

BRIDGE CALLS FOR “COALESCENT” APPROACH TO SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION

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On Thursday, 11th of October, the education-focused non-profit organisation Bridge held a rally to bring together a range of innovators in education to discuss the measures that should be taken to improve education throughout the country.

Opening the event, Dr Mamphela Ramphela said that more needed to be done to make sure that “every child” has the opportunity to be “lovingly-guided” all the way from “cradle to career”. Ramphela went on to say “we need to renew our vows to make South Africa a great country with a great education system.”

Former struggle icon Ramphela is the founder of the Citizens Movement for Social Change which is collaborating with Bridge in trying to breed a more active and united citizenry that will “walk together” towards social change. Like Bridge, much of the focus of the Citizens Movement for Social Change is on education and breeding young leadership.

Bridge itself was set up in 2009 to create links and a stronger sense of community between civil society, government, funders, practitioners, teachers, students and research organisations, when looking at how to bring about positive change in South Africa’s education system. Among other initiatives, Bridge is working with the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to create an educational NPO and NGO database so that the WCED will be aware of all organisations offering services to schools within the province. The organisation is also working on a project to help the department better support and mentor school leaders and principals.

At the Bridge rally, guests from across the board were encouraged to voice their feelings about the issues raised and there was a clear emphasis on interaction and sharing of ideas. With this in mind people were later split into groups to discuss and propose active solutions to problems with the current educational system.

Also speaking at the event, Eugene Daniels, who left a position in the Western Cape Education Department to start working on the development of Bridge, said that the time had come to “stop celebrating mediocrity” in education, pointing out the low marks required to pass matric and the current emphasis on merely pushing as many students through school as possible. Daniels also said that South Africa should look to European countries and the way that government and the private sector are encouraged to work together in creating a “seamless” transition from school into the job market.

Ramphela made it clear that South Africa possessed a “wealth” of young talent, noting that the country’s population was one of the youngest in the world, with around 40% of the population aged less than 30 years old. She reiterated that more needed to be done to harness that talent and to make sure that “no-one is left behind”.

Image 1: Dr Mamphela Ramphela addressing the audience.

Image 2: Cross-sector experts invited to brainstorm education.

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