NEMISA NEWS

4IR SUMMIT EDITION

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Digital Skills Summit Receives Resounding Media Coverage

The NEMISA Digital Skills Summit received an overwhelming media coverage from both local and national media houses.

The summit also had a fair social media presence under the hashtags #DataScienceHack and #4IRDigitalSkills. Media coverage begun on the day before the summit when NEMISA board chair Ms Molebogeng Leshabane conducted an over the phone interview with Lesedi FM giving listeners a breakdown of the programme and what NEMISA, UNISA and the Department seek to achieve by hosting the summit.

Subsequent to the Lesedi FM interview, Ms Leshabane also had a 30 minutes interview on JJ's Views with JJ Tabane on Newsroom Afrika, which is one of the most watched TV current affairs news programmes in South Africa.

On the day of the event the national SABC radio station Radio 2000 had an outside broadcast, broadcasting live from the event their midday show The Inner Circle with Ntombi. Several people participating in the summit were interviewed including NEMISA Acting CEO Treveen Rabindhnath, Board Chair Ms Molebogeng Leshabane, UNISA's Prof Hossana Twinomurinzi and the winners of the Research Colloquium amongst others.

On the last day of the summit during the presentation of the Data Science Hackathon awards, Ms Bongekile Filana, NEMISA board member, data analyst and hacker herself, had an interview with Ikwekwezi FM on the technicalities of a hackathon. She demystified to the talk show host and listeners the concept of a Hackathon and Hacking and relayed its benefits in achieving solutions when hacking data.

Data Science Hackathon winners announced

"Shocked" and "Surprised", that is how the NEMISA Data Science Hackathon main prize winners described how they felt when they scooped the coveted accolade. The team of two won the main prize after two days of hacking, sifting through and analysing data at the Data Science Hackathon, which was part of the 4IR Digital Skills Summit held at Birchwood Hotel from 11 – 13 March.

Speaking subsequent to their win, Tino Manhema and Tsitsi Morote of The Guardian said that even though they put in their best effort they never thought they would even be runners-up, let alone win the main prize.

"It was a surprize to us when we were announced as winners of the overall Data Science Hackathon because we arrived a bit late. We missed all the introduction and speeches, meaning that we had to read everything ourselves and try to understand what is required of us. We worked on a very insightful data about individuals; and we had to come up with solutions on people that are isolated when it comes to 4IR," Morote said. Her partner Manhema echoed similar sentiments saying that the data presented them with an opportunity to probe the digital divide between individuals that lived in different communities.

"When we won, it was a shock, we did our best, but we were confident enough that we will win. In our data we also discovered the lack of connectivity in rural areas and the need for digital literacy," he said. The Guardian team was part of 10 teams that were eyeing for the top 3 spots. Third position was awrded to Naki Tech, who received R10 000, second position was awarded to Vidly IT Africode, who received R30 000 and main prize winner The Guardian received R50 000.

Other teams that made presentation included the EC4IR which found that there was a lack of digital literacy in the Human Resources Sector and that the sector does not take digital skills seriously. Limpopo CoLabs came up with a solution that financial literacy should be taught in all levels of schooling and that universities should play a leading role in this regard. Other teams that participated in the Hackathon included; SMU Hack, Futuristic Kids, Khabubu Brothers, African Humanist and Alpha Labs. Closing the Hackathon NEMISA Acting Chief Executive Officer, Treveen Rabindhnath, said that the solutions that the teams came up with were amazing and it would be great if President Cyril Ramaphosa would see them.

"We had to make this Data Science Hackthon happen. The hackathon provided an opportunity for innovation. The real data sets provided a chance for the teams to come up with real solutions. NEMISA has done this on purpose because we want to be disruptive and we are excited that we are moving in the right direction. This is our chance to provide solutions that we need in our country," Rabindhnath said.

NEMISA STAFF JOIN IN ON THE HACKATHON FUN

From crunching numbers for a living as an accountant to spending two sleepless nights sifting through data as part of a Data Hackathon, Kimberly Matlosa has described her first Hackathon experience as "amazing".

Matlosa who is NEMISA's finance head, traded her "calculator" for a laptop full of datasets assisting teams of data hackers during the institutions 4IR Data Science Hackathon which was part of the Digital Skills Summit convened at Birchwood Hotel early this month.

She went above the call of duty not leaving the hackathon venue for two days joining the enthusiastic young team of hackers dubbed "The Futuristic Kids". Like most who have never been part of a hackathon, she had misconception of what a hackathon is; however as the hacking begun, she says everything was demystified.

She said that on day one of the 4IR Digital Skills Summit after the stimulating presentations and engagements, she had an interest in joining the hackathon.

"I had no team and wasn't sure what I would do as I had the misconception stated above, I met-up with group of young people at the gala dinner and ask if I could participate at the hackathon with the team. However, I still had mixed feelings.

