Education and National Development

Historical and Critical Perspectives on Vocational Schooling in Malta

Ronald G. Sultana
EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Historical and Critical Perspectives on Vocational Schooling in Malta

RONALD G. SULTANA
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About the Author

Dr Ronald G. Sultana is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta where he teaches sociology. He has taught in schools at all levels, has carried out research in universities and institutes in Malta, England, France, New Zealand, and the United States, and in 1990 was one of the founder members of the Moviment Edukazzjoni Umara. He is the author of many articles published in different scholarly journals including the British Journal of Sociology of Education, the International Studies in Sociology of Education, and Qualitative Studies in Education. He is the editor of Themes in Education: A Maltese Reader, (Mireva Publications, 1991), and winner of a number of academic awards including the British Council Prize (1979), two Commonwealth Awards (1982, 1985), the Caltex Prize (1988), and a Fulbright Visiting Scholar Award (1990), which enabled him to carry out post-doctoral research at Stanford University, U.S.A.

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R.G.S.
University of Malta
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Abbreviations

RWGID — Reports of Workings of Government Departments
RDE — Reports of the Department of Education
TSRP — Trade School Research Project
TSRPQ — Trade School Research Project Questionnaire
TSTS — Trade School in Tracer Studies

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Education and National Development

After the Maltese general elections of February 1992, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Environment adopted the new name of 'Ministry of Education and Human Resources'. This change in name highlighted and made more explicit the assumed link between education and the economy, where the former was to be a key partner in sustaining, even leading the latter by means of the development of human potential. This linkage represents a formal marriage which had in fact been consummated much earlier as Malta strove to become not only politically, but also economically self-reliant.

As countless commissioners who came to investigate various aspects of Malta's social, cultural, political, economic and educational features and institutions noted over and over again, the islands had little to offer - or to develop - other than their human resources. The same comments have been made by many of Malta's political leaders, whatever their ideological persuasion or the historical configuration of events which formed the platform for their analysis.

And yet, the eminently attractive view that education can somehow address the economic ills that have plagued Malta
from the onset of the nineteenth century onwards is dangerous precisely because of its appeal to the common sense. For it is difficult to contest a position which argues that, since Malta is bereft of raw materials, then the only possible source for revenue is that which is generated by its human stock. Indeed, despite the apparent chasm that differentiates the educational policies and ideologies of the Labour Party from those of the Nationalist Party - differences which took on a most dramatic turn between the 1970s and the 1980s - a study of the root structures of that ideological discourse and those policies displays what is ultimately the same language; a belief in the important role that education can play in the island’s economy. True that the Labour government emphasized - as it had historically done since its foundation at the turn of the twentieth century - the more utilitarian aspect of schooling. But the Nationalist Party, though professing more liberal educational policies, nevertheless engaged similar concerns even as it fought to wrest government from Labour. In its 1981 electoral manifesto, while contesting the technocratic elements of the Labour Party’s educational policies, the Nationalist Party however noted that ‘the best investment that our country can make is in its people, and the greatest development will come from the development of their skills’.

Such views are, as will be argued throughout this book, larger than the ideological rifts between parties and movements, and reflect realities which cannot be wished or conjured away. Malta\footnote{Malta is made up of a group of small islands, two of which are inhabited. The larger island, Malta, has a population of around 325,000, while Gozo’s population is around 25,000. The archipelago of islands covers a surface area of about 316 square kilometres. It occupies a strategic position in the Mediterranean Sea, lying 95 kilometres to the north of the African Coast. Malta’s position in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea and its natural harbours have invited a number of colonial powers - the Carthaginians, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Normans, the various houses of Spain, the French, and finally the British - to take possession of the islands. Malta obtained its political independence from Great Britain on 21 September 1964, and was declared a Republic on 13 December 1974.} is a peripheral micro-state, overpopulated and overburdened by demands which will always prove difficult to satisfy, and which only help to expose the dependency and fragility of its economic endeavours. In such a situation, it is fairly obvious that only a few alternatives are available to a nation as it attempts to generate a self-sustainable economy. It is also fairly clear why, when problems in the economic sphere prove intractable, attention is transferred to other sectors of the social system which appear to be more amenable to influence and change.

This partly explains why there have been movements and calls in favour of technical and vocational education ever since the early nineteenth century when Malta, under the modernizing influence of the British, had to face the challenge of an individualistic ethic which was to feed hopes and aspirations for nationhood and independence.

Education was considered to be the key tool to skill future workers, who would develop Malta’s industrial base and hence generate enough wealth to move the nation away from a dependence on charity, grants, and economic circumstances external to itself. This dream regarding the economic function of education was constant from the 1830s to the 1990s, and has been true for Malta as for other developing nations. It has also found expression in a number of ways, ranging from a formula which granted
technical onto general education, to one which set up technical and vocational schools as distinct institutions within an overall educational system.

**Malta’s Trade Schools**

This book looks at the development of the view outlined above, namely that education is closely linked to national and economic development. The initial impetus for the research reported in the chapters that follow came from what can be broadly referred to as a humanistic concern for students attending Malta’s most explicitly vocational of schools - trade schools. This concern grew as a direct result of my experience as a counsellor in these schools, the notoriety that trade-schools had as low status ‘educational’ spaces for the under- or non-achievers, and criticism from various quarters, including educators and industrialists, that these schools were failing in many ways. All these factors sparked off a number of research questions which, given my normative commitment to notions of justice and equity in and through education, and professional interest in the links between education and the economy, proved challenging.

Initially, the research interest revolved specifically around trade schools. They included questions such as:

- Why do students choose to go to such schools?
- To what extent do they actually choose? Or are they, in actual fact, channelled?
- In what ways, if at all, are educational processes and pedagogies there, different from those in other parts of the overall system?
- What educational and social advantages and disadvantages are incurred by students attending trade schools?

These and similar questions structured my approach to the research field I had chosen. However, it soon became clear that, in order to answer such substantive questions, more fundamental ones had to be asked and explored first. Among these were:

- Why were trade schools set up in the first place?
- What aims came together in the formulation of these new educational spaces?
- How did these schools articulate with previous attempts to technify education in response to economic challenges?
- Why, despite the many criticisms and clear evidence of failure, have trade schools been maintained?
- What function do these schools have in the overall educational, and economic, system?

As the research questions changed, so did the narrow focus and equally narrow assumptions that I brought to the field. In the first instance, it became necessary to understand the roots of educational Innovation and change, and therefore to study the development of Malta’s educational history from the nineteenth century as it was in the mid-1800s that schooling was established on an institutional and increasingly mass basis.

That study makes up the first part of this book. It includes the documentation of the setting up of trade schools in 1972, representing Malta’s latest bid to make education responsive to the needs of an ailing economy. The richly detailed historical context underpinning the rise of vocational schools helps the reader appreciate the lineage of the ideas and assumptions that led to that innovation, and to draw parallels between the hopes expressed for the new schools then, and those expressed for similar schools set up decades earlier, both in Malta and elsewhere.
Part Two of the book looks more directly at the contemporary situation in Malta's trade schools, and sets out to investigate that reality utilizing sociological tools which provide empirical data for evaluation. The quantitative and qualitative research tools used - questionnaires, participant observation, tracer studies, structured and unstructured interviews, and so on - are described in detail in an introductory section to Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

The data reported in Part Two of the book evaluate the extent to which the economic, educational and ideological goals announced in favour of trade schools have, in fact, been achieved. The historical and evaluative chapters, as well as the constant interaction with trade school staff and students, alerted me to the danger of accepting the assumption that the root of 'the problem' lies in the problem itself. In other words, awareness of the historical context which gave rise to the setting up of trade schools, as well as awareness of the function of vocational schools in the overall Maltese educational system, led me to engage more explicitly with the root cause. And this is

a. that the economy is asking trade schools to do that which schools have universally been found most unable to do, namely, to teach specific vocational skills, and

b. that the educational system covertly channels the least motivated and achieving students towards trade schools, only to blame those same schools for having the least motivated and achieving students.

