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A school's success depends as much on what happens around it as what happens inside it, making community buy-in a non-negotiable. A school must be seen as a shared asset the community is proud of and committed to protecting. When that happens, you create a safer environment and a deeper sense of belonging and responsibility. Without it, even the strongest model stands on fragile ground.

In the podcast, Adri speaks powerfully about the importance of partnering with value-aligned funders. Funding is not simply about money; it's about mindset. At Christel House, we cannot afford teachers or donors who view our children as broken. We don't need to fix these children. We need to fix the circumstances within which they live. A deficit mindset diminishes potential before a lesson is taught. What our students require are adults, inside and outside the organisation, who see their possibility, not their perceived lack.

Also top of mind for Christel House is scale, for which we must confront the land issue. The biggest hurdle is not ambition or capacity, it is bureaucratic ambiguity. Who actually owns the land? The city? Public Works? National government? Too often these entities defer responsibility, creating a cycle of delay that stalls real progress. Until the governance environment becomes clearer and more coordinated, expanding high-impact models like Christel House will remain far more difficult than it needs to be.

This discussion is not complete without a global lens. South Africa's education struggles can feel overwhelming, but they are far from unique.

I have seen similar dynamics in India, Chile, and other countries wrestling with inequality, rapid urbanisation, and under-resourced systems. Recognising this broader pattern frees us to learn from others and

to situate our challenges within a global conversation about what genuinely enables young people to thrive.



DR RASHID TOEFY

Western Cape Department of Economic Development & Tourism Deputy Director-General: Economic Operations

The Christel House South Africa case highlights a truth we should no longer soften: South Africa does not simply face an education crisis, we face an investment crisis. The system is producing exactly what it is structurally designed and resourced to produce. When schools are expected to overcome trauma, hunger, digital exclusion, and unstable home environments without the corresponding investment, we should not be surprised by the outcomes.

It is clear that the role of Christel House in the community extends beyond only academics to encompass trauma-informed social services, essential life skills training, and parent education to address the challenging backgrounds of many learners.

What should surprise us is that models like Christel House remain the exception rather than the baseline.

If the Western Cape is serious about future competitiveness, productivity, and social stability as a region, then education must be treated not as social welfare but as economic infrastructure. The private sector has a catalytic role to play here, not through occasional philanthropy, but through long-term, systemic investment in digital tools, psycho-social support, school facilities, and pathways that link learners to real economic opportunity.

Government's job is equally clear: reduce friction and red tape, accelerate approvals, and actively cultivate education as an investment ready ecosystem and proposition. We must create the conditions where investors see schools as strategic assets, not charitable causes. If we fail to invest deeply and collaboratively in human capital now, the economic costs will be unavoidable later. The case for bold, coordinated, investment-led education reform is no longer aspirational – it is urgent.