

AS partnering universities, the Walter Sisulu University, the Durban University of Technology (DUT), the Vaal University of the Technology, University of the Western Cape and the University of Pretoria have been working with the e-Skills Institute over the past few months in addressing the massive e-skills deficit of the country and will continue to do so through the establishment of provincial e-skills knowledge production and coordination hubs.

As Minister Radhakrishna L. Padayachie (Roy) says, it is a very appropriate choice for these institutions of higher education to be a part of this national initiative, given the socio economic population they serve and their commitment and understanding to make the provincial e-skills Knowledge Production and Coordination Hubs a collaborative reality in the provinces.

Work is already underway in the five provinces in building a collaborative network architecture that allows e-skilling interventions within each province to better align to the local and national strategic objectives, MDGs and the WSIS Plan of Action.

A core function of the provincial hubs will be to define the e-skills gaps, and where

HUBS are the key

possible create new offerings across organisational boundaries.

For instance the work in progress at the University of the Western Cape, where through a multi-stakeholder collaborative approach embarked on an e-inclusion and social innovative programme with the Provincial Government of the Western Cape, the City of Cape Town, USAASA, Department of Rural Development, South African Post Office, ICDL, CISCO and Telecentre.org developed and is in the process of delivering the first e-skills for e-centre manager course offered to e-centre managers.

The aim is to build local ICT champions within the communities to increase the application of ICT to improve the livelihoods of the local community.

The Eastern Cape e-skills Knowledge Production & Co-ordination hub established at the University of Walter Sisulu sees the low levels of e-skills among learners and educators in the FET colleges and the lack of employment readiness a major challenge.

In partnership with the Department of Higher Education, Telkom, Cisco, ICDL, USAASA and Research in Motion a project aimed at capacitating these FET ICT lecturers has recently been launched.

The project will focus on the curriculum, research and innovation i.e. the use of technology to better support the learning and teaching environment. A second core function of the hub is to coordinate all e-skills activities at a provincial level.

This function includes determining existing programmes, projects and service delivery of e-skills related activities across all stakeholder groups; conducting a gap analysis to address future needs in relation to the National e-skills Plan of Action 2011, MTSF and MDGs; and to identify local needs, overlap, gaps and collaborations.

Provincial environmental scans are currently being performed by each of the hubs and is already starting to shape the local e-skills agenda for each of the provinces. For example the Vaal University of Technology, focusing on the Northern Cape

and Southern Gauteng regions sees as one of its points of departure, the mobilisation of the broader population – including the unemployed, low income levels (44 percent less than R10 per day) and broad community structures into the socio-economic mainstream to make them competitive, employable, entrepreneurial and self sustaining.

The University of Pretoria, Gauteng e-Skills Knowledge Production and Coordination hub is focusing on Creative Industry with a pilot project aimed at e-entrepreneurship.

Given its many e-skills activities, the Durban University of Technology is focusing on “Smart Connected Communities” – with the aim of effective service delivery at a local and provincial level supported by an appropriate access model.

A key partner for the hub is that of Smart Exchange, currently responsible for growing the ICT Sector in the region.

Overall the e-Skills Institute and its collaborative partners is committed to the development of the country and will continue its plight to increase the e-skills capacity of the country be it for business development, effective service delivery, employment readiness and socio economic development.