By focusing on trade schools, the book carries with it the danger of participating in, and adding to, the scapegoating exercise of fault-finding. Though this will become increasingly clear in subsequent chapters, it is nevertheless important to point out from the outset that any attempt to transform trade schools will have to involve the Maltese educational system as a whole. This is my main contention in the concluding chapter of the book. Here, attention is drawn to the policy implications that follow from the historical and empirical data reported.

The Maltese educational system is characterized by strong classifications within and between its different sectors. Streaming is still practiced at the primary school level, and differential secondary schooling distributes roughly a third of students - the academically successful ones - into Junior Lyceums, another third - those less successful - in area secondaries, and a last third - the low-achieving and demotivated students - into Trade Schools. Non-achieving and illiterate students are channelled into what are ironically called 'Opportunity Centres', where pupils are offered remedial Primary education. Needless to say, students with special needs are excluded from mainstream schooling and
are taught in 'Special Schools'. In addition to this, thirty per cent of all students are to be found in private schools, and these institutions further reinforce the structures of selection and exclusion which exist in state schools. Movement between sectors is minimal, and occasionally not even possible. In this situation, therefore, any significant change that can take place within any sector is dependent on reforms in other sections of the overall system.

The final chapter of this book, therefore, shows that it is the whole 'language' of the Maltese educational system that needs to be addressed if we are truly to engage with the problems manifesting themselves in one particular sector - trade schools.

Comparative Frameworks

While this study is empirically founded in Maltese data, and is directly related to specific Maltese concerns, its relevance extends beyond the local. Vocationalism has proved attractive to various countries,

because it appeals to many groups, especially in its more general forms. It gains support from students in search of jobs; businesses in search of trained workers; education in search of students and an important social function; and politicians in search of popular reforms that appear to address social and economic problems.²

As will be documented in the chapters that follow, many developing and developed countries have invested in some type of vocational education – indeed, it has been argued that the tightening and loosening of the bonds between education and the world of work coincide historically with the country's economic performance. Thus, when the economy is booming, the vision for education becomes more liberal, while calls to make schooling more responsive to the needs of the economy become more urgent when the economy is in crisis.³ This at least partly explains why vocationalism went out of fashion in the late 1950s and 1960s, and why there has been a resurgence of what has been called the 'new' vocationalism after the economic depression of the mid-seventies.⁴ It also explains why vocationalism has had a perennial appeal in Malta, given the constant state of fragility and vulnerability of the country's economy.

In both the historical and the evaluative chapters, therefore, reference is made to other educational systems where vocational schooling exists under one form or another. This not only places local data and experiences within a larger framework so that comparisons and contrasts can be made, but also throws light on processes which are thought to be idiosyncratic to the Maltese situation but which can in fact be found elsewhere. In addition, the comparative dimension enhances the possibility that non-Maltese readers will find this study of some use as they address their own particular educational concerns. Not that there are many educational systems which have specialized vocational schools at the secondary


level in the same way that Malta has. Indeed, it has been almost as difficult to find comparative literature on ‘trade schools’ as it has been to find studies which report that vocational secondary schooling, of any type, has proved successful. Most countries have opted in favour of general education – occasionally offering a vocational stream, as is the case in America – leaving training in specific skills till after compulsory schooling is over.

However, the rise of the ‘new vocationalism’ in many countries has revived calls for more employment-oriented curricula and, with schools finding it increasingly difficult to legitimize themselves in the face of rising unemployment, there is therefore a great temptation to channel unachieving and behaviourally problematic students into vocational classes or schools. The Maltese case-study will be a timely reminder that, irrespective of the good intentions behind any ‘vocationalizing’ scheme which sets out to provide ‘relevant’ schooling, the results will very likely be the same as in Malta namely, the creation of lower-status tracks and/or schools for low status students who will be offered an inferior, diluted form of education which will lead to the reproduction of social inequalities from one generation to the next. A noted sociologist remarked – when referring to efforts to include technical elements and a ‘relevant’ curriculum in British schools – that such innovations were often ‘not simply for the transmission of educational knowledge, but for the purposes of social control of forms of deviancy, and that usually occurs with the ‘less able’ children whom the school has given up educating’.5

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Defining ‘Vocational’ Education

There is much slippage in everyday language between the terms ‘vocational’ or ‘technical’ education – which are generally considered to have a ‘practical’ and ‘applied’ character – and ‘general’ or ‘academic’ schooling. Given the constant use of these terms in this book, it is important to clarify the semantic fields that they refer to in this particular context. In one sense, of course, all schooling is ‘vocational’ to the extent that, directly or indirectly, it is an essential part of the preparation for any vocation. Indeed, most higher education is often distinctly vocational.

The root of the distinction between vocational/technical on the one hand, and academic/general on the other often has more to do with the distinction between ‘hand’ and ‘mind’, and with the differential prestige accorded to both in the labour market and culture generally. Thus, it is more likely that a course in mechanical engineering or carpentry will be considered to be instances of technical education, while a course in surgery or in dentistry – or in law for that matter – will be seen to be examples of academic and general education. Often, the fact that all these are eminently vocational courses will be ignored. Similarly ignored will be the fact that

There can be no adequate technical education which is not liberal, and no liberal education which is not
technical: that is, no education which does not impart both technique and intellectual vision.\(^7\)

The distinction between general and vocational education, however, reflects more than class bias or a faulty theory of knowledge. The fact that so many educators have highlighted the difference over and over again suggests that there must be something important in the distinction first drawn by Aristotle between 'education' and 'training'. The latter term tends to be used co-terminously with 'vocational' courses, and both acquire a pejorative meaning since practical training is largely considered to be aimed at developing technical skills where performance at an optimal level is the goal, even if this efficiency excludes the understanding of the context in which that skill is practiced or in which the product is produced.

The pedagogy used in 'training' programmes tends to be applied and practical, aiming to reproduce in the classroom the same social and technical relations of production. Thus both the hidden and the overt curriculum enhance the possibility of the transfer of learning to the shopfloor environment. In this case, there is often little, if any, critical analysis of these same social and technical relations, or of the industrial environment which schools are so keen on mirroring.

Promoters of general and liberal education are not always necessarily against vocational education, although there is a general tendency to see the latter as offering a narrow, limiting access to the type of knowledge which gives students the power to decode their lives and the structures within which these lives are acted out. There is often a fear that a focus on technique excludes vocational students from what, given the demands on modern citizenship, is truly 'worthwhile knowledge'.

For many - and this is the position adopted throughout this book and defended at some length in Chapter 8 - the need for a cautious and critical appraisal of technical education is therefore necessary. But that caution does not exclude vocationism or technique from the curriculum. Rather, the three elements of knowledge, namely:

- **savoir**: skills in holding and manipulating knowledge
- **savoir faire**: skills in doing something, and
- **savoir être**: social and life skills

need to come together for all students throughout the curriculum. It is in this way that we can meet the practical as well as theoretical and intellectual needs of students, so that any vocational programme that is offered must 'promote full human development through the exposition of the learner to work experience as part of the education process... The purpose of the work is to further the education of the student; the work is subordinate to the education process; it is work for education'.\(^8\)

The preoccupation with education rather than with skilling is important for practical as much as for philosophical reasons. As I will extensively argue throughout this book, there are a number of factors - some internal, others

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external to the educational system – which render schools the least effective of places for teaching vocational skills to young people. Indeed, most research has shown that industry, for instance, can teach such skills much faster, more efficiently, and at a fraction of the cost that are incurred by educational systems. And yet, if, following R.S. Peters, we are to define education as an initiation into a worthwhile form of life,\textsuperscript{9} then work ought to be one of the focuses of the curriculum since it is a part of that worthwhile form of life (and) because work is a part of the normal and necessary range of human activities. In exercising a minimum skill, men and women are 'at work'. It behoves those responsible for framing educational processes to ask: What are the curricular processes that will reveal work as a component of a worthwhile form of life and which will prepare children for initiation into that work component of a worthwhile form of life?\textsuperscript{10}

This is the key question which must be answered if vocational concerns are to be addressed in the Maltese educational system. While this book does not claim to have a blueprint answer to that challenge, it does set out to provide the historical and critical context of past and current formulations of vocational schooling so that future endeavours can benefit from our national experiences. Ultimately, the overall goal for our educational efforts must be guided by Dewey's simple, yet profound advice: 'What the


\textsuperscript{11} DEWEY, J., quoted in OAKES, J., 'Beyond Tinkering: Reconstructing Vocational Education', in COPA, G.H. et al. (eds), Re-Visioning Vocational Education in the Secondary School, (Minnesota Research and Development Center for Vocational Education, Minnesota 1980), p.65.
PART ONE

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY MALTA

A brief case for history

This book started as an attempt to critically consider, in sociological terms, the nature of vocational schools and their value (or otherwise) for students below school-leaving age and for the Maltese economy more generally. It became clear early in the empirical research that an understanding of the issues required a sensitivity to the historical developments of education generally, and technical and vocational education more specifically. In other words, in order to use contemporary sociological tools with the view of analyzing and understanding current formulations of schooling, it was necessary to go back to the past where political, economic and cultural currents and processes intermeshed to form the institutional matrices that were now the subject of inquiry.