On the second day after Prof Christiaan Addendorff inspiring keynote speech, I decided that I had to be part of the movement," Matlosa said.

She said that what was interesting about her team was that no one knew each other and only one person in the team had been part of a hackathon event before.

"We were all clueless. The Futurist Kids called me their mentor; however, I had learnt so much from them. The role I played was to bring the team together and spark their creative juices.

The team had only one laptop, this was a serious challenge in terms of the work that was required, there was no way that I could leave. The atmosphere was so electric and supportive. At the end of the night we managed to source two additional loan laptops, from the team from St John's College in the Eastern Cape and one from our board members Ms Bongekile Filana, who also stay with us throughout the night," she said.

She said that even though at time the team members got frustrated with each other, they managed such frustrations and broke into laughter and dance. She added that she learnt in the hackathon that one does not have to invent something but rather have to give an alternative approach to solve the real world problems in an innovative way keeping in mind the basics requirements of the user who is going to use it.

"The bond we created at the hackathon was authentic that we even have a WhatsApp group to remain in touch and become a powerful 4IR army. It was interesting that one of the teams used NEMISA datasets and manage to pick up challenges faced at NEMISA in terms of the staffs digital skills , the team ran out of time and could not present their solutions , which would have been interesting to hear. It was encouraging that all the teams presented solution which would help our country without seeking ideas elsewhere, solving problems with technology from a South African perspective," Matlosa said.

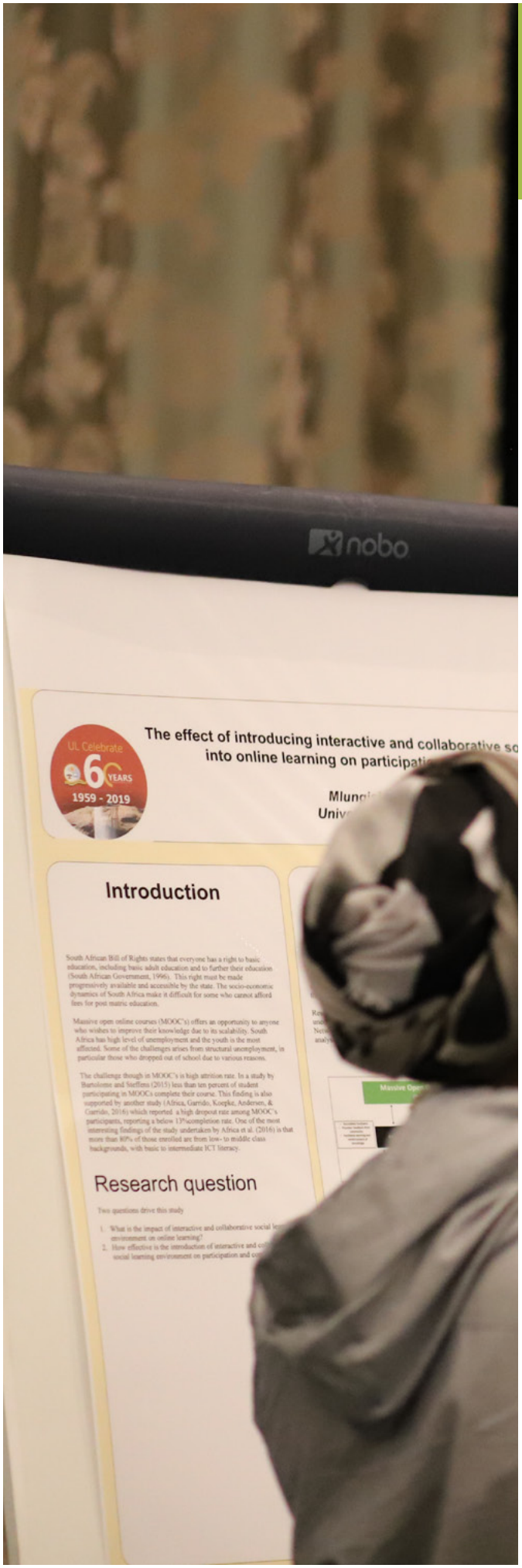
Academic Research Poster showcase

As part of the 2020 4IR Digital Skills Summit, NEMISA hosted the Digital Skills Research Colloquium which saw academic papers, posters and abstracts awarded accolades in each category.

A number of submissions in these categories contested for runner-up and main award of which these awards were presented on the second day of the 4IR Digital Skills Summit. Prior to the summit last year October NEMISA sent out a call for the submission of the academic work in the digital space, of which the deadline was subsequently extended to 31 January 2020.

During the summit researchers presented their papers in plenary and those that submitted posters were given an opportunity to exhibit their posters giving a breakdown of their research and important elements thereof, they decided to include in each poster.

Some of the research papers, abstracts and posters topics and problem statements included "Digital transformation in government", "upscaling ICT in developing digital economy", and the "Creation of a Central Process Management Repository" amongst others.



