

Project introduced computer literacy to rural Kei Mouth

BRINGING computer literacy into the ambit and experience of all South Africans is becoming possible through the Minimally Invasive Education Project, a joint undertaking between the CSIR and the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

Dr Ben Ngubane, Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, gave a keynote address at a demonstration of the pilot project, situated in Cwili Township, on the border of Morgan Kay and Kei Mouth in the Eastern Cape last week.

The Minimally Invasive Education project seeks to verify results in the South African context, of research conducted in India, indicating that children possess the cognitive ability to acquire functional computer skills without formal training.

The project entails providing access to a multimedia kiosk, which provides access to various applications including the

Internet. Similar findings in South Africa could serve to inform policies and methodologies to introduce alternative mechanisms for computer literacy.

It could also suggest another pathway towards building human capacity in support of the advancement of the Information Society in South Africa and its adjacent regions.

Working closely with the Department of Science and Technology, the CSIR's Information and Communication Technology Unit, i'com-tek, believes that the Indian experience could be replicated successfully in South Africa, with due consideration to the demographic, social and cultural issues unique to South Africa, as compared to India.

Beneficial outcomes of successfully introduced Minimally Invasive Education would include informing policies and initiatives in ICT for development, such as

telemedicine, distance education, government service delivery, technology literacy, demand and supply for ICT infrastructure in technologically underdeveloped areas and the New Partnership for Africa's Development."

Project objectives have been defined as:

- Testing the viability of minimally invasive computer literacy in South Africa.
- Determining the efficiency of the "hole in the wall" concept as a delivery mechanism for PC literacy as well as information and service delivery in South Africa.
- Identifying the learning methodology of the users.

In implementing the project in South Africa and to ensure that minimally invasive education is a success, intermediation of educators to empower them to assist in facilitating the process and offer some minimal (human) guidance is of paramount importance.