Youth development will shape the ICT industry in 2013 and beyond

It's no secret that in the past couple of years students have been performing poorly when it comes to maths and science in schools. While matric results from the class of 2012 show a slight improvement in the pass rate for these two subjects with maths increasing by 7.7% to 54% and science by 7.9% to 61.3%*, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done and dropping the pass rate average is certainly not the answer.

"Unfortunately there is not enough being invested in ensuring students excel in these subjects and it's resulting in fewer students qualifying to study in fields such as engineering and IT at tertiary level," says Malcolm Rabson, managing director of Dariel Solutions. "What we need is a new focused plan that will aim to improve the pass rate for these subjects. In order for the ICT industry to continue growing we need to produce highly skilled students that will take the industry to next level of greatness and this can only be achieved if more focus is put into the development of the students."

If we consider that in 2013, IT spend is projected to grow by 4.2% **, it is clear that despite the slowdown in the last two years, given the financial pressure, the IT industry is on the upturn and with such forecasted growth, so too is the demand for IT skills expected to rise to accommodate for such growth and more importantly to ensure sustainability of the industry. Adds Rabson: "It therefore becomes imperative that we make it a priority as a nation to train, develop and nurture potential skills not only for the growth of the industry but for the growth of the local economy as well - especially as emerging markets are rising to the challenge and becoming gateways to international business."

The solution

So what is the solution asks Rabson? "Government can't be expected to grow the industry through skills development on their own; businesses need to play their part too. This can be achieved by partnering with institutions and helping set better practical tests and exams. Businesses can also assist this process by opening their doors to graduates, with better internships and other programmes that can introduce students to the industry and equip them with real world skills."

Next month the finance minister will deliver his budget speech and Dariel hope that more focus will be put into the development and nurturing of the ICT industry through education. "If we can put focus on the above and get it right, we will be on the right path to ensuring we're developing the future of the ICT industry. Certainly this won't happen overnight, but we need to put the relevant steps in place now so that we are producing world-class workers for the industry in 2013 and beyond," concludes Rabson.

*http://www.iol.co.za/news/special-features/maths-science-pass-rates-improve-1.1447002#.UPj9Vh2Tyqc
**http://www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=2292815