



Skills development through structured qualifications: learnerships and apprenticeships

Journey through the learnership system mired by past

An analysis focusing on the journey and progress of individuals through the learnership system over the period of NSDS II shows the overall positive impact of participation in the system, while also highlighting continued structural inequalities. **ANGELIQUE WILDSCHUT** explains.

Learnerships can be defined as work-based learning programmes leading to a qualification directly related to an occupation. The aim is to provide a recognised occupational qualification achieved through structured institutional learning and applied competence developed through workplace experiential learning.

POSITIVE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Our analysis shows that a substantial majority of participants immediately enter into employment after completing their learnership. In other words, the most likely first transition after completion of a learnership qualification is into work (79% of sample), of whom an overwhelming majority remain employed, as described in Table 1.

CONTINUED STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY

A key finding in this regard is that the tendency for complicated and uncomplicated trajectories into and out of the learnership system is noticeably informed by race, age, gender and socioeconomic status.

Our analysis highlights, for instance, that African women are more likely to experience complex trajectories to the labour market in

TABLE 1: FIRST TRANSITION OF LEARNERSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Transition 1	N	%
Worked	1976	78.29%
Studied	339	13.43%
Unemployed	104	4.12%
Both worked and studied	92	3.65%
No response	13	0.52%
Total respondents	2511*	100%

TABLE 2: RACE AND EMPLOYMENT

RACE	Employed at entry level	Unemployed at entry level	Employed	Unemployed	Total
			Final transition	Final transition	
African	427 77.36%	1720 88.57%	1698 84.02%	92 95.83%	2147 86.09%
Coloured	34 6.16%	82 4.22%	102 5.05%	1 1.04%	116 4.65%
Indian	15 2.72%	30 1.54%	42 2.08%	1 1.04%	45 1.80%
White	76 13.77%	110 5.66%	179 8.86%	2 2.08%	186 7.46%
Total	552	1942	2021	96	2494*



comparison with their white male counterparts.

RACE AND EMPLOYMENT

Table 2 describes the labour market status (employed or unemployed) of learnership participants at entry into, and after participation in, the system (two key points in an individual's trajectory).

Our country's socioeconomic realities are illustrated by the fact that Africans are particularly over-represented and whites under-represented in the group that remains unemployed.

Based on this data it appears that the acquisition of this skills development qualification has not sufficiently intervened to promote greater equality.

The learnership qualification thus enhances employability for the majority, but not for all, participants.

Differences in trajectories through the pathway system are still very much influenced by past patterns of inequality. This analysis allows a more accurate assessment of the success of a system, which could contribute more meaningfully to debate around appropriate policy intervention.

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This article is based on the following report, which is available on www.hsrc.ac.za:

Learnerships and Apprenticeships Survey 2010 Technical Report: Identifying Transitions and Trajectories through the Learnership and Apprenticeship Systems, by Wildschut, A; Kruss, G; Janse van Rensburg, D; Haupt, G; and Visser, M; 2012.



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