

SOME LESSONS CAN'T BE LEARNT AT BUSINESS SCHOOL

WHILE executive education is in demand around Africa, there are also those who cannot afford it. And as Guy Pfeffermann pointed out in his piece for the eLearning Africa 2013 Report, it is more than just industry that suffers from a lack of management skills. Other sectors, including education, also lag behind.

The education crisis in South Africa inspired change management expert, Louise van Rhyn to partner with a primary school principal in a move that led her to found Partners for Possibility. The national non-profit

organisation and public benefit organisation functions with a vision to mobilise business, government and civil society to work collaboratively towards meeting the educational challenges facing South Africa.

"The PFP programme is built on the simple idea of partnering business leaders with school principals in a partnership for possibility. It is a leadership development programme, the first of its kind in the world, that has had many of the participant business leaders claiming they have learned more from being a partner to a principal than they ever

learned from attending a course at a business school," she says.

"A growing body of literature recognises school leadership as the critical factor in turning around an education system in crisis. International research shows that the key differences between schools that succeed and schools that fail are the vision, commitment, and leadership skills of the principal and the extent to which parents and other community members are involved in the school."

In the programme, the business leader becomes a learning and implementation partner to a school principal. Since most principals are not properly equipped for the task of leading the enormous



FIRST CLASS: Louise van Rhyn, Kannemeyer Primary School principal Ridwan Samodien, and children have fun in the classroom in Grassy Park. KPS was the first school to benefit from the programme

social change required at their schools, this partnership affords the business leader the opportunity to share his or her knowledge and skills with the principal and school management team.

Van Rhyn says the benefits of the programme are reciprocal as business leaders have reported how inspired they have been by the calibre of school principals in our schools. It is through the process they have also learnt the skill of engaging with communities outside of their normal social parameters, which they have then been able to apply in the workplace.

"They have also been astounded by how principals have been expected to learn on the job through trial and error and with very little guidance and support in what must surely be one of the most important jobs anyone can have in South Africa, that of educating our children."

The emphasis is on the partnership between the business leader and the principal with the anticipation that they will support and learn from each other. The Partners for Possibility Programme is being acknowledged as an innovative CSI, leadership development, educational reform and principal support because it is not a coaching or mentoring process. The programme carries an NQF level 6, programme accreditation, with the University of the Western Cape.

PPP is endorsed by a number of well-known and respected individuals such as Clem Sunter, Professor Jonathan Jansen, Bonang Mohale and Trevor Manuel.

SARS CFO, Bob Head went a step further

and became a partner to Jane Tsharane principal at Makgatho Primary School in Atteridgeville. He gave the following list of personal benefits at a panel discussion on how business can improve education at GIBS earlier this year:

- Understanding of all communities – from both a business and management perspective;
- My influencing skills have definitely improved – I only have influence, no power;
- I am more open to other points of view;
- My listening skills have grown, not least because I am confronted by a very different set of circumstances;
- You value other people and what they are trying to achieve. From the Principal to the people protecting our vegetable plot;
- I can make change happen in a totally alien environment;
- Humility. There are some brilliant, talented and amazing people out there; and
- It has enabled me to take people to the township who would not otherwise go – truly one South Africa.

"If you want to help fix education and you want to fix yourself, then do it," he said.

To find out more about the programme visit www.pfp4sa.org

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