

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Tuesday, 2 April, 2024**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION**

#### **Title: Department of Basic Education Sparks Controversy with Implementation of *ECE Toolkit***

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has recently come under scrutiny for its implementation of the Gender-Responsive Pedagogy for Early Childhood Education (GRP4ECE), also known as the *ECE Toolkit*. Developed in collaboration with the University of Stellenbosch and funded by a R40 million grant from VVOB, a Belgian-based organisation, the *ECE Toolkit* aims to train pre-primary and primary educators to promote transgender ideology and gender diversity among children aged 0 to 9 years.

Opposition to the *ECE Toolkit* has been significant, with a coalition of religious, spiritual, cultural, educational, and traditional associations, representing over 20 million members, expressing deep concerns. Despite presenting a 35-page "Comprehensive Position Statement" outlining their objections and recommendations in December 2023, the Department has firmly rejected their concerns and proceeded with the implementation. Multiple requests for meetings and intervention by the Minister of Basic Education and the Presidency have also been ignored.

The key aspects of the *ECE Toolkit* include asking young children for their preferred names and pronouns, using gender-neutral language in class, and promoting access to toilet facilities based on children's gender identities. This initiative has raised ideological concerns, with critics arguing that it imposes a singular ideology that undermines traditional views and values held by many parents and communities.

The Coalition emphasises the importance of parental rights to raise children according to their cultural, spiritual, religious, and traditional beliefs, as recognised by South African and international law. They assert that the *ECE Toolkit's* approach could potentially divide children from their parents and damage the family unit, which is fundamental to South African society.

In response, the DBE has defended the *ECE Toolkit* as part of its strategy to combat gender-based violence (GBV) by challenging social and gender norms from an early age. However, critics argue that teaching an ideology that denies the biological differences between men and women risks entrenching GBV, rather than eliminating it. It undermines the status of women, the very people who are the main victims of gender inequality, discrimination and GBV.

The Coalition has proposed the formation of a Family Values Unit within the DBE to ensure that educational solutions are rooted in the South African context and not driven by foreign ideologies. However, the DBE rejected this proposal, citing the principle of the separation of Church and State, and instead established a Directorate: Social Cohesion and Equity in Education.

The Coalition remains committed to fostering constructive dialogue with the DBE to find a balanced approach that respects the constitutional rights and cultural diversity of all South Africans. They emphasise the importance of considering the best interests of all children, which includes taking into account their familial, community, and religious contexts.

Religious leaders and concerned citizens are invited to express their views on the *ECE Toolkit* through an email address provided by the DBE and a survey/questionnaire available on the [www.forsa.org.za](http://www.forsa.org.za) website.

ENDS

**Links:**

- [GRP4ECE – aka ECE Toolkit](#)
- [Video provided by DBE of President Ramaphosa GBV speech to justify ECE Toolkit training](#)
- [“Comprehensive Position Statement” of the Coalition on the GRP4ECE - ECE Toolkit](#)
- [DBE response to the Coalition “Comprehensive Position Statement” on the GRP4ECE - ECE Toolkit](#)
- [DBE presentation - Promoting positive gender norms](#)

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## Coalition representation

This press release is endorsed and supported by the following organisations:

<b>Name of Organisation</b>	<b>Approximate Membership</b>	<b>Representative</b>	
United Ulama Council of South Africa (UUCSA)	Islamic Faith 1.8 million	Abdul Khaliq Allie	
Association of Muslim Accountants and Lawyers (AMAL)		Ashraf Parker	
Association of Muslim Schools (AMS)		Ibrahim Bismillah	
Markaz Manār al-Fikr (MMF)		Uwais Dockrat	
South African National Muslim Women's Forum (SANMWF)		Shamshad Sayed & Hawa Patel	
Islamic Medical Association (IMA SA)		Abdul Kadar Peer	

Old Apostolic Church (OAC)	1.2 million	Mandated Michael Swain	
South African Community of Faith-Based Fraternals and Federations (SACOFF)	5 million	Bert Pretorius	
InkululekoYesizwe Association (IYA)	10 million	November Mbhele	
The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA)	4 million	Moss Ntla	
Freedom of Religion SA (FOR SA)	Legal Representation	Michael Swain	



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**UNITED ULAMA COUNCIL  
OF SOUTH AFRICA**