The following were the winners and runner ups in all the categories

Best paper

Opportunities for Digital Transformation in Government: A Case for the National Treasury Budget Process

by Takalani Rasalanavho & Hossana Twinomurinzi| University of South Africa

Runner up

Digital Skills and Employability in the South African Gig Economy

by Lovemore Khambane and Pitso Tsibolane | University of Cape Town

Best short paper/Abstract

Up-scaling ICT for Development Projects in Growing the Digital Economy

by Gugulethu Baduza and Caroline Khene | Rhodes University

Runner up

Towards a Framework for Examining Compliance of Digital Financial Service Agents to Legislation in Kenya: A Systematic Literature Review

by Rebecca Njuguna and Adheesh Budree | University of Cape Town

Best poster

Gamification for Collaborative Learning in Information Systems Education

by Arthur Emil van der Poll | University of South Africa

Runner up

A Central Process Management repository and workflow system for Provincial Government: A focus on the Eastern Cape

by Zizipho Macanda | Macebo Medi

Minister Ndabeni Addressed The Digital Skills Summit

The Minister of the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies, Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams has re-emphasized the need for NEMISA to rigorously provide digital skills to young people to address unemployment in the country.

Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams was addressing delegates that attended the NEMISA 4IR Digital Skills Summit 2020, at Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg from 11 – 13 March. The Minister, who is the "commander" of the 4th Industrial Revolution transition in the country, addressed the plenary via video call from Cape Town.

Talking to NEMISA's mandate and mission Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams said that technology advances every day and other people become victims, spectators, and innovators. She said that we have become consumers of technology, but this must change.

"We have observed that there is a skills mismatch in SA, most young people are unemployed with the qualifications they have, some are retrenched. Our people are still digital illiterate – so we needed to remodel NEMISA to provide these digital skills," Ndabeni-Abrahams said.

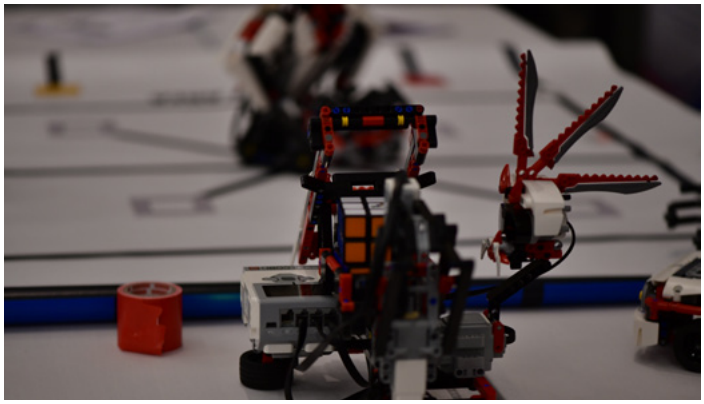
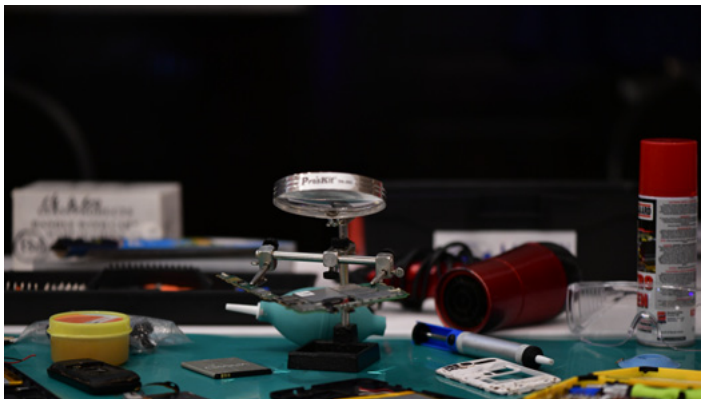
She said that only way that South Africa can turn around and leverage on digital tech is that all stakeholders both in the public and private sector work together.

"President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that coding will be introduced to young people, but how is this going to be done if our teachers do not know how to code? We call upon yourselves not to abandon this process after the summit, let us contribute positively towards the development of the society. There is also a strong need for universities to review the curriculum to bridge the skills gap that exists in the society," she said.

CoLab exhibition showcase at the 4IR Digital Skills Summit

All NEMISA CoLabs, which are in strategic partnership with several universities across the country took part on an exhibition that was part of the 4IR Digital Skills Summit.

NEMISA has eight CoLabs at the higher education institutions including Walter Sisulu University in the Eastern Cape, University of the Western Cape, Durban University of Technology, University of Mpumalanga, University of Limpopo, Vaal University of Technology in Northern Cape and Southern Gauteng, and North West University.

The CoLabs and their training partners in the digital and Information Communication Technology sector showcased their work, projects, programmes and some of the products and services they provide.

The exhibition played a colossal part as a platform for the exhibitors to expose and market their products and work to the attendees of the summit.