

## EDITORIAL

# Kids must stay at home, we are not out of the woods

IN THE midst of a crisis such as the current Covid-19 pandemic, it is impossible to make popular decisions. It is, therefore, not surprising that President Cyril Ramaphosa is one minute a hero and the next a villain.

While the lines are often blurred between listening to the expertise of the likes of Professor Salim Abdool Karim or the instant social media epidemiologists and infectious diseases specialists, fact should always triumph over fiction.

Take the issue of returning schoolchildren back to class from the beginning of June – it is a total no-no that does not require the brains of Karim. We are not out of the woods yet, we are told.

The pandemic is yet to peak, with some forecasts putting the expected rise around September. Busing children back to school is an own goal of disastrous proportions. Children can never be trusted to observe such measures as social distancing. Who says they will not exchange masks, among other curiosities they are prone to? The people who are making the decision to go back to school do so in virtual meetings, safely ensconced at home.

A whole country cannot suffer because the Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga is chasing targets. She is obsessed with keeping the 81.3% 2019 matric pass rate record intact.

There are worrying projections that the country could suffer in the region of 48000 deaths in a few months. Who else but a shameless careerist to add fuel to the fire by marshalling children back to school? Ramaphosa has been taking flak over the U-turn on the tobacco ban.

Those quick to throw mud have lampooned Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma as the brains behind the re-banning of tobacco.

Ramaphosa should not allow that unfortunate spectacle to play itself out again in the basic education sector. He must lay down the law, as he has been doing ever since the initial lockdown announcement. Top of his mind should be cushioning the economy against the blow of Covid-19, averting a jobs bloodbath.

It is not like the matric passes are going to churn out engineers who would save Eskom from disembowelling. White retired engineers have already raised their hands for this assignment.

Kids must stay home.