

05 JULY 2020

PEU MEDIA STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO BASIC EDUCATION MINISTER 'S ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON THE SECOND PHASE OF SCHOOL REOPENING ON 06 JULY 2020

The Professional Educators' Union (PEU) is noting the Basic Education Minister 's address to the nation regarding the second phase of reopening of schools on 06 July 2020. We must be upfront in indicating that there is nothing new to write home about from what has been presented in the main, as the speech excluded a number of pertinent issues affecting schooling under the current COVID-19 environment, which we will indicate in the statement.

It is indeed disheartening to point out that the risk-adjusted strategy adopted is skewed to perpetuate the existing inequalities and disparities in the country, which is still defining majority of our schools, which will be the only ones grappling with a number of permutations that best suit their poverty level in terms of severe shortages in infrastructure, whilst on the other hand, schools in suburbs and those in private education will continue as normal, as they inherited high quality infrastructure, to comply with all what it takes to live meaningfully under COVID-19 environment.

Whilst we understand and sympathise with DBE , as they comply with the Court Order to open school feeding scheme even to learners who are still at home, we are overly skeptical to their adherence to safety measures, as these will be the same children roaming streets in our communities, with a complete disregard to the non-pharmaceutical measures, which is key to the prevention of the spread of the pandemic. It remains to be seen how this is going span out at our various schools.

PEU bemoans the fact that the Minister missed the opportunity to address the nation on the concerns below:

- To advance compelling reasons leading to DBE 's obsession with Grade R learners to reopen school right at the peak of influenza season.

- To give operational procedures that schools should follow, as soon as positive cases of COVID-19 infections become identified, to ensure that teachers and learners are not subjected to disinfected environment due to unnecessary delays.
- Replacement of over ten thousand teachers with comorbidities, to alleviate overloading from the remaining of staff complements, to ensure meaningful learning and teaching.
- Provision of clear directives and guidance to parents who decided to withdraw their children from going back to school. on how to go about in applying for home schooling other than a sweeping statement that they must approach districts.

PEU wishes to place on record that, notwithstanding the above challenges raised, we declare our unwavering commitment to finding ever-lasting solutions to multiplicity of challenges bedeviling our schooling system under COVID-19 environment in majority of poor schools in the country.

We remain committed to actively engage with DBE and other stakeholders in education, in ensuring that we do not preoccupy ourselves with salvaging the current academic year at the expense of the lives of our learners and teachers.

We urge our communities at large and parents to remain vigilant and closely monitor issues of safety compliance in our schools, to guarantee that they do not become death traps.

Consistent with the much-vouched flexibility on the risk-adjusted strategy, provinces are urged to exclude grade R learners from the cohorts of learners that will be reopening on 06 July 2020.

-END OF STATEMENT-

ISSUED BY GENERAL SECRETARY. Cell No: 079 515 1165