That journey back in time does not result in the presentation of 'educational history' as such but rather of a
history of education because, as modern historiography of schooling¹ has shown, the boundaries between historical description and interpretation are impossible to discover. Hence, Silver² is right to argue that

Description and narrative are emphasis, choice, interpretation. The organizing concepts and categories are interpretation... The very starting point is an act of interpretation.

Awareness of the interpretative nature of 'description' is particularly called for in the construction of an account of the rise and development of vocational and technical education, for perhaps in no other area in the history of education have contemporary categories and prejudices been de-historicised and transposed in the reading of the past. It is therefore a great temptation to write a history of education as a case for liberal education as against vocational instruction, for—these seem to be the opposing categories used today in many an appraisal of schooling. But the emergence of a liberal discourse as opposed to a vocational one, as indeed the distinction between 'education' and 'instruction', needs to be carefully documented, with reference to other social phenomena, structures and processes.

This documentation in national historical terms presents its own special and peculiar challenges when the country in question has been, like Malta, subject not only to internal power struggles between different social movements in

¹ As exemplified, among others, by Harold Silver, David Tyack and Harvey Kantor.
³ SILVER, H., op.cit., p.4.
that project is to set out the evolution of formal technical/vocational education in the nineteenth and twentieth century. My interest is not in providing minute details on the different vocational establishments or streams that developed in the Maltese educational system as much as to analyze the categories used in different time periods in order to make it possible for educators to speak about 'industrial training', 'vocational education' and 'instruction' as distinct, or co-terminous with, other forms of education.

Moreover, I have decided to choose two main categories to organize and give form to the historical data presented below. The first is the relatively simple category of chronology: this entails the utilization of a crude though not totally arbitrary method of slicing through historical development at regular intervals. This slicing of decades is generally related to major events, such as a new step in Malta's constitutional and political history, the publication of an influential educational report, or the reform of the educational system. It is a method which satisfies my goal of presenting reasonably detailed discussion of data, while at the same time incorporating most of the significantly influential periods in the history of vocational and technical education. The account is divided in three chapters.

A first chapter looks at the initial, largely unsuccessful attempts to graft a technical/vocational element upon primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions. A second chapter looks at the last decade of the nineteenth century when the first state technical school was set up, and at the twentieth century which saw an increasing popularity of the view that technical and vocational education was necessary in order to respond to the needs of emigration policies, to the diversification of an increasingly mass based education, and to the attempt to develop a local industrial base. A third chapter looks at the setting up of vocational schools in 1972. I consider the establishment of these schools to be the most recent turn of a 'story' which had its roots in the nineteenth century.

'A second category for the organization of this historical account refers to the twin causal mechanisms of economy on the one hand, and culture on the other. In other words, the data suggest that the development of education generally, and technical and vocational education specifically, is closely related to developments in the economic base and in the superstructure of ideas ascendant in a particular period of time. Now, I am generally sympathetic to the Marxist insight that

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.4

However, I depart from the reductionism and monocausality that plagues much (orthodox) Marxist analysis. I therefore allow for the power of ideas, culture and education to bring about societal transformation, and do not view them simply as mere epiphenomena or surface manifestations of a deeper, more 'real' structure.

Thus, while I recognize the economic base as a massive and extraordinarily powerful force which structures and organizes the nature of the possibilities that can emerge in other areas of human interaction, I also acknowledge the power of human agency and cultural production. Indeed, the

point of historical inquiry would be to search for instances 
and conditions in which and under which systems are more 
or less permeable to ideas and change. Thus while I give a brief account of the socio-economic background of the period to be treated at the start of each of the chapters, I also give detailed consideration of the same factors within the narrative itself in order to highlight the interaction between different elements of a social system, and specifically the inter-relationship between education, economy and culture.

In writing this historical account one problem emerges above all others. This is that, given the nature of the main sources I have followed - Government reports, texts of public speeches and proclamations, parliamentary debate proceedings, biographical accounts of key political figures - 'the main vocabulary and structure of analysis... have been defined from the top, [that is from official definitions and interpretations] and the most persistent controversies have been sustained by interpretation and reinterpretation of definitions from the top'. I have avoided this only in Chapter 4, where my account of the rise of trade schools depends not only on what I discovered in departmental files, records and reports, but also on interviews with teachers and instructors who were pioneers in the new schools. I also refer to articles on trade schools which appeared in local newspapers between 1972 to 1992, in order to better grasp the process of change and innovation as seen by different sections of the community.

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6 SILVER, H., op.cit., p.152.

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In Chapters 2 and 3, I relied mainly on Government and department reports, special commissioned reports regarding the educational system and the economy, and occasionally on secondary sources. With reference to the nineteenth century, I also looked at newspaper issues which appeared directly after major reports on education were submitted, assuming that articles on the subject were likely to feature, as indeed they often did. Secondary sources also provided me with a number of helpful clues about where to look for information. I also read through most of the books, pamphlets and leaflets on education which were published in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. These were particularly useful in helping me identify the various elements pertaining to the developing educational discourse.

The account for the period between 1912 and 1972 depends mainly on the Reports published by the Government Departments, on the special commissioned reports relevant to education and the economy, and on other official documents such as political party manifestoes and Development Plans. I also perused a number of dissertations which cover aspects of the development of

7 C.A. Price for instance, speaks of a 'movement in favour of technical education' in his book *Malta and the Maltese: A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration*, (Georgian House, Melbourne, 1954, p.246), and refers to several newspaper articles which appeared between 1855 to 1868, to illustrate his point.

technical education in the twentieth century, but these, while occasionally providing useful references, are descriptive in the main, and focus on developments since the 1900s without exploring the roots of those developments in the nineteenth century. There is no systematic attempt to place a chronological account within an interpretative framework, to identify the conflicting economic, political and cultural forces which gave rise to educational innovation, or to situate the latter within general trends in educational development in Europe and especially England.

I therefore found it necessary to peruse original documents and reports referred to in these dissertations, since these had been scanned without great sensitivity to the complexity of interaction between different elements of a social system. A case in point would be the fact that the researchers who had read through the section on education in the Reports of the Working of Government Departments had failed to read, or to refer to other sections in the reports — such as industry and emigration, for example.

1980; AZZOPARDI, F. The Trade Schools of Malta, B.A. (Education), University of Malta, 1979, and ATTARD, A., The Development of Technical Education in Malta, Diploma in Guidance and Counselling dissertation, University of Malta, 1980. The latter is valuable in that it contains information gathered from interviews with some of the early pioneers of technical education in the twentieth century, including the erstwhile Director of Education, A.F. Raimondo. Two other dissertations which had chapters dealing with technical education were CAMENZULI, P.G., Reform in Local Education, M.A. dissertation, University of Malta, 1971; and ZAMMIT MANGION, Josette, on Politics and Educational Change in Post-War Malta: 1945-1970, B.Educ. (Hons.) dissertation, University of Malta.

