

Education crucial for Africa - Tony Blair

By  Danette Breitenbach

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Part of attracting investment to a country is education. This is no difference in Africa. The advantage the continent has is that it does not need to replicate the West, instead it can look at what is on offer globally and choose the best.



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This is according to Tony Blair, former prime minister of the UK who addressed VIPs, the media and delegates at Monash South Africa as part of a panel discussion on 'Preparing higher education and skills for an international world' at Monash South Africa, in Gauteng.

African countries need to make education a priority he said. "As prime minister, education was a priority for me, however, if I was back in office today, I would make it an even bigger top priority."

No substitute for education

There is no substitute for education and this applies not only to primary education, but also tertiary education, that is university education, and to be successful, a country must have at least one world-class university. "One good institution serves as an example to others. "The lessons are clear, universities, like any other institution of a country, must be of a high standard and run properly."

He said today's world requires a mix of public and private providers. "State institutions often need to be shaken up, and while this can be a difficult lesson, it can be very necessary."

Adding to this, he said that countries need to look outside of themselves. "There is a huge market of ideas in the world today, go out and explore and bring back the best. Get outside providers if that is what it is going to take," he said.

Technology is vital

Education today is about learning to be creative. "The accelerated pace of change is the single biggest characteristic of the world today. Therefore, you have to be equipped for tomorrow. Technology is vital here, not only in teaching young people how to use it, but teaching them how it works in the workplace."

Young African people are very happy and committed to their countries. Therefore, apart from education, governance and security are important for countries so that their citizens feel safe and secure. "Young people will not stay if they feel there are no opportunities or if they feel unsafe. For young people to stay and work in Africa, governments need to think about what they want and need. Where there is a well-run government, there is never a shortage of young people."

Government also needs to devote funds to education. "Like everything else, there is a way of doing it well and a way of not, and sometimes it is the most basic of things that need to be fixed, like teachers turning up. There is no point of enrolling a child if there are no teachers," he said.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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