

Media Release
Actuarial Society of South Africa
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Solution to removing learning barriers for SA's poor heads for global stage

Paper Video, a Cape Town based Education Technology (EdTech) enterprise, has been selected as one of five African EdTech start-ups to showcase their innovative solutions to education challenges in London later this year.

In partnership with the Educational Trust of the Actuarial Society of South Africa (ASSA), Paper Video has over the past three years provided more than 15 000 learners from low income households across the country with technology enabled tutoring in Mathematics, the Sciences and Accounting.

Paper Video creates books of past exam papers and worksheets that contain embedded video lessons, providing learners with access to some 13 000 lessons by experienced teachers via their mobile phone or computer without needing an internet connection or data.

In recognition of the impact that Paper Video's application of technology is making in providing learners with access to learning resources and real life teachers, the enterprise was invited to pitch against four other start-ups at the Cape Town leg of EdTechXAfrica earlier this month. At stake was a ticket to attend the EdTechXEurope event taking place in London in June. EdTechXEurope 2019 aims to connect more than 900 global investors, innovators and industry influencers to showcase EdTech innovations and perspectives from around the world.

A firm favourite with the judging panel and the audience, Paper Video won the Cape Town pitch and will be joining the other African winners from Johannesburg, Dar es Salaam, Nairobi and Kigali on the global stage in June.

A solution with global relevance

Daniel Sacchelli, Global Events Director at EdTechXGlobal, says Paper Video emerged as the winner of the Cape Town pitch, because it demonstrated a tangible offering for the African education market.

"Answering multiple critical problems such as delivering content in areas of limited or no connectivity, having a solution that has relevance beyond the confines of Africa, and being in a position as an organisation to benefit from the prize and exposure to the wider audience, it was unanimously decided that Paper Video was the worthy winner."

Michelle Matthews, one of the competition judges and Head of Innovation at Cape Innovation and Technology Initiative (CiTi), adds that the judges wanted to give Paper Video a chance to gain further exposure on the international stage at EdTechXEurope in London, which could help expand the reach of their model through economics of scale in low-resource settings.

“Across the world, on-demand tutoring is a growing sector, with test preparation being one of the biggest drivers of this growth. However, a key challenge in a low-resourced African context is connectivity and price point. Even if an online tutoring solution could drastically reduce what it charges to government, the school still pays for connectivity out of limited budgets: keeping in mind that few schools have decent bandwidth, if any at all, or labs where each student has their own computer. Learners' homes have neither connectivity nor computers, only smart phones. Paper Video has a product that leverages technology for that context.”

The Paper Video resources

Paper Video was launched as a pilot project in 2014 by maths teacher Paul Maree and concept architect Christopher Mills. In 2015 the ASSA Educational Trust joined forces with Paper Video, making it possible for corporate social investment from some of South Africa's leading brands to be used to sponsor the educational resources for thousands of learners from low income backgrounds.

As a result of this partnership, Paper Video has been able to create and release digital versions of their resources free of charge, starting with “Subject Maps” for grade 10 Mathematics and Physical Sciences. The Paper Video “Subject Maps” provide in-depth video lessons for every concept in the Maths and Science curriculum, each accompanied by its own set of worksheets and examples. The video lessons are also presented in a flow-diagram structure that allows learners to see what concepts form the foundation for the topic they are currently covering in class, making it possible for learners to revisit any aspect of the curriculum for which they need help.

Corporate donations also cover the physical resources (such as hardcopy exam books, posters of the Subject Maps and microSD cards/Content Hubs that allow for offline access), allowing for corporate sponsors to maximise the reach of their donations.

Commenting on winning the Cape Town leg of EdTechXAfrica, Maree says: “In my view we won, because we are creating EdTech solutions that take into consideration the reality of students' and teachers' needs across the socio-economic spectrum.”

“Not only do we take into account what teachers and learners require from the resources, but also the reality that data costs in South Africa make it impossible for most people to watch educational videos to complement traditional education. Our microSD cards that can fit into any Android device or Windows computer have been a game-changer in this regard, not to mention our Content Hubs which make it possible for up to 50 simultaneous users to enjoy our resources without needing a cent of data.”

At the EdTechXEurope event Paper Video will participate in the Global Super League of Start-ups pitching competition. Some 28 start-ups from around the world will have 90 seconds to impress the judges.

Maree said that while winning competitions is a good way of creating awareness among potential sponsors, the positive feedback received from beneficiaries is what matters the most.

Teacher and learner views

Jade Davids, head of Mathematics at Delft Technical High School, describes the resources sponsored for learners in grade 10 and 12 as a "godsend". "The teaching in the video lessons by Paul is very good and they have given my learners the opportunity to have an extra tutor, which for many of them is the first time experiencing such a privilege."

Mavuso Dambuza, head of Mathematics at Intsebensizwano Senior Secondary School in Philippi, says: "The grade 10 Subject Map pack was very helpful for us because we could use the video lessons in our after-school programme to help learners catch up on anything they missed or revise any topic that they still needed help with. This resource helped improve my learners' marks, often by more than 10%, even 15%."

Leokona Rector, who was in grade 10 last year at Bopedi Bapedi Technical High School in Limpopo, says: "Thanks to Paper Video and the Learning Centre, I passed my maths and physics with good marks. I watched the video lessons to revise for my exams. I wish Paper Video could provide a Grade 11 subject map now."

Sepheu Itumeleng, who was in grade 10 last year at St Marks College in Limpopo, says: "I just want to say that Paper Video is the best application for education. It is interesting and has the best educators. Paper Video benefitted me in my maths and science and I wrote my final examination with confidence".

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To set up interviews please contact:

Lucienne Fild
Independent Communications Consultant
082 567 1533
lucienne@fild.co

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The Actuarial Society of South Africa

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