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CSIR technology equips young filmmakers to run mobile TV channels

By Ntombi Dyosop

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The CSIR has partnered with the Big Fish School of Digital Film Making to include rural and urban youth in the formal digital economy through a technology platform that makes it possible for entrepreneurs to operate their own television stations using a mobile internet protocol television platform.



The CSIR's Dr Keith Ferguson and CEO of the Big Fish School of Filmmaking, Dr Melanie Chait.



THE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION INDUSTRY is dominated by large regional monopolies that own high-cost delivery mechanisms such as satellite and terrestrial TV and act as the only current gateway for content distribution. Film and television producers who wish to broadcast to their desired audiences have to sell their content to these industry players. They risk producing content at high cost and still be rejected. Another challenge is that despite several government and non-government initiatives to address film school graduate unemployment, significant numbers of media graduates have no outlet

for their talent if they are not absorbed into such large media production houses.

In an effort to mitigate these challenges, the CSIR is setting up a studio and full mobile internet broadcasting capability at the Big Fish School of Digital Film Making, under the guidance of experienced media training personnel. The partners will employ young people to develop several mobile internet protocol television platform youth channels. The objectives are for the youth to not only film the content but also to engage in

the conceptualisation, planning, editing and scheduling, thereby managing the entire media production chain. Big Fish will run the educational operations of the project and the CSIR will implement the technology software development. Big Fish will also provide in-house employment opportunities for young people who graduate from recognised education institutions in South Africa such as universities, FET colleges and other training organisations. Only unemployed youth will be targeted for these roles.

"Who better to understand a young audience than the youth themselves? By expanding the video content production into the international arena, particularly across the African continent, we can all start to understand each other better," says Dr Keith Ferguson, the project leader at the CSIR.

"This project should not be considered a trial, but as seeding the actual implementation where the effectiveness will grow over the project period as the new software components are completed and come online," he says.

The introduction of new low-cost mobile internet protocol television technology will disrupt the traditional chain by bringing the media producers and their global audiences into direct contact and in so-doing, widen the scope for participation by micro-enterprises and individuals as micro-workers. "The new technology enables open access where the global delivery platform becomes a service to television producers and not a stranglehold," says Ferguson.



The CSIR team are Moipone Ramokone, Thierry Luhanjula, Dr Keith Ferguson, Siveshnee Moonsamy, Ralf Globisch, Tebogo Rens, Riette Pretorius and Louis Joubert.