



Sri Lanka makes Networking Academy focus for IT skills

Sri Lanka is relying on [Cisco Networking Academy](#) expertise to train its IT experts after opening a specialist teacher training college last year



Jagan Jothivel, Area Academy Manager for Cisco Networking Academy and President of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa at the official inauguration of the Ruwanpura National College of Education for Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The country's President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, officially inaugurated the Ruwanpura National College of Education for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in November.

Renaming the former Ruwanpura National College of Education underscored a new focus on technology in education in Sri Lanka, encouraged by Cisco's experience in the field.

Of the 17 teacher-training institutions in Sri Lanka, Ruwanpura is the only National College of Education devoted to IT training for future teachers, and the Networking Academy curriculum is at its core.

The collaboration between Cisco and the Sri Lankan Ministry of Education has been fostered by Cisco's part in the UNESCO Next Generation Teachers Training Project.

This is an initiative aiming to help post-primary teachers in the Asia-Pacific region harness the benefits of information and communication technologies to enhance teaching and learning.

The Networking Academy initially trained 32 delegates from the Sri Lankan Ministry of Education in [IT Essentials](#) and the experience of the participants helped provide the impetus for the establishment of the dedicated ICT teacher-training college.

At Ruwanpura National College of ICT Education, 15 master trainers are currently completing [CCNA](#) courses run by the Vocational Training Authority, an existing Networking Academy.

It is expected they will begin training the aspiring teachers mid-year. All trainee teachers at the college will complete IT Essentials and [CCNA Discovery](#) Networking Academy Courses.

The Directorate of Education has obtained approval to train 30 more master trainers in CCNA.

The future teachers undergo two years of training at the college, and the annual 150-strong graduating class then moves to on-the-job training with placements in schools

The aim is for them to be able to deliver the Academy's curriculum at these schools, although the potential for the Academy to grow exponentially from its current five locations in Sri Lanka is restricted somewhat by a lack of infrastructure.

"There are 9000 schools in Sri Lanka," says Jagan Jothivel, education program manager, India & SAARC, "but not all of them have PCs or broadband connectivity, which is required to deliver the Networking Academy on-line curriculum."

The Ministry of Education is consulting with Cisco and other partners on the hardware requirements to change this, and with Sri Lanka Telecom to provide broadband connectivity.

The ultimate aim is to connect the schools with a 'schoolnet' which could help bring IT into the mainstream in Sri Lanka, to the benefit of forthcoming generations. "We place enormous faith in youth and their potential," said President Rajapaksa.