

RMI and HWK unveil new EV pilot training module in Eastern Cape

The Retail Motor Industry Organisation (RMI), and the Chamber of Crafts Erfurt, also more popularly known as Handwerkskammer Erfurt (HWK Erfurt), last year agreed to collaborate on a 12-month project ending June 2024. This follows the successful completion of the Eastern Cape TVET partnership in November 2022 - a partnership designed to drive vocational training in the automotive aftermarket.



From left to right in the back row Lvh, Birgit MacMahon (HWK representative in South Africa), Patricia Roth (Head -International Education at HWK Germany) | image supplied

Louis van Huyssteen, RMI national training director, says the organisation is currently rolling out a small-scale project with HWK to assess business needs for vocational training in modern automotive technology, including e-mobility (electric car technology), responding to the changing needs in workplace skills in the automotive aftermarket.

As South Africa moves towards Alternative Energy Vehicles (AEVs), South African automotive manufacturers are expanding the array of brands, models, and derivatives within Electric and Hybrid vehicles. It is therefore imperative that training stays aligned with this trend. e says the project with HWK is progressive for two reasons. “Not only does it allow us to collect data from TVET colleges and employers, but significantly, we are also running a pilot training module for TVET lecturers at the same time.”

The virtual launch of the project late last year was attended by both Frank Oelze, Head of the Vocational Training Center for HWK in Germany and Patricia Roth, HWK International Education. Oelze says it is important to conduct the necessary needs analysis in preparation for the inclusion of E-mobility into the lecturer training programme in South Africa.

“We need to ensure that any subsequent introduction of the topic of e-mobility into South African curricula will not bypass either the needs of the TVET colleges, or the needs of the South African automotive industry. In order to determine the specific training needs and, above all, the common fundamental interfaces in this area, we would like to involve the TVET colleges as well as the companies in the automotive sector.” The survey which is currently being rolled out across all nine provinces includes small, medium as well as large enterprises.

Van Huyssteen says running concurrent with the survey, a two-week pilot is being conducted, firstly at Eastcape Midlands College this month for about 16 lecturers from eight TVET Colleges, and the second pilot scheduled for April at Tshwane South TVET College.

“We are particularly grateful to Torsten Klavs, Manager of Corporate Diplomacy and Corporate Citizenship, from Porsche AG for providing us access to a fully electrical vehicle, the VW E-Up, for the pilot sessions.” The RMI has a strong relationship with the Porsche Aftersales Vocational Education (Pave) team in Germany which was able to facilitate the training vehicle.

Looking to the future, van Huyssteen says the vision is to ultimately work with the various stakeholders to develop a national registered electromobility specialist qualification on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in SA. “By leveraging both vertical and horizontal articulation pathways, individuals with qualifications such as Electromobility Specialist can enhance their skills, expand their knowledge, and advance their careers in the dynamic field of electromobility,” says Van Huyssteen.

He says the future is bright for young people following this speciality. Some potential career paths include a charging infrastructure specialists; grid integration specialist, battery engineers, and renewable energy technicians to name just a few.

“We would like to sincerely thank our partners HWK and Porsche Germany for making this opportunity available to fast track the training of our TVET teachers and guide the youth on the benefits of further education as electromobility specialists or related fields,” he concludes.

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