Finally, this history of technical and vocational education is characterized not only by an account that generally sees events ‘from the top’, but also by one which generally privileges males, because a history of technical education is predominantly a history of male education. As in many other areas of life, women fail to feature in his-story either because the home was considered to be their proper place, or because, given that fact, any ‘technical’ education revolved around providing the skills required solely for that narrow niche. Thus, needlework, sewing, cooking, and other household activities were taught to service the needs of a husband and family, rather than to meet the direct needs or requirements of an underdeveloped economy.
CHAPTER TWO

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NINETEENTH CENTURY MALTA

The Social and Economic Background

If one had to distill the complex, multifarious history of the Maltese islands in an attempt to identify the most fundamental elements constantly encountered and experienced by the inhabitants, then two of these would surely have to be the economic battle to eke out an existence from what is ultimately a barren rock, and the often related vicissitudes suffered under foreign rule. Exploitors and protector-conquered, bought, bartered and sold the islands with ease. Meanwhile, the Maltese were either being showered with unexpected, often uninvited attention when this archipelago suited the pecuniary or political interests of the warlords of the time, or were neglected and scorned when it did not.

This narrative weaves only one thread in that chequered history, taking as its departure point the configuration of dreams and expectations which some Maltese had spun for themselves after the long drawn-out twilight of the rule of the Order of St John and the shorter, abrupt take-over of the French had come to an end. When, with the ousting of the Napoleonic troops, the English were invited to become Malta's new protectors, the politically active sections of the local population had two key aspirations - the gaining of security and of a degree of autonomy. They soon found out that these aspirations were difficult to reconcile, for the desire for autonomy had to somehow co-exist with the need for protection, both military and economic. After an initial hesitation about the value of adding Malta to its imperial showcase, Britain soon realized that there were attractive trading and political benefits to be won in return for sheltering the islands.

Indeed, Malta's relationship with the British - from the beginning of the nineteenth century right up to the 1960s - is characterized by the unhappy resolution of the tension between Britain's vested interests and Malta's political aspirations. The various constitutions drawn up from 1812 onwards attempted to regulate the autonomy/dependence dichotomy, occasionally awarding the Maltese formal mechanisms by which they could influence the Governor and commander-in-chief of the islands - as in the 1849, 1887 and 1921 constitutions. However the British always held the prerogative of withdrawing or severely curtailing these rights when this suited their political interests - as in fact happened in 1903 and 1930, for instance. In all cases, and right up to the Blood constitution of 1961, the British maintained a tight control over 'reserved matters' which included defence and at times finances, while the Maltese - or more precisely, status groups from among the local inhabitants - had autonomy over the internal affairs of the islands, although even this autonomy was at times restrained.1

1 This synthesis depends on a reading of a number of sources the most important of which are: FREndo, H., Party Politics in a Fortress Colony, (Midsea Books Ltd., Malta 1979), BLOUET, B., The Story of Malta, (Progress Press, Malta 1959, 4th ed), LEE, B., Malta 1813-1914: A Study in Constitutional and Strategic Development, (Progress Press, Valletta Malta 1972), and
Underlying these political fortunes and misfortunes lay an underdeveloped economy, which, at the outset of the nineteenth century, already exhibited the key characteristics which were to bring the islands wealth, but more frequently poverty and misery, during the next one hundred and fifty years. The main sources of income for the Maltese were trade and commerce with Europe, North Africa and the Levant for the commercial classes, while the labouring people were engaged either in agriculture, or in cotton growing, spinning and weaving. The latter industry was to peter out under the British, partly due to their free trade policies, and partly due to the availability of cheaper cotton from Egypt.

The fact that local entrepreneurs were not keen to develop mechanized systems of production also meant that much of the machinery available in the cotton industry was outdated, dependent on the cheap labour provided by women and children. The sunrise industry under the British was concentrated around the harbour region. Here, depending on the defense and trading interests of the British and the aggressive or pacific foreign policies pursued by European powers in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, Maltese workers and merchants experienced brief booms (1810s, 1850s, 1870s) and more long-lasting slumps (1820s, 1840s, 1860s). New employment opportunities were available for the Maltese in the building and repairing of ships, as well as in the related industries and services of bunkering, trade and finance. Increasingly, the traditional employment in agriculture and textiles was abandoned as more stable and secure employment could be found in and around the naval dockyard where 'long term jobs were available and a whole range of new skills and crafts were developed by a workforce increasingly competent to undertake complex repair works on the largest naval vessels'.

Many of these new skills were learnt at the workplace, and indeed one can understand the surprise expressed by various commissioners, reporting on the state of the islands, at the fact that no industrial schools had been developed despite the importance of maritime activities in Malta. During the nineteenth century, it was the skilled labouring class which generally managed to eke out a relatively modest standard of living. In the early years of the British occupations of the islands, skilled craftsmen who had previously worked in the naval workshops of the Order were much in demand. Shipwrights, caulkers, coopers, painters, sailmakers, smiths, ropemakers, masons, labourers and clerks were the first to benefit directly from the British connection.

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4 BLOUET, B., op.cit., p.165.


In subsequent years, drops in real wages affected the unskilled; skilled workers employed with the naval yards, however, maintained their income which Clare\(^7\) computes as being twice and more than that of a semi-skilled worker for the period between 1822 and 1840, and between six to eight times more than the income of a farm and town labourer. There were, therefore, ample financial incentives for children and youths to invest in some form of technical education or apprenticeship. This kind of training was not generally available, however, and indeed there seems to have been a general complaint in the early 1800s that far too many young, self-styled artisans could not perform skilled work because they set themselves up too soon with almost no training.\(^8\)

In this, as in other areas of investment, the Maltese seemed to have "an unhealthy disregard for the benefits of a secure economic base".\(^9\) There was no attempt to develop an industrial sector in Malta. Those who had capital preferred to invest in commerce and in safe deposits in overseas banks rather than in factory development. These typically Mediterranean merchant capitalists retained a parasitic role, incapable of creating the conditions for industrialization.\(^10\) They financed trade, aspired as bankers...invested in property and foreign debentures, and engaged in commerce; but they lacked the drive to diversify their economy. Perhaps the risk element was too high in the circumstances, higher than can be possibly imagined at this stage of research.\(^11\)

\(^7\) CLARE, A.G., op.cit, p.134. Clare draws his conclusions from figures taken from various sources, including The Malta Blue Books.

\(^8\) PRICE, C.A., Malta and the Maltese..., op.cit., quoting BADGER, G., Description of Malta and Gozo, (Malta, 1838) and various newspaper reports between 1836-1843.

\(^9\) CLARE, A., op.cit., p.128.


\(^11\) CLARE, A., op.cit., p.144.
It is true that entrepreneurs had to deal with such disincentives as the lack of coal and iron, and the higher cost entailed in utilizing sea-borne raw materials. However, there were some compensating factors, including the attraction of cheap labour and the availability of British capital and technical know-how.

The lack of initiative on the part of the moneyed class in Malta was often remarked upon in the nineteenth century and, depending on the person's pro- or anti-British stance, different reasons were given to explain this. Many merely argued that it was a typical character trait of the Maltese. Others disagreed with this 'genetic' explanation. In his nineteenth century account on Malta and its industries, Zammit blames the Maltese for the lack of 'the spirit of British industry' which manifested itself in the splendid spectacle of its own greatness in the arts, of its high commercial intelligence, and the courageous daring of its gigantic enterprises.'

