

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA concerned about 464 public schools dropping mathematics and calls for urgent action
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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is extremely concerned about the recent revelation that 464 public schools across South Africa have dropped mathematics as a subject.

This decision disproportionately affects learners in underprivileged communities, exacerbating existing inequalities in the education system. These learners would have limited options and study courses that are not needed by the market, thus condemning them to perpetual unemployment and poverty. This alarming development highlights a severe crisis in the education system that demands urgent attention and action.

Various studies have found that science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) is increasingly recognised as a key driver for innovation and societal advancement in South Africa and the world. The PSA is anxious about the long-term implications of this decision for learners and the future of the country. Mathematics is a fundamental subject that is crucial for developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The absence of Mathematics education in so many schools will undoubtedly hinder the academic and professional prospects of affected learners. Of further concern is the fact that South Africa recently ranked last in the world in mathematics and science according to the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study*.

The reasons provided by the Department of Basic Education are all within its influence and competence. The PSA urges the Department to prioritise the recruitment and retention of skilled mathematics educators, including recalling such educators who are on retirement. Further, the allocation of resources, including adequate infrastructure development, sufficient teaching materials, and educators should be prioritised.

The Department must engage tertiary institutions on teaching methods and the capacitation of mathematics and science educators, as the South Africa lags behind many developing countries. The situation is dire and necessitates the introduction of an occupational-specific dispensation for mathematics and science educators. The PSA believes that every learner deserves the opportunity to succeed. Mathematics education is essential for building a prosperous and equitable society. The PSA stands ready to collaborate with all stakeholders to address this crisis promptly and effectively.

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