SOE Review

The magazine for state-owned companies, entities and statutory bodies

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CT006/13

Deputy City Manager Musa Gumede, a representative for Mr James Nxumalo, Mayor of eThekwini Municipality

Dr Ellen Kornegay, Adviser to the Minister, and representative for Ms Ayanda Dlodlo, Deputy Minister of the Department of Public Service and Administration.

Ms Linda Shongwe, Chairperson of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Portfolio Committee on Education.

Ikamva
developing e-skills to take our nation forward

Mr Trevor Manuel

Technology and innovation is a fundamental part of growth for a prosperous economy. It has become a defining force in our lives and is at the heartbeat of a nation's development. It makes a country globally competitive and enables economic growth on a daily basis.

The vision of the Ikamva National e-skills Institute (INeSi) is to become a national catalyst, facilitator and responsive change agent in the development of South Africa. Their mission to do so is by leading the creation of e-skills development strategies, solutions, practices and the implementation to benefit the entire population.

In an effort to cultivate e-skills across South African soil, INeSi recently merged and collaborated, with the assistance and guidance of the Department of Communications, with three institutions, the e-skills Institute, the National Electronic Media Institute and the Institute for Satellite and Software Applications. All of which have the same focus, equipping South Africans with an abundance of e-skills. To be equipped with e-skills, means that you are able to use information to actively participate in your community and move forward. This is vital for the development of communities and for the country.

Mymoena Sharif, chief director INeSi says that this merger will only bring positive change to South Africans. "When there is an alignment, it is easier to achieve South Africa's e-skilling aims and increase impact." She adds that this merger will enable e-astuteness across the country.

The national merger of these three institutions boasted an array of professional businessman and

Guests at the iNeSI launch which was hosted at the Durban University of Technology.

> "We have to understand the impact of what we are doing and to do so to encourage the advancement and application of technology."

statesman. Trevor Manuel, former Minister in the Presidency who attended the festivities spoke about the importance of e-skills in communities. "We have to invest massively in e-skills, in training and in hard work."

Manuel added that he hoped the INeSi would recognise that this was the core mandate. He also said the responsibility to close the gap, started with them, the policy makers. "We have to understand the impact of what we are doing and to do so to encourage the advancement and application of technology."

The state-owned entity is a globally recognised collaborative model that allows stakeholders to meet South Africa's e-skilling objectives, which is aligned to the new broadband policy, South Africa Connect and the National Development Plan.

Their mandate focuses on four key elements, employment readiness, effective e-governance and service delivery, socio-economic development and business development. To fulfil their mandate, they have created several projects to assist in the development of e-skills. One of which is the national multi-stakeholder network that aligns e-skills stakeholders to national goals and at the same time reduces duplication and increases impact.

> "Education is a priority that includes life-long education and training. This is especially the case when it comes to ICT, which is an enabler and essential to performing well in today's world."

Ms Mina Lesoma represented Mr Sikhumbuzo Kholwane, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Communications.

They are currently developing an accessible information network that will be called, the virtual knowledge production and transfer network. Through this information system, people will be able to access the cloud from computers and mobile devices. It will be developed in a manner that will cater to the rich and poor.

The entity also uses decentralised architecture to ensure that all corners of South Africa are reached. Through their "CoLabs", which are research facilities based at universities across the country, they continue to develop e-skills as well as to train people in e-skills. "Through these projects we are fulfilling our mandate by creating and developing e-skills across the country," Sharif says.

Deputy Minister of Communications Stella-Ndabeni Abrahams, who also spoke at the launch, emphasised the importance of ICT, which is the importance of information and communication technologies when it comes to education. "Education is a priority that includes life-long education and training. This is especially the case when it comes to ICT, which is an enabler and essential to performing well in today's world."

It was continually emphasised that INeSi's programmes should focus on the growth of e-skills in rural areas, as they are in need of e-skills

Prof Roy Marcus

the most. Ayanda Dlodlo, Deputy Minister of the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) agreed by saying: "South Africa as a development state must be able to direct and support economic development through building a strong public service, creating an investor friendly environment, supporting small business development, using this state-owned enterprise effectively and driving strategic investment."
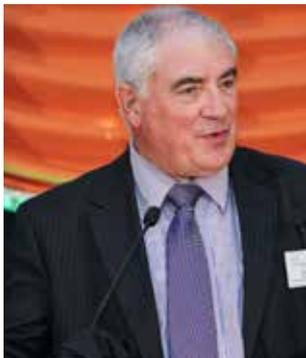
The entity has numerous achievements to its credit. One of which includes their participation in ensuring that the broadband policy "South Africa Connect" highlights the importance of e-skills and its development. Their formal multi-stakeholder network is a unit which merges all stake holder groups in building South Africa's national e-astuteness with the aim at improving this country's global e-readiness position. This alliance makes use of 50 national as well as international bodies to develop and enhance e-skills in this country. Sharif adds that this can possibly be a first in Africa.

Another highlight, which also falls in with their mandate, is their e-skills for entrepreneurs. They have conducted technology driven ecosystems for mobile applications where entrepreneurship is fundamental. This has developed more targeted graduate courses for mobile applications and has also increased the human resource capacity within the mobile applications development.

Their National Research Network for e-skills called "ResNes" is also one of their biggest achievements. This network is a platform for multi-stakeholder collaborations on research that creates new knowledge for innovation and informs provincial, national and local policies. Sharif reassures that every project initiated by them falls in with their mandate.

Future projects include their participation in an event called "Uni Connect", which is focused on developing collaborative national and international university networks. This will be used as a mechanism to build capabilities and knowledge for innovation. They will also be hosting the third national South African e-skills summit later this year, which will assess and develop new approaches for the national e-skills plan of action 2015.

Sharif emphasised that it was utterly important to be equipped with e-skills to develop this society. "South Africans need to be aware that this is a digital world and that to get ahead we have to develop e-astuteness." She explains that it is not simply knowing and having the necessary computer skills, but it is evident that we should be able to know how to use technology to actively participate in the world to move forward. **SOE**

Representatives from the e-Skills CoLabs-Surendra Thakur, Lorna van der Merwe, Dr Hossana Twinomurinzi and Dr Leona Craffert.