Rather than some inborn weakness in the race, Zammit condemns the moneyed class for organizing a 'cleverly concealed monopoly' which blocked the attempts of others taking initiatives, so that 'the financial position of a few is a barrier to the industrial success of the many.' He also blames the professional, cultured class for having nothing but contempt for industrial labour and for failing to promote the education and practical training of the artisan class. 'industry', Zammit argued, 'does not enjoy the sympathy of thinking men, and exists only by sheer force of labour', and hence could never take off.14

On the other hand, the anti-British were quite correct to point out that the colonial government had strangled, not helped, the attempt of the Maltese to build a viable and independent economy. As the chief propagandist of the Partito Nazionale was to argue, the British had dealt a heavy blow to local commerce by their imposition of customs duties and their control of harbour activities. They had also never really encouraged local industry. On the contrary, they had plotted to buy out local private capital investment, even when the project itself was worthless or unprofitable. Intelligent, able people had thus to look for jobs with the government, as this represented their only means of livelihood.12

Education

Formal educational provision, be it 'technical' or 'general', was, at the turn of the nineteenth century and for a long time to come, either, as in the former case, practically non-existent or, as in the latter, directed at a privileged few. A University college had been founded under the auspices of the Knights of St John in 1592 and was run by the Jesuits. But during the Order's rule over the Maltese islands between 1530 and 1789, precious little seems to have been done regarding the general education of the masses. The

13 ibid., p.16.
14 ibid., p.15.
Jesuits - who had fallen in disrepute following the vigorous onslaught of the Encyclopedists and other French enlightenment thinkers, and whose schools in France had been closed down in 1764 - were likewise expelled from Malta by Grand Master Pinto in 1768. When Napoleon took over Malta thirty years later, he closed down the University - which had lingered on untouched by the reforms on the continent - and, in the spirit of mass popular education that began sweeping Europe between 1790 and 1830, proposed the setting up of a Central School and fifteen elementary schools.\(^\text{16}\)

Napoleon was in fact bent on technifying education, and he planned to substitute the University by founding an École Générale with specialization in Mathematics, Stereometry, Mechanics, Physics, Navigation, Chemistry, Oriental Languages and Geography. One can only speculate about the contribution such an education would have made to the economic development of the islands. As it is, those plans were shelved. Under the British the old University, itself utilitarian and vocational since it enabled those who followed it to practice a profession, was to persist in its focus on a classical education for decades to come.

Informal technical training had existed in Malta - in the form of guilds with a complex system of apprenticeship and initiation - ever since the fourteenth century\(^\text{17}\) right up to

1854.\(^\text{18}\) These guilds had flourished under the rule of the Order which, given its interests in perpetuating a cultural standing, patronized craft work in the building trades, in cabinet and furniture making, in silver work, and so on. Moreover, because of its privateering interests, the Order required a constant supply of skilled shipbuilders and repairers.\(^\text{19}\) Grand Master Pinto had, in fact, set up a School of Navigation.

With the expulsion of the French from Malta in 1800 and the commencement of British influence, all the plans which the French had entertained of extending a basic education to the Maltese came to an end. Malta’s British civil administrator, Sir Alexander Sail, reopened the University in 1800, but the little formal education provided left much to be desired.

British interests in developing a Mediterranean fleet were well served by the maritime tradition that had been established in Malta by the Order of the Knights of St John.\(^\text{20}\) The British lost no time in exploiting the opportunities offered by Malta’s natural harbours, and by 1807 the Naval Commissioner issued a call for apprentices, who were to follow a seven-year course.\(^\text{21}\) This was the forerunner of the Dockyard School which, as will be seen,

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\(^{17}\) ELLUL GALEA, K., Fratellanza u Kiskiet tat-Tarżiż (II-Najja, Malta 1981), p.34. Ellul Galea says that the earliest guild was set up at Rabat in 1345, under the patronage of St Joseph.

\(^{18}\) Reports of the Workings of Government Departments (henceforth RWGD), 1930-1, Y7.


\(^{20}\) ELLUL GALEA, K., L-Istorja tat-Tarżiż, (Stampiriija II-Najja, Malta 1975).

\(^{21}\) DEGIORGIUS, D., L-Ideal, Malta, November 1970, No.58, p.20, as
was one of the main promoters of technical education in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Late in 1819, a Normal School Society had been established and a primary school opened in Valletta. By 1829, this school was catering for 220 boys and 200 girls, and other schools were opened in various villages in Malta and Gozo. These schools were accessible to all, but especially to lower classes, and were funded by private donations and a liberal allowance on the part of the government.\textsuperscript{22} A proposal to open a second University in Gozo in 1818, when England entertained hopes of establishing Malta as an important seat of learning in the Mediterranean, was opposed by the Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Sir Thomas Maitland, who felt that education was so mismanaged on the islands that he preferred parents to send their children for schooling in England, at the government's expense, rather than extend educational provision in the crown colony.\textsuperscript{23}

On the continent, in Britain and in northern America, the rise of industrialism at the turn of the nineteenth century resulted in demographic conglomeration in cities. Consequently, the social pressures to organize surveillance, discipline and punishment were intensified. This led to the systematic development of institutions such as hospitals, prisons and schools.\textsuperscript{24} With regards to the latter, comparative studies in education have revealed that the demand for education rose from various conflicting quarters, each asserting its own agendas, and each wanting to mould education and schooling into forms which best met its needs.

Williams,\textsuperscript{25} for instance, has argued that the modern school curriculum is the result of an ongoing series of compromises between three groups, the 'industrial trainers', the 'old humanists', and the 'public educators'. The first group was especially active in the second half of the nineteenth century when industrialists were earnestly seeking to mechanize the factory system. These 'industrial trainers' wanted schools to respond to the newly developed industrial needs, and promoted the factory model for schools so that children would be socialized for the working careers they were most likely to follow. This model advocated the need for time discipline, the ability to work as part of a large group of people assembled under one roof, and so on. The 'old humanists' wanted to maintain a classical type of education that had traditionally been imparted in elite schools; while the 'public educators' were keen to respond to liberal notions of 'nationhood' and 'citizenship' by extending education to all.

\textsuperscript{22} The Sixth Report of the Normal School Society of Valletta, (Government Press, Malta 1839), pp. 9, 10.

\textsuperscript{23} Maitland to Bunbury, 9th April 1815, in LAFAER, op.cit, pp.108-9. Sceptics about the likelihood that countries in the Mediterranean would send their children to a University in Malta or Gozo was to be expressed again by Austin and Lewis, in their Reports of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Affairs of Malta, (HMSO, 1838), p.40.

\textsuperscript{24} FOUCAULT, M., Disciplines and Punish, (Pantheon, New York 1977).

Given that Malta's economic, cultural and political situation was different, we do not find the same kinds of struggles taking place locally, although parallels do exist. For one thing, aspects of these different agendas for education necessarily emerge in the reports of British commissioners who came, at the behest of the colonial government, to report on a variety of the Islands' affairs. Furthermore, many Maltese political and cultural figures, having received their education in Britain, were coming back to the Islands with ideas and experiences which matched those of the British commissioners. However, the fact that Malta did not as yet have an industrial base or an enterprising group of industrialists meant that there was little pressure to develop industrial training within schools, or to develop mass education for that matter.

This partly explains why educational provision in Malta lagged behind when compared to developments in other countries during the nineteenth century. Indeed, education seemed to fare badly not only when compared with that in Britain, where compulsory education was introduced in 1876 but also with that of other colonies. Indeed it was not until 1946 that compulsory attendance was truly enforced in Malta.

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26 Canon P.P. Pullicino and Sigismondo Savona, the third and fourth Directors of the Maltese education department, had received part of their education in Dublin and at the normal school of the Royal Military Asylum in Chelsea respectively.

27 BLOUET, op.cit., pp.176-7, quotes Sir Frederick Ponsonby, Malta's governor in 1832, who thought that Malta's educational facilities were disgraceful when compared with what was on offer in the West Indies.

High rates of illiteracy effectively disqualified many of the common people from participation in the political affairs of the country. In addition, the crown colony administration in nineteenth century Malta allowed the development of small but powerful local power groups - consisting mainly of professionals, especially lawyers and ecclesiastics - who vociferously sought to protect and advance their own interests. When reading nineteenth century official documents, one gets the impression that Malta was embroiled in mass political struggles, but as Blouet points out, of a population of 200,000 in the early 1800s, only about 10,000 persons could vote. The relatively small politically active groups 'often claimed to speak for national interests, but their representations frequently did not take account of the needs of other interest groups'.

