Learnerships: A light in the dark for SA's unemployment crisis

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South Africa's unemployment rate has hit a record high of 35.3%[1] - *the highest level since Statistics South Africa's first Quarterly Labour Force Survey in 2008. What this means is that 7.9 million people remain jobless.[2] So, how do we, as a country, rectify this?*

"The private sector needs to play a bigger part in pulling our people out of unemployment and learnerships focused on sought-after skills are the way," says Rudi Mdima, business development and relationships manager at HyperionDev, *South Africa's largest training institute for coding bootcamps.*

A learnership is a work-based learning programme that leads to a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) registered qualification. They are also directly related to an occupation or field of work.

Mdima shares that not only do learnerships address unemployment, but the country's skills shortage too, something which 87% of executives are experiencing or expecting within a few years, based on the findings of HyperionDev's 2021 Tech Graduate Futures Report.[3] "We understand that, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and Great Resignation, many industries rely on coding and highly skilled tech talent now more than ever to remain competitive in the digital age. Yet, it is these very skills that are so scarce in South Africa."

He explains that it is for this reason that HyperionDev is launching a world-class, industry-relevant and highly practical learnership programme to service the South African market and African landscape.

Starting in June 2022 and running online for 12 months, the learnership will enable participants to earn a National Certificate in Information Technology,specialising in Systems Development. It will be strategically structured to comprise 30% theory and 70% practical, meaning that, during the second half of their learning journey, learners will be placed with employer partners and given real-world exposure along with outcomes-aligned tasks to complete, overseen by their assigned mentors. For the duration of the learnership programme, learners will receive a monthly stipend. "For some learners, this will mean entering the job market for the very first time and an invaluable opportunity to secure future employment."

Mdima says that on completion of the learnership, graduates can apply for and kick off their careers in junior roles such as IT systems engineer, desktop support technician, IT support technician, computer or network support technician, junior business analyst, or database administrator. "The learnership opportunity also opens up avenues for successful learners to be absorbed by our employer partners and to continue being able to earn an income."

Graduates are also put through HyperionDev's bespoke 90-day graduate programme designed to maximise their candidacy for job opportunities. "They go through three levels of focused career development phases, namely: technical career readiness, alumni network and introduction to the industry. By the end of the graduate programme, they are equipped with technical skills and professional career development tools to help them succeed in their job hunt."

Mdimaadds that, for employer partners, the learnership presents an opportunity to build and maintain a strong and future-proofed pipeline of key talent and young professionals. "Employer partners will also be in a position to apply for and take advantage of mandatory and discretionary grant funding from the Sector Education and Training Authority. Plus, they will benefit from tax deductions under Section 12H of the Income Tax Act as well as B-BBEE points depending on the percentage of the organisation's staff that are registered on the programme, along with bonus points should unemployed learners be absorbed. Additionally, the stipend earned by the learner over the programme's duration

can contribute toward the company's B-BBEE Skills Development target."

He concludes by saying, "Learnerships are a win-win for everyone involved, with the biggest wins including being able to help Government tackle the unemployment crisis currently facing our country, improving South Africans' livelihoods and closing the global tech skills gap."

To apply for the learnership or to be an employer partner, go to https://www.hyperiondev.com/corporate-services.

[1] http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02114thQuarter2021.pdf
[2] http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02114thQuarter2021.pdf
[3] https://www.hyperiondev.com/resources/graduate_futures_report_2021/