



THE PRINCIPALS ACADEMY TRUST  
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**Principals Academy Trust celebrates international gold award for transforming school leadership in South Africa**

The Principals Academy Trust (PAT) is proud to announce the international recognition of its partnership with the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB) and the Capitec Foundation, which has been awarded a prestigious Gold Award for Ecosystem Development at the 2025 EFMD Excellence in Practice (EiP) Awards.

This award, presented by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), celebrates high-impact learning and development partnerships that have delivered measurable, transformational change. The [winning case study](#), *Empowering Principals to Transform Schools*, highlights the success of the PAT leadership development programme. This programme combines coaching and executive education as a means to strengthen school leadership as a lever for sustainable educational change in some of the Western Cape's most marginalised communities.

“This award honours over a decade of dedicated work, collaboration and belief in the potential of our school leaders,” said Keith Richardson, CEO of the Principals Academy Trust. “It is a tribute to the commitment of the principals we’ve worked with, the expertise of our coaching team, who are experienced retired principals themselves, and the shared vision of our partners to restore hope to public education.”

The 2025 EFMD Excellence in Practice (EiP) Award is an initiative of the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), a leading global network for management development with over 950 member organisations in more than 90 countries.

The EiP Awards are considered among the most prestigious global recognitions in executive education. They reward clearly defined initiatives that address strategic challenges through innovative learning and development. The awards recognise strong partnerships between stakeholders and demand evidence of both people and measurable business impact.

The UCT GSB-PAT-Capitec Foundation case study now joins a distinguished list of past winners that includes Unilever, Lego Group, Audi UK, and Randstad—affirming the global relevance and excellence of this South African education initiative. The award for the UCT GSB-PAT-Capitec Foundation case study will be formally presented in October 2025 at the EFMD Executive Development Conference.

The Principals Academy Trust, established in 2012, runs a three-year programme designed to support principals in their leadership journey through one-on-one coaching, leadership training, and capacity-building workshops. Delivered in partnership with UCT GSB Executive Education and funded through the Capitec Foundation since 2013, it equips school leaders with the management, leadership skills and business acumen required to transform underperforming schools into thriving learning environments.

The EFMD award-winning case study demonstrates the tangible impact of this model: improved school culture, strengthened teaching practices, and better academic outcomes. Principals Academy Trust has reached nearly 350 schools, with over 280 000 learners, mostly serving high-need communities across the Western Cape. The schools face systemic challenges such as poverty, under-resourcing, and high levels of social risk. Yet, by investing in the development of principals as leaders of change, the programme is helping to shift the narrative.

“This recognition reaffirms what we have seen on the ground for years,” said Richardson. “When a principal is supported and empowered, the ripple effect reaches teachers, learners, families, and the wider community.”

The award also underscores the strength of long-term, cross-sector collaboration. “The tripartite partnership between PAT, UCT GSB and Capitec Foundation shows what is possible when academic excellence, practical expertise, and philanthropic commitment come together to address one of our country’s most urgent challenges,” said Richardson.

“This is not just a win for PAT or our partners,” said Richardson. “It is a win for every principal who has dared to lead differently, for every teacher inspired to grow, and for every learner whose future is brighter because their school has become a place of possibility.”

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*The Principals Academy is a PBO (Registration NO. 930 041 885) and is a registered Trust IT2943 / 2012.*

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