At the turn of the century there emerged in Malta interest groups that were differently located in the local power structure, and hence their discourse regarding educational provision necessarily reflected their needs. The colonial government's interests in education were inextricably linked to the necessity of domesticating potentially resistant and rebellious subjects. The 1836 Commissioners, for instance, held that the request for 'the extension of
elementary education to all classes of the inhabitants of Malta, and a reform in the existing institutions for the education of the higher and middle classes' was justified since 'the diffusion of sound knowledge amongst the people of Malta would tend to improve their condition, and to strengthen their attachment to the British crown... [and that] an improvement in the education of the higher and middle classes would facilitate the admission of natives to employments in the civil government'.

Indeed, the fourth Director of Education, Sigismondo Savona, was to play on these same interests in order to make a claim for the necessity of educating the people, arguing that nothing better than 'rational education' would create a more governable people, free from criminal activity, and intent and equipped with the right habits of mind to serve God, neighbour and country. The British also developed, with the help of Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, an educational programme for the masses in the colonies. Thus, in 1847 there appeared the British Government's first officially-adopted colonial education policy, which suggested that 'day schools of industry' should become part of the system of education for 'the Colored Races of the Empire'. Education was to prepare individuals to be economically productive in the socio-economic context in which they lived.

The local and traditional power blocs however, had other interests to pursue, and these, they held, would not necessarily be best served by the extension of elementary education to all. The Catholic Church, for instance, tended to equate British interference in education with a presumed interest in proselytism. The fact that some British Protestants had opened missionary schools in Malta for that establishment of teacher training courses and the replacement of monitors by pupil-teachers, for whom he introduced the 'payment by results' system as a financial incentive (cf. Lawson, J. & Silver, H., A Social History of Education in England, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London 1973, pp.267 and passim). He had his own private teacher training college at Battersea, which was attended by Ferdinando Inglott (1820-1893), whom Frendo, H., (op.cit., p.17) describes as an exponent of the Maltese pro-British mentality, and who in 1880, as the longest-serving head of a government department and an official member of Council of Government, favoured the vocationalization of school curricula, from the primary to the tertiary level.

purpose did much to increase the Catholic Church's suspicion.\footnote{Despatch from governor Ponsonby to Lord Stanley, the Secretary of State, dated 23/10/1833, and quoted in LAFERLA, A.V., op.cit., pp.152-3.} Meanwhile the pro-British press complained that clerical influence on the islands was so extensive that any attempt to introduce systematic liberal instruction was bound to fail, opposed as this was by the hierarchy and by the people who seemed 'content with mental restriction'.\footnote{\textit{The Malta Observer}, 28/1/1867.}

Furthermore, the professional classes, and lawyers especially so, were not particularly keen to see the British transform the contours of the local cultural scene by insisting that English, rather than Italian, be the medium of instruction in elementary schools. This was a threat not only to the cultural capital the professional classes had enjoyed for centuries prior to the arrival of the British, but also to the Maltese people in general whose budding sense of national identity was inextricably linked with the language question.\footnote{FRENGO, H., op.cit., Chapter II and passim. The language question had its roots in the 1830s, and was raised by the 1836 Commissioners, and by SCHLIEFZ, C.F., \textit{Views on the Improvement of the Maltese Language and its Use for the Purpose of Education and Literature}, (Malta 1838).}

The 1836-1838 Commission: Early Discourse on Technical Education

By 1836, the educational situation had not improved much since Maitland had expressed his despair eighteen

\footnote{Reports of the Commissioners..., op.cit., p.42. The Master of the Melita House Academy, J. Lawson, seemed to agree with the commissioners' verdict. He complained that little attention was paid to the cultivation of reason in Malta, where the learning by rote system and the antiquated parochial method of teaching by Monitors prevailed in the few schools that existed (cf. LAWSON, J., \textit{Remarks on Education and the Method of Teaching}, [Tizo & Co., Valletta, 1838], pp.8, 9).}

years earlier. The 1836-38 commissioners found only three government-supported schools in existence. The education they found there and elsewhere was 'small in quantity and bad in quality',\footnote{Reports of the Commissioners..., op.cit., p.42.} and they recommended that government establish and support elementary schools in Malta and Gozo. Although the commissioners believed in individualism, prevalent among the hegemony of ideas at the time, and were, in principle, against state intervention and subsidy in civil affairs, they nevertheless thought that

At present, the working people are so poor, and so little able to imagine the manifold advantages of knowledge, that the exaction [of payments] would probably prevent them from sending their children to the schools.\footnote{\textit{The Malta Observer}, 28/1/1867.}

The Commissioners' individualistic ethic is perceived in another criticism they made of the general state of affairs on the island, where destitution and poverty seemed to be the lot of many of the inhabitants. They took the educated Maltese class to task for not having enough spirit of initiative to develop industrial enterprises which would ensure the generation of sufficient wealth. Rather than courses in classical studies - which in real terms brought no prosperity to the islands but only helped to inflate the numbers of the much too numerous, and generally underemployed young professionals (priests, lawyers,
doctors and civil servants) - there should be an education for ‘more homely, though not less useful or honourable callings. It would tend [...] to fit [students] for exercising such callings with skill and success; and, moreover, it would tend generally to invigorate their understandings and improve their moral dispositions’. The commissioners moreover attempted to encourage the same sense of responsibility at University, arguing that ‘the fitting of youth for practical, rather than a speculative life’ was the principal aim of the reform they were proposing.40

The commissioners were against the continued teaching of mental and ethical philosophy which, according to them, was ‘far too abstruse and difficult for the apprehension of youths’, and ‘had too little of the practical character which ought to be given to the studies of the University’. They were very keen, on the other hand, to recommend the introduction of political economy, for in this way,

the elementary truths of the science (which, happily, are the most important) would gradually diffuse themselves amongst the mass of the population, gradually dispelling the prejudices which blind them to the causes of their poverty, and divert their attention from the only remedies for the evil.41

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39 Ibid., p.39.
40 Ibid., p.50.
41 Ibid., pp.47-8. The Chair of political economy was in fact established soon after. However it was abolished in 1846. II Fortafaglio Maltese, (17/9/1846) complained that this put the material progress of the people in jeopardy. The chair remained empty for a number of years. Indeed twenty-two years later The Malta Observer, (16/4/1868) was still insisting that due attention be given to a social science of ‘the very highest importance’.
42 Reports of the Commissioners..., op.cit., p.43.
43 LAWSON, J. & SILVER, H., A Social History of Education in England, op.cit. The belief in ‘useful knowledge’ was shared by the Normal School Society of Malta, which in 1829 undertook to ‘infuse throughout these islands that sphere of useful knowledge which has been proved, not only in the Mother Country, but in every part of the world, to have been attended with the utmost surprising results, and the most beneficial effects’ (Sixth Report..., op.cit., pp.10-11).
44 WILLIAMS, R., op.cit.
professions, and were thus, strictly speaking, vocational schools.

It was only in the 1920s that, in England, the vocabulary of the debate began foreshadowing the antithesis that was later to develop between a liberal education 'for its own sake' on the one hand, and a technical/vocational/scientific 'training' on the other. There had been earlier intimations of this dichotomy in the writings of M. Arnold, J.H. Newman, J.S. Mill, and T.H. Huxley, but there is no reason to believe that there was popular support for the liberal-vocational antithesis. 45

The commissioners' early call for 'industrial education' was to remain unheeded. Most provisions for technical education on the island during the 1830s, and for many years after that, had to do with what the Commissioners referred to as the improvement of 'moral dispositions' and were generally removed from a concern with industrial development. This was true also in countries other than Malta. Indeed early technical and vocational forms of education were linked to projects of charity with orphans and destitute and 'delinquent' children. Here schooling went hand in hand with the presumed corrective and reformatory value of industriousness, since 'idle hands make devil's work'. 46 As Canon Pullicino - the third Director of Education - noted after visiting correctional institutions in Scotland, Belgium and France in the summer of 1862, any 'reform machine' had to have a not too demanding literary instruction, a lot of practical training in arts and crafts and a thorough foundation in religious education. While religion would tame the spirit, work would tame the body. 47

Thus, there appears to have been a House of Industry established by the second governor of Malta, The Marquis of Hastings, in 1824. This governor's charity was intended for the 'maintenance and instruction' of girls between the ages of ten and nineteen, who were either orphans or without fathers. By November 1836 there were 243 girls receiving an instruction in sewing and embroidery. 48 But, as Grungo, a critic, pointed out to the newly-appointed governor of the islands, Sir Patrick Stuart, this 'so called' House of Industry taught skills of 'little moment'. 49 What was needed, Grungo argued, was a Government which recognized the importance of Maltese craftsmen and gave them the status

45 Pullicino, P.P., Le Case di Correzione nella Scozia, nel Belgio e nella Francia, (Albion Press, Malta 1865) p.55. Unless otherwise indicated all translations from Italian texts are the author's own.

