The Polytechnic of Namibia became a member of the Institute for People Management (IPM) at its launch at the Hilton Hotel in Windhoek recently.

The IPM was conceived in 2010 at a breakfast meeting hosted by MTC and attended by 97 Human Resources (HR) professionals from various industries. Delegates agreed to establish an official platform where HR Professionals could meet and discuss issues and challenges common to the HR profession. The result was the establishment of the IPM.

The aim of the Institute is to professionalise Human Resources management and to ensure that it becomes a recognised and respected profession through accreditation of HR professionals, individuals and organisations the promotion of high standards, ethics and accountability.

The Director of the Centre for Cooperative Education (CCE) at the Polytechnic, Carva Pop, received the Polytechnic’s membership certificate from Prime Minister Nahas Angula and Tim Ekandjo, President of IPM Namibia at the IPM launch.

Speaking at the launch, the Prime Minister said: “The HR profession (people management and development) is uniquely positioned to play a catalytic role in contributing to the realisation of positive outcomes for our country.”

Commenting on the Prime Minister’s statement, Pop said: “This role, incidentally, is exactly what the Centre for Cooperative Education is striving to fulfil. The CCE’s role at the Polytechnic is to bridge the divide between the theoretical and academic world and the work of industry. We engage industry and Government to give input to the Polytechnic’s curricula as well as to support the “work integrated learning” (WIL) component of all our academic programmes. The latter involves giving our students the opportunity to serve a semester’s internship right on the production line and other front lines of service delivery.

Pop said Namibia can only hope to reach the goals of Vision 2030 if all stakeholders in both the public and private sectors take on the challenge of developing the nation and allow for the development of skills through adopting a “business unusual” approach.

“It is this commitment to skills development and youth capacity building that will cement the HR profession’s contribution to national development. HR plays a key role in identifying talent and facilitating value adding activities such as the Polytechnic’s graduate internship programmes that is such an important means of competence-building.

“The Centre for Cooperative Education looks forward to utilising the Polytechnic’s membership of the IPM to expand the Polytechnic’s interaction with Namibian industry to promote Work integrated Learning as well as the practice of mentoring and coaching, which is the essence of skills transfer in an internship,” Pop said.

Lydiah Wambui, the Head of the Department of Human Resources Management (HRM) in the Polytechnic’s School of Business and Management, has played a pivotal role in the resurrection of IPM in Namibia and in the Polytechnic’s becoming a member of the IPM.

The department has trained a large number of active Human Resources Practitioners in Namibia: according to Wambui, about 150 students graduate with Diplomas and Degrees in HRM from the Polytechnic each year. Most of them are absorbed by industry, with which the HR department remains in close contact to ensure that the HR curriculum and graduate competencies match industry requirements. About 1 600 students are currently registered in HR programmes at the Polytechnic.

The Department was also among the first to align its curriculum with the requirements, of the Namibia Qualifications Framework (NQF), an exercise in which industry practitioners were closely involved throughout the process. We are confident that our graduates at all levels, from the new two-year diploma through the three-year Bachelor to the postgraduate Honours degree will continue to more than meet industry expectations,” she says. The new programmes were introduced this year.

“Many of our lecturers belong to different external professional bodies, but it was my desire to see a Namibian professional association to which our students could also belong. The IPM provides a forum for information sharing, research and improvement of quality of professional practice in Namibia. This also means that our students can now write Namibian case studies and participate in documenting Namibian HR issues.”