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Skills development through structured qualifications: learnerships and apprenticeships

Locating skills development in spatial and economic context

The learnership and apprenticeship systems are in their infancy, but evidence suggests that participation in these pathways has created access to employment — at least for some individuals and groups. But who gains from these systems in terms of qualifications certification and employment, and where did they qualify and find jobs? **DEAN JANSE VAN RENSBURG** has some answers.

The nature of the South African economy is such that activity is concentrated within a few economic hubs. While it is important that education and training create an adequate local supply of skilled workers for these activities, there is also an obligation to provide skills in areas of low economic concentration.

Promoting skills development in these geographic areas can create opportunities for the individual, but, if local activity is not promoted, the burden on economic hubs can increase as job-seekers migrate, simultaneously draining poorer areas of skilled talent.

Table 1 (opposite page) describes the contribution of the nine provinces to the South African economy in 2010 and over the preceding decade. It is evident that Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape are the largest absolute contributors to the economy as a whole. They were the only provinces to exceed national GDP growth rates in 2010 and, on average, for the preceding decade. More concerning, other regions are not developing or 'taking off'.

Taking population into account, GDP per capita indicates a slightly more equitable picture. The four regions contributing the smallest amount to overall GDP maintain close to average GDP per capita. The KwaZulu-Natal economy, though growing at, or near, South African average rates, and contributing the second largest share to GDP, experiences a high burden in terms of population per rand produced. Limpopo and the Eastern Cape exhibit the worst levels of GDP per capita.

So what can be done to bolster growth and economic productivity in underperforming regions?

Part of the answer lies in instilling skilled human resources. By properly equipping the people of poorer provinces with appropriate skills such that they are rendered employable, the conditions for productive activity can be bolstered. Participation in learnership and apprenticeship programmes are potentially significant in this regard, as they can be offered in a wide range and spread of locations and

do not need massive infrastructure investment, as do colleges and universities.

Where do participants register for learnerships and apprenticeships?

Figure 1 (below) reflects the provincial distribution of enrolments in learnership and apprenticeship programmes in 2009/10. It reflects inequitable access, with the economic hubs of Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape accounting for 62% of all registrations.

To interpret the spatial distribution more ac-

Figure 1 2009/10 Learnership and Apprenticeship Registrations

	Learnerships	Apprenticeships	Total
EC	24 012	564	2976
FS	2 862	491	3 353
GP	16 500	3 583	20 083
KZN	4 840	1 639	6 479
LP	3 843	65	3 928
MP	2 229	495	2 724
NW	1 996	137	2 133
NC	988	110	1 098
WC	5 363	938	6 301
Unkown	2 536	1 274	3 810

