

“Education woes not unique to South Africa”

LOUISE van Rhyn, Founder and CEO of Partners for Possibility (PiP), attended the Global Education and Skills Forum (GESF) in Dubai earlier this year and says our education crisis is not unique.

“The grim situation of the education sector is not limited to South Africa and there is a global call for collective action between government, business and civil society,” she says. “According to a report commissioned by the UN education agency, at least 250 million of the world’s 650 million primary school children are still unable to read or write.”

This year’s GESF theme was ‘Rethinking collective responsibility for public education’ which aimed to explore how public-private partnerships can help achieve quality education for all.

Van Rhyn says what was very clear from the Forum was that the issues experienced by South Africa with regard to poor quality of education are experienced in other countries around the world. There were 1,600 delegates from 110 countries with 22 ministers of education in attendance and everyone was eager to learn.

“Even though the UN’s Millennium Development Goals contributed to improved access (more children in school), 58 million children globally still do not attend primary school and half a billion attend failing schools. More than 8 million children in SA are in failing schools.”



Van Rhyn believes the only way to change a failing education system is by business, government and civil society working together which is why she founded PiP, an NPO that partners business leaders with school principals to develop their skills.

“We need a shared vision for educational reform. The beauty of a shared vision is that all parties involved will benefit when education improves.”

Speaking at the GESF, Tony Blair, former British premier and founder of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, said that education is now the biggest determinant of whether a country succeeds or fails. He stated that the private sector has a critical role to play to help with experimentation and innovation in schools.

“People need to recognise that education is a societal responsibility. Businesses, government and citizens must get involved,” says van Rhyn.