

MEDIA RELEASE PSA appalled by the level of unpreparedness for Limpopo Department of Education regarding the opening of schools.

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), is sceptical regarding the undertaking by the provinces Education Department to ensure that schools are ready for reopening. The MEC of Education, informed the people of Limpopo that the province was ready to reopen schools, despite the call by the PSA that much still needs to be done to ensure readiness. The MEC was supported by the Premier who indicated that water tanks, mobile toilets, and the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), will be dispatched to schools without these items. However, the PSA found huge confusion at schools, with many receiving conflicting messages from various departmental officials on WhatsApp and SMS and telephone calls with no clear information creating confusion for employees.

The PSA crisscrossed the whole province to ascertain what was happening and was further updated by members throughout the region. It was established that most of the schools in all five districts are yet to receive PPE, no training of employees regarding COVID-19 as per safety directives, no deep cleaning as schools do not have Certificates of Compliance to demonstrate that deep cleaning was conducted. Other schools are yet to appoint cleaners or even procure cleaning material, as they are waiting for the release of the Schools Norms and Standards for School Funding (NSSF), which can only be received in their school accounts on 29 May 2020. Where it is purported that PPE has been received, it has been found that they are inadequate as they are not corresponding with the number of learners and educators. Permits of workers are yet to be issued although the employer is calling them to report back to work, whilst others were told to go home until their principals recall them.

Compliance was dumped on the Principals and Senior Management Team, with no proper direction and support, worse without resources as they depend on the NSSF Budget to execute some of these functions. Some schools were provided with 1 thermometer contrary to the undertaking to provide two per school. No screening of employees and training of screeners at most schools especially special schools. The PSA calls upon the MEC to be honest with their limitations, accept that the Department is not ready and furthermore calls upon all role-players to engage in the interest of the safety and health of the workers and learners at schools. The basics are not in place such as cleaning, sanitation, adequate PPE, training of the workers, water tanks hence the PSA's call to avoid further embarrassments to the Department and the possibility spreading COVID-19 to the employees and learners. Educators and learners must return to a safe and healthy environment which will enable the containment of the virus.

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