

# Is the private sector complicit in public sector corruption?

Speaking recently at a Leader's Angle talk hosted by the [University of Stellenbosch Business School](#), anti-apartheid activist and academic Dr Mamphela Ramphele said that SA cannot be competitive "without vigorously tackling the gross under-performance of our education and training system that is stealing so many children's futures".



Dr Mamphela Ramphele speaking at a Leader's Angle talk hosted by the University of Stellenbosch Business School.

"Business has a vested interest in ensuring that we promote the emergence of confident, skilled 21st century citizens from our schools and higher education and training system," she said.

"The World Economic Forum's *Global Technology Report* places the performance of our grade nine maths and science learners last out of 143 participating countries - behind Yemen, DRC and Angola. Even worse still, our learners were competing with grade eight-level learners from other countries," she said.

## Education access and security

"African children were denied access to appropriate facilities to develop their capabilities. This ensured that they remained under-performers. The tragedy is that both black and white learners are now reaping the whirlwind of a poor performing school system and a demoralised teacher corp."

She also said that businesses should step up and tackle these social injustice issues.

“Would it not be a great idea to agree as individual corporate entities on how you could contribute to enhancing education and training starting with your own employees (some are illiterate and unskilled); employees children and those of your customer bases? Business as active corporate citizens would have the leverage power to engage civil society and the public sector to work together to put our talent and knowledge development on a higher plane,” she said.

## **Embracing values of social justice**

“In the same way that business leaders were able to enable the negotiations that led to our celebrated political settlement, can they not refocus on complementing that political settlement with conversations that would promote healing and embracing of the values of human dignity, equality and the rule of law and social justice?

“Is it not in the interests of business leaders to invest in promoting these civic values in their personnel development programmes so as to build shared value-based workplaces to enhance trust and productivity in business operations,” she asked.

Ramphela said the Gupta email leaks raise very worrying questions of corporate complicity with corruption and anti-competitive behaviour. “Public sector corruption does not thrive without complicity by private sector actors,” she said.

The challenge for the new generation of business leaders is to become active corporate citizens to remove obstacles to our prosperity, said Ramphela. “Business leaders have the opportunity to re-imagine both their country and their roles as citizens so they can be guided by an image of a future they can shape and believe in.”

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