

# Ramphela lays into ‘partying leaders’

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By Michelle Jones



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**TIME FOR CHANGE:** Mamphela Ramphela, addresses an education rally in Pinelands, says South Africans need to demand better education and it isn't surprising the education system is failing, as government is failing. Photo: JEFFREY ABRAHAMS

## Michelle Jones

Education Writer

IT SHOULD be no surprise that education in SA is failing, because the government is failing, says activist and academic Mamphela Ramphela.

She compared SA to a sinking ship that was not being righted because its captain and crew were partying and drinking champagne.

She was speaking at the Leap Science and Maths School in Pinelands yesterday at a rally for the organisations Bridge; Linking Innovators in Education; and the Citizens Movement for Social Change, which Ramphela founded.

There are six independent schools in the Leap group that provide no-fee education to disadvantaged pupils, and have achieved a 94 percent matric pass rate since 2004.

Ramphela called on South Africans to demand improved education.

“We have a failing government, if you haven’t noticed,” she told the approximately 100 teachers at the rally.

She said that in 2009, when the current government was elected, SA was already listing toward the rocks and it was thought that a new government would help push the sinking ship out to sea.

Instead, Ramphela said, lifeboats were now gathering around the ship and people were jumping from the wreck.

She said the passengers aboard the ship had trusted the captain, who was having a champagne-fuelled party with tripartite alliance members.

“You and I are sitting in our houses, complaining... and not saying ‘This boat belongs to us, and if it sinks, we all sink’.”

Ramphele likened education in SA to a game of chance where just one child out of every 100 would be guaranteed a school and university education.

“We are wasting talent by making education a game of chance rather than opportunity. How are we going to change this? We need to make sure that every child makes it from cradle to a career that will make the country a better place.”

SA’s current education was not the correct way to go about building a country, she noted.

“It’s not an accident that public education has failed, it is because the government has failed. Why have we not been absolutely relentless in our demand for quality education?”

Ramphele questioned why South Africans were complacent, passive citizens.

“Our electoral system has stolen our power. Let’s look beyond the games being played by the governing party.”

She called for people to vote in the 2014 elections only for candidates who promised change, and to support efforts in education.

“You have to say: ‘I want to move out of my comfort zone and be the change I want to see’. We in the Citizens Movement have a vision of a South Africa where active citizens are walking together. But who is going to make active citizenship happen?”

“No government, anywhere in the world, performs well unless they are kept on tenterhooks.”

Eugene Daniels, a former district director of the Western Cape Education Department and now the head of education at the Citizens Movement, cited statistics that of 100 children who started school, 40 wrote matric, 28 passed, four entered university and one graduated.

He said there was too much pressure to churn out matric passes with little emphasis on what children were learning.

“Our Grade 12 certificate is not worth the paper it is written on.”

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