46 Reports of the Commissioners..., op.cit., Section 10, p.50, para.4; p.52, para.8. 'Industrial schools' of this sort, together with 'workhouse schools' and 'ragged schools' emerged in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and represented an attempt to educate the children coming from the lowest classes of society (see Lawson and Silver, op.cit., pp.283-295).

47 Grungo, F., Del Bisogni del Popolo Maltese, (Malta, 1843, pp.11, 15). While this was undoubtedly true with reference to the industrial development of the island, it seems that such instruction did improve the life-chances of the orphaned and destitute girls. The Malta Observer of 29/10/1868 reports that the House of Industry was in fact closed down by Governor O’Ferrall in 1851 because its protection gave inmates unfair advantage over the poor industrial labourers who had families to support.
which the Romans and Greeks had accorded them in days gone by.

Schooling, argued Grungo, ought to respond to the manufacturing needs of the country, and rural schools should teach agricultural skills and general artisanship. There were those who shared Grungo’s opinion: a certain Giuseppe Naudi, for instance, planned to open schools for children between the ages of three and seven, where boys would be taught the principles of mechanics besides arithmetic, geography and history, while girls would be taught needlework, embroidery, and lace-making. But, as will be seen further on, it was the association between industrial or technical education and its presumed benefits for character training which actually founded currency.

The 1850s: Canon P.P. Pullicino

In the meantime, however, following the Commissioners’ reports and the personal interest of the wife of one of the commissioners, Sarah Austin,52 government aid for education increased. By 1842, nineteen elementary schools had opened their doors to 1296 students. There was also a seminary at Mdina, a lyceum attached to the University in Valletta, and 135 private schools catering for 2218 fee-paying students.53 After a rather brief and uninspiring leadership by the first two Directors of Education - Canon F. Panzavecchia (1844-1849) and and Barbaro di San Giorgio (1849-1850), it fell to Canon P. Pullicino to hold the office for three decades and to lead government primary schools through their slow growth as institutions for the masses. Pullicino was a well-travelled and educated cleric, who, as Principal Inspector and Director of the Primary Schools, as well as Professor of Methodology at the University of Malta, was to have an overwhelming influence on the structuring of educational provision on the islands, as well as on the educational principles and vision underlying those structures. Returning from Dublin where he had been sent to study the system of national education by Governor O’Ferrall in 1849, Pullicino set about reforming elementary school instruction, introducing an industrial bias in the new centres he opened, as well as in the secondary schools, and, to a lesser extent at the University.

52 Ibid., pp. 11, 15. Dr Grungo identified five major needs, i.e. the development of Legislation, Education, Agriculture, Arts and Manufacture, and Commerce.


and their application to mechanics and decoration. He was aware of the coupling of manual, mainly agricultural, work along with literary instruction, in Irish schools since 1833, in Bavaria, and in Florence, where a trade school had been added to the ‘asili infantili’. Pullicino considered such developments to be normal and a natural result of ‘popular’ education.

For, he argued, while the traditional curriculum taught morals, industrial schooling gave a context for the application of what was learnt. Furthermore, Pullicino felt that the introduction of manual work in the classroom was sound pedagogical practice because it made class activities more enjoyable and useful, helped train the eye, the hand and the mind, developed art appreciation, inculcated the habits of patience, creativity and perseverance at work, and increased the motivation to learn because little could be more rewarding than seeing the results of one’s work.

Pullicino was not in favour of developing specialized technical or industrial schools which focused only on applied sciences and arts, but rather he preferred to graft some technical, mechanical and artistic work upon

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56 ibid., p.5.

57 ibid., p.6.
elementary school curricula 'so that the child could develop his physical faculties at the same time as the intellectual ones'.

This new graft should not 'disturb the teaching that normally goes on at school. It should occupy children in work, as a form of recreation, between one lesson and another'.

It should be as related as possible to the arts and crafts practised in the village in which the school is to be found. This fact would encourage parents to send their children to school since they would see that there was useful learning taking place.

Thus, Cospicua elementary school developed a maritime bias to enable the boys to learn the arts of navigation and ship construction.

In most of the other schools, classes in printing and woodwork were held after school hours, but these were very poorly attended, even if the standard of the product was generally good.

Manual work in both elementary and secondary schools was gender-typed with girls receiving instruction in needlework, since 'home economics, without any doubt, was the exclusive responsibility of the woman'.

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58 ibid., p.7.
59 ibid., p.9.
60 ibid., p.19.
61 PULLICINO, P.P., Rapporto della Educazione Primaria nelle Isole di Malta e Gozo (Malta, 1850).
62 KEENAN, P.J., op.cit., p.43.

Pullicino encouraged these new technical classes by organizing regular annual exhibitions to show off models and designs done by boys and girls, and he was enthusiastic about the level of craftsmanship achieved.

He particularly praised that work which exercised the mind as well as the hand, noted that clay modelling was useful for a variety of occupations, and that the architectural models done in schools would help give a much needed boost to professionalism in the construction of homes in Malta.

He reserved particular praise for students who produced teaching aids - such as maps in relief - in the time dedicated to manual work.

The introduction of manual work in the elementary schools was received positively by some and negatively by others. Some accused Pullicino of giving too much attention to the mind and therefore welcomed this initiative, while others felt that this practical work was detrimental to the development of other studies.

Pullicino in fact admitted that it had always proved difficult to couple artistic trade education with literary instruction in popular education in a number of countries, especially because of the fear that a

64 PULLICINO, P.P., Prima Esibizione Generale delle Scuole di Primaria Educazione di Malta e Gozo: 1855, (Malta, 1855); Seconda Esibizione... di Malta e Gozo: 1856, (Malta, 1857); Terza Esibizione... di Malta e Gozo: 1859, (Malta, 1959).
68 ibid., pp.6-7. Pullicino here had just returned from a three months' tour of European schools, among which were the
focus on a literary form of instruction might distract a craftsman’s son from his father’s line of work. But while he felt that a solution had not yet been found in Maltese elementary schools, one could not deny that they were close to this for ‘various branches of artistic instruction, useful and pleasant, are today practised in our schools by children during some hours of the day, without disturbing literary instruction in any way’.69

Pullicino set out to counter-balance the bias in favour of the classical studies being taught in the two secondary schools of Malta and Gozo, in the Lyceum and the University. When inaugurating a school for secondary instruction at Rabat, Gozo,70 Pullicino practically quoted word for word Austin and Lewis’s advice about the need for more young people to dedicate themselves to the study of subjects of ‘practical utility’. Pullicino, in fact, argued against the pretensions of those many youths whose aim was to take up a profession, and said that while the secondary school did in fact intend to prepare these students for University, its main concern was to consolidate the education received at the elementary level so that

students would be better prepared to contribute to the road of progress in agriculture, industry and commerce.71

Reading through Pullicino’s speech, one becomes aware that the linguistic distinction between ‘education’ and ‘instruction’ – so rigidly interpreted in the twentieth century – was still rather fluid.72 Elementary Instruction was to civilize and give moral backbone to the common labourers, who would earn a living in an honest manner. The ‘scuola primaria d’insegnamento superiore’, or the secondary school, would prepare the leaders of the labouring classes.

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technical schools of Genoa, Turin, Milan, and a polytechnic in Zurich. He reported favourably upon these schools when he met teachers in Malta (cf. Pubblica Educazione nell’Italia, nella Baviera, e nella Svizzera, Malta, 1856).


