderators and assessors required by training service providers to uphold learner results. The Services Seta (SSETA) also has limited verifiers for real estate which causes long delays in obtaining results and certification.

New way of thinking needed, no time to waste

Seeff says working with organised industry is vital to ensure the framework is informed by practical experience and is outcomes driven. The industry is entrepreneurial-driven and offers excellent employment and own-business opportunities, but the barriers to entry are prohibitive.

Rebosa suggests a more appropriate, simplified framework that will allow candidates to write the PDE4 and PDE5 exams before entering the industry, while working in another sector or, for example, studying at university or school. The Estate Agency Affairs Board (EAAB) should provide the learning material and at least four exams per year.

Upon joining an estate agency, the candidate would then complete a practical training course within six months of being issued with a Fidelity Fund Certificate (FFC), failing which the FFC is withdrawn. During this time, all contracts and mandates must be co-signed by a qualified property practitioner. This would be an improvement on the current supervision process.



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Ability to earn an income

Without the onerous burden, candidates can immediately start earning an income. Those with a PDE5 could then, upon completion, operate as principal agents or become business owners much sooner.

Le Roux says it will enable the current 25,000 interns to complete the course within four to six months and qualify as

property practitioners. This will immediately boost the income of the EAAB as qualified agents pay a higher annual fee than interns.

Importantly, transformation can accelerate as thousands of BEE candidates could quickly pass the PDE4 exam, enter the industry and start earning an income while being able to qualify within six months. Thousands more can complete the PDE5 exam, enabling them to become principal agents and business owners. Those trading illegally can then also enjoy a fast and practical way to become legal, concludes Le Roux.

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