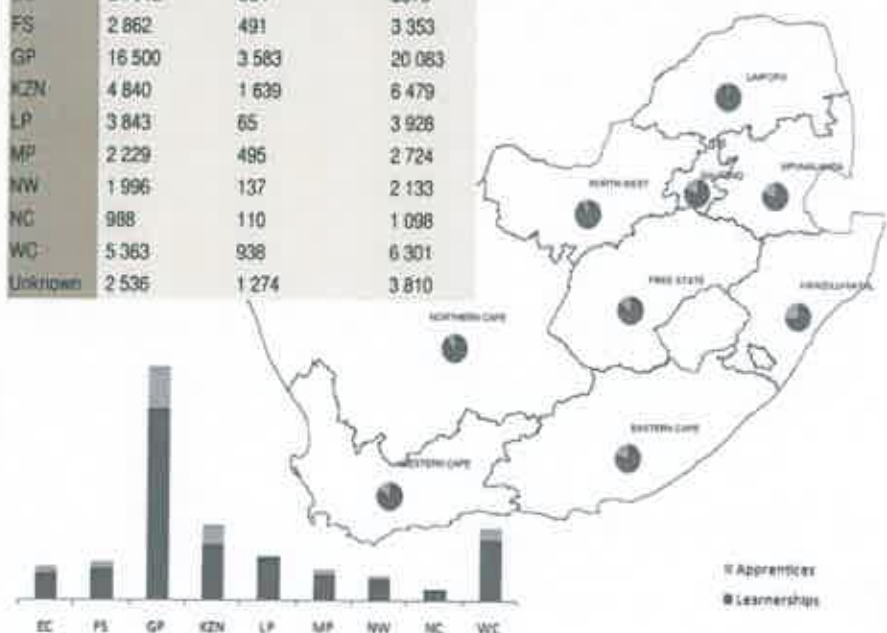


Table 1 Economic performance by region, ascending by contribution to GDP in 2010

REGION	GROWTH RATE 2010 (%)	AVERAGE REAL GROWTH 2001-2010 (%)	CONTRIBUTION TO GDP IN 2010 (%)	GRP PER CAPITA
NC	1.9	2.1	2.3	55 417
FS	2.3	2.9	5.5	51 480
NW	2.7	2.8	6.7	55 320
MP	2.5	2.9	7.0	51 793
LP	2.6	3.0	7.2	35 285
EC	2.2	3.1	7.7	30 249
WC	3.1	3.7	14.1	72 031
KZN	3.0	3.6	15.8	39 514
GT	3.2	4.1	33.7	80 198
SA	2.9	3.6	100	53 238

Table 2 Equitable access to learnerships and apprenticeships

REGION	LA PER POPULATION 2009	LA PER YOUTH 2009	LA PER GRP 2010	LA PER GRP PER CAPITA 2010
EC	0.4	0.18	0.0000015	9.84
FS	0.12	0.44	0.0000023	6.51
GT	0.19	0.66	0.0000022	25.04
KZN	0.06	0.23	0.0000015	16.40
LP	0.08	0.29	0.0000020	11.13
MP	0.08	0.28	0.000000	5.26
NC	0.10	0.40	0.0000018	1.98
NW	0.06	0.24	0.0000012	3.86
WC	0.12	0.44	0.0000017	8.75
TOTAL	0.11	0.40	0.0000020	NA

curately, we need to analyse enrolment trends in relation to the size of the local regional economy and population, particularly the size of the youth population.

Table 2 describes the relative provision of learnership and apprenticeship in terms of the provincial spread of registrations, population and economy. The national trend is that 11 of every 10 000 people register for these qualifications, or 40 for every person (youth) aged between 20 and 35. Yet it is evident that this varies considerably by region, with the Eastern Cape registering the lowest proportionately in terms of total population, and of youth aged 20 – 35. Similarly, in 2010 low economically performing regions registered fewer people for these programmes for every rand produced. Gross Regional Product (GRP) per capita gives an indication of productivity per person in the region (inclusive of the non-working population). Registrations per 'individual productivity' (rands produced per person) controls for both population and economic productivity. As with other ratios, more individuals for every rand-person are

registered in Gauteng than other provinces – suggesting favourable access conditions in this region. KwaZulu-Natal exhibits similar conditions, albeit less extreme. Access in provinces such as the Northern Cape, North West, Mpumalanga and Free State is low relative to rand-person.

CONCLUSION

A spatial lens shows an important limitation of skills development programmes that is masked by aggregated numbers. The geographic spread of opportunities for learnership and apprenticeship skills development are skewed in absolute and relative terms, reflecting the economic profile of regions.

The policy implication is that targeted interventions are required to promote greater access to learnership and apprenticeship programmes in neglected, underdeveloped regions, such that more equitable opportunity is created and cross-regional patterns of inequitable growth can be ameliorated.

This article was drawn from two reports commissioned by the Department of Labour/Higher Education and Training. Both reports are available on www.hsrc.ac.za:

A Technical Report on Learnership and Apprenticeship Population Databases in South Africa: Patterns and Shifts in Skills Formation, by Janse van Rensburg, D; Visser, M; Wildschut, A; Roodt, J; and Kruss, G; 2012.

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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