

# Youth lag behind parents and others when it comes to skills

THELMA NGOMA

AFRICANS between the ages of 25 and 34 are less skilled than their parents, and every other race group.

This is according to the recent statistics from Statistics SA's report *The Social Profile of Youth*.

Rosie Chirongoma, head of stakeholder engagement at non-profit organisation Partners for Possibility (PFP), said that the findings underline that employment is linked directly to education levels and little has changed since 2009.

"In the five-year period, the study shows that people who do not have a matric were the most likely to remain unemployed," Stats SA said.

"It is time for the business sector to step up and take note of this problem which directly impacts the economy as pupils are not adequately educated or prepared for the workplace.

"They therefore struggle to become meaningful contributors to the economy," Chirongoma said.

She said that 20% of 25 000 schools in the country are world class while the remaining 80% are "failing" schools.

"Less than 30% of the 1 million children who start Grade 1 every year will be able to sustain themselves financially.

"The system is failing South Africa's children," Chirongoma said.

She said that the differentiating factors for those successful schools are two things.

"The first is they have principals who are equipped for their task and they have an active community of citizens supporting the principal, including parents who are actively engaged in partnership with the teachers as well as an supportive school governing body.

"While other failing schools often have teachers who have been promoted to the role of principal without the knowledge and skills to lead an organisation and very little support from other citizens and parents.

"The principal is the change leader at the school. He/she needs to be equipped for this task. There is increasing recognition that the highly specialised role of a school principal requires specific knowledge, skills and expertise.

"However, in South Africa, the majority of school principals are not being sufficiently equipped for their role."

School staff in South Africa, especially teachers are reported often to feel overburdened, tired and de-energised.

"Many have become disengaged," she said.

In addition, school staff need parents and other members of the community to become involved, they can't lead change alone.

"Studies show that one of the key differences between schools that succeed and those that fail is the extent to which parents and other community members are involved in the school."

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