

Judges shun judicial training job

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WITH few applications received for the post of director of the Judicial Education Institute, the institute would now be headed by Chief Justice Sandile Ngcobo and Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke, Department of Justice spokesman Tlali Tlali said yesterday.

The crucial work of the institute was put on hold earlier this year when its former director, retired Judge Meyer Joffe, left after a dispute between the institute's council and Justice Minister Jeff Radebe over Judge Joffe's salary.

Continuing judicial education has been touted as a panacea to a number of judicial ills, including a gap in skills and experience, as well as the need for diversity and sensitivity training. In a rapidly transforming legal landscape, the institute is meant to strengthen the judiciary and the magistracy.

The need for judicial training also seems to be a pressing concern for the Judicial Service Commission. In interviews for judicial appointments last week, candidates were routinely asked whether they would be willing to undergo more training, including diversity training.

But following Judge Joffe's exit, only two judges had applied for the post, said Mr Tlali.

"In view of the limited applications that the post has attracted, the council had decided not to fill the post with a permanent appointment, but decided that the chief justice and the deputy chief justice would perform the role," Mr Tlali said.

When the council fell out with Mr Radebe, its biggest concern was that it needed to attract a director of sufficient skill and seniority to take on the training of other judges.

But when Judge Joffe left the institute, Mr Tlali said he had "demanded a double salary": his judge's salary, which he gets for life, and "an equivalent salary of a judge". This was not possible under the legislative framework, he said.

Now, justices Ngcobo and Moseneke would receive no "additional remuneration" other than their judges' salaries as "is the position with all other judges who serve on the council".

In January, Mr Tlali said the first judges' training course, originally meant to start that month, would start in April. He said yesterday it would now start in June.