

5 reasons learnerships deserve greater acknowledgement

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It's high time that learnerships get the credit they deserve. Powerful and effective training vehicles, learnerships have been one of the greatest catalysts for long-term employment in South Africa for the past 20 years.



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However, even with a strong track record for transforming lives, learnerships continue to be undervalued and undermined by South Africans. Learners and sponsors alike must come to the realisation that learnerships have the greatest potential for closing the experience gap in South Africa.

For unemployed individuals, learnerships provide valuable work experience and a formal qualification; while employers sponsoring learnerships gain concomitant Sars tax benefits and B-BBEE value, as well as a talent pool of individuals with relevant, quality skills.

What more proof do we need that learnerships are an instrument of compounded value for all stakeholders?



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Here are five reasons why learnerships should be considered South Africa's most powerful catalyst for employment:

1. Meaningful training

Learnerships promote access to education and training as they allow unemployed South Africans, especially those with disabilities, to get started on their careers while studying a formal qualification. Candidates build their knowledge and gain work experience, providing them with the skills that are relevant to a specific occupation. They are also an

effective way for employed people to advance their careers and become more valuable to their employers and the market as a whole.

2. Relevance to business needs

Learnerships are developed by the industry for the industry in consultation with all related stakeholders, making the learning programmes and qualifications relevant to the skills required for an occupation. In addition, businesses sponsoring learnerships have the opportunity to collaborate with training providers in customising learning programmes to meet specific workplace needs. For example, at EduPower, our learners work as an extension of our client's contact centre providing customer services such as data washing and surveys. In this way, our clients get additional value from the learnerships they sponsor.

3. Improved skills and work performance

With 70% of a learnership being focussed on work experience, learnerships are more effective in delivering the practical application of learning than most other formal qualifications. Learners acquire new knowledge and skills which are immediately applied and tested in the workplace, giving companies sponsoring employee learnerships the opportunity to raise skills levels and improve work performance. A potent blend of training and immediate application of skills, learnerships are unparalleled in their ability to prepare young people for the world of work. You don't have to look further than EduPower for evidence that learnerships are successful in this regard: 50% of EduPower's full-time staff complement is made up of learners who have completed their qualifications. And through our unique absorption model, we intend to offer all our learner graduates permanent work opportunities in conjunction with our B-BBEE sponsor partners.

4. Recruitment pool of trained employees

A learnership is a tool for multi-skilling as it develops the competence of learners in every component of the work processes of an occupation. An example of this is the fact that many companies will not hire graduates from university until they gain experience and can demonstrate a work history. Learnerships are a mechanism for these talented young people to show their value and potential to future employers, while the employer does not risk permanent employment of a candidate without a work history.

5. Return on investment for training

Learnerships are of no cost to the learners and with SETA's, B-BBEE sponsors, government and Sars providing a financial framework including learner remuneration, individuals can earn while they learn. For companies, the costs of learnerships can be recouped in many ways including higher returns from the Skills Levy, increased grant disbursements, tax rebates and points for Skills Development on their B-BBEE scorecards. So learnerships really are a win for business and a win for learners.

The learnership route is by far South Africa's most exciting employment enabler. They offer actionable opportunities through which individuals and companies can address our nation's chronic skills shortage in order to build a capable labour force. As such, learnerships deserve more recognition on the education spectrum. History will record whether or not we seized this as an opportunity.

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