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contact us. We will give you that experience of a lifetime and one not comparable to run of the mill agencies."

Meantime for South African business the skills shortage remains a paramount issue. "If South Africa doesn't get serious about education and skills development all the gains in the 16 years since democracy will go down the tube," says Gareth Stokes of the financial and advisory news and information portal, FA News.

"We cannot condone a situation where more than 50 percent of Grade 1's fail to make it to their final year. Nor can we accept the abysmal matriculation pass rate achieved by the provinces in 2009."

Annette Kinnear agrees. "We need many many more people coming through our universities studying and qualifying in those areas and disciplines needed in the country." And she takes issue with those who reject this view.

"We need an across the board realisation of just how chronic the skills shortage is rather than going into denial. That's not going to help anybody.

"The skills shortage is well known among business people, but if you want to bring in a skill from overseas it has become very, very complicated to get the necessary permits. You can get them but can be a very long, tedious and sometimes inefficient process. If this could be opened up a little and made more user-friendly and accessible, then in the long run it would help rather than harm the country.

"People here are very entrepreneurial, with lots of ambition, ideas and a great love of independence. There's a very positive spirit here. South Africa is a very positive country and not much can get us down. Potentially it is ripe.

"We have a great country, a strong country. If we pull together and each of us does his or her part, and we as a nation make up our minds to do it, we can reach fantastic heights." END