70 PULLICINO, P.P., Discorso dell’Abate P. Pullicino in occasione della inaugurazione delle nuove classi in Secondaria Instruzione nel Rabat del Gozo, 16 settembre 1851, (Malta 1851).

71 ibid., pp.12-17. These efforts were not very successful, it seems. Commenting on the secondary school at Rabat two years later, Pullicino reports to Governor Sir William Reid that ‘The old system of making pupils study almost nothing but dead languages is very deeply rooted in Gozo’ (PULLICINO, P.P., Report on the School of Secondary Instruction of Gozo, Malta, 1855, p.1).

72 One clear example of this is the different semantic fields covered by the terms ‘education’ and ‘instruction’ in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the meanings we attribute to them nowadays. In the past, ‘education’ referred to the formation of character and conscience, while ‘instruction’ referred to the transmission of knowledge and information. This distinction is drawn in a number of texts, such as when Casolani notes that if we only instruct but do not educate, we would be producing ‘not good members of society... but intelligent devils’ (CASOLANI, C., Two Letters Suggested by the Present Educational Crisis, Translated from the Corriere Mercantile Maltese and reprinted by Burns & Oats, London, 1872), p.7. Similarly, S. Frendo de Mannarino notes that primary schooling ‘ought to be more aimed at giving education rather than instruction’ (La Scuola Primaria, Malta, 1898, p.8). Today, ‘education’ is a term which refers to the development of autonomy of the mind, while ‘instruction’ carries with it connotations of skills training which is of a ‘lower order’, mechanical kind.
who would, according to their different abilities and callings, manage workers for the greater good of the country. All the curricular subjects, while of a general nature, would go towards the building of a foundation for the development of the necessary skills. Thus, for instance, mathematical knowledge could be applied to numerous projects of practical utility, such as new methods of weaving textiles, as well as to other industries. All this would lead to the multiplication of wealth on earth. This development of intellectual abilities needed to be guided by a sense of moral uprightness, so that, with the help of parents and schools, 'the general order of things' would be upheld.

We find the same overt emphasis on technification in Pullicino's policy with regards to the Lyceum and the University. Classes in commerce, design, navigation, and applied mathematics were therefore started at the Lyceum. These courses were however criticized by one section of the press as being too theoretical. The crux of the problem, in actual fact, lay in the lack of government support. This meant that hardly any models, tools or instruments were available to students and these were being put off learning due to the pedantic style in which knowledge was communicated.\(^{73}\) Pullicino seemed determined, however, to pursue this policy arguing, in his address at the start of a new academic year at the Valletta University and Lyceum, that while the thirteenth century had focused on speculative philosophy, and the sixteenth on critical philosophy, the emphasis in the nineteenth century would be on industry. This was why French universities had added schools of arts and crafts to their establishments, and why American ones had invested, to a very large degree, in applied sciences.\(^{74}\)

It is significant, however, that Pullicino ended his speech by praising Cardinal Newman's liberal idea of a University. While much of what has been said so far seems to give credence to the popular belief that Pullicino introduced technical education in Malta,\(^{75}\) it would be wrong to portray him as a promoter of the 'new' scientific spirit - of which Governor Reid was a key proponent and which was beginning to blaze on the continent and in England - and as an exemplar of the cultural shift from a preoccupation with classical education to one which was more in tune with the quest for 'useful knowledge'. Indeed, Pullicino is perhaps best understood when viewed as a person caught between respecting and believing in the old classicism - which, as a cleric, he had been brought up in - and responding, half-heartedly and cautiously, to the different mentality which the British, with their practical commitment to material progress, represented.

It was Sigismondo Savona, Pullicino's successor, who would totally believe in the British dream of modern progress, and the utility of a specific kind of education

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\(^{73}\) cf. L'Avenir, 16/3/1850, p.122; 23/3/1850, p.132. This newspaper, an organ of the Associazione Patriottica Maltese, was highly critical of Pullicino, considering his reforms as being worse than useless. It also ran a series of articles which criticized the instruction given at the Lyceum (23/2/1850; 2/3/1850; 16/3/1850; 23/3/1850) and at the University (5/4/1850), where it considered that not enough was being done to apply science to the needs of Malta's industries and agriculture.

\(^{74}\) PULLICINO, P.P., Inaugurazione degli Stadi Accademici dell'Università e del Liceo di Valletta, Anno 1852-3, (Malta, 1852).

\(^{75}\) cf. Inscription underneath his portrait at the Rabat Girls' Secondary, a school which carries his name.
within that particular project. As yet however, despite the fact that Pullicino seems to have recognized the practical, moral and pedagogic benefits of having manual work in schools, he remained half-convinced of the educational value of the practical bias he was trying so hard to introduce in response to the recommendations of the 1836 commission. The good quality of the work produced by students and shown at the various annual exhibitions made him wonder whether enough attention was being given to developing the faculties of the mind.  

Pullicino in fact ultimately ends up reproducing rather than reconciling the tension between the mental and the manual.  

He thus accepts the hierarchical order of merit, considering the Artist (executor of liberal arts) as most noble, followed by the Artisan and finally the craftsman ('mestiere'). The first produces things 'predominantly with the mind', the latter 'predominantly with the hand' (cf. PULLICINO, P.P., Dell'Influenza..., op.cit., pp.4-5).

PULLICINO, P.P., Dell'Influenza..., op.cit., p.35.

PULLICINO, P.P., Prima Esebizione..., op.cit., p.15.

PULLICINO, P.P., Importanza dello Studio delle Lettere, Speech at the inauguration of a new edifice for primary and secondary instruction in Rabat, Gozo (Malta, 1850), p.15.

In actual fact, few among the cultural leaders in Malta were then ready to adopt the 'spirit of progress'. England, on the contrary, had seen, since the mid-1820s, the development of popular investment in informal technical education through the setting up of Mechanics' Institutes and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. These, together with the movement for manual education - which was pioneered by Froebel on the continent and which gained popularity in England during the last decades of the nineteenth century - were examples of a vigorous working- and middle-class response to new economic developments, and had as a goal the teaching of the scientific principles underlying trades. British efforts to inculcate a scientific culture in Malta were not particularly successful in attracting interest or a following.

PULLICINO, P.P., Dell'Influenza..., op.cit., pp.4-5.

ibid., p.16. A cursory look at the pattern of educational expenditure as reported in the Blue Books shows that in fact, the commitment to an industrial bias in the curriculum did not amount to much in real terms during Pullicino's directorship. For an elementary school population of 5367 in 1858, a little over £49 were spent on tools (in comparison to double the sum on books and over £1910 on establishments). By 1870, with the population rising to 7985, the sum dedicated to tools had been reduced to almost £11.

The weekly illustrated magazine *The Mediterranean* was, for instance, launched on 5 November 1842. It published articles in English and Italian, addressed countries around the Mediterranean, and set out to diffuse 'useful knowledge' in the same way as the famous *Penny Magazine* had done in England for a decade under the auspices of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

A frequent contributor to *The Mediterranean* was Professor R. Wallace, who argued that 'knowledge is power', and that education and instruction would enable the 'inferior classes' to move beyond 'grovelling and vegetating with appetites prone to the earth, knowing but indistinctly the difference between good and evil, possessing but few notions of justice and honesty and never rising to the idea of being more than tools to the iron hand of the oppressor'. Wallace favoured the education of the poor, but he showed how in many countries, educators had seized the pruning knife and without the possibility of endangering by an unskilful operation the vital principle of the trunk, [had] for certain classes severed from the tree of knowledge the leaves of Cicero and Demosthenes and grafted in their stead enlarged branches of scientific and modernly linguistic education.

Wallace recommended a technical and scientific education which would lead to the enlightenment of the people: 'They want enlightenment – they want the knowledge necessary to the efficient performance of their part on the social stage'.

But the magazine did not find much of a reception in Malta, and by the seventh issue the editor admitted that the number of subscribers scarcely met two thirds of the cost of the printing and lithography, and 'that at least a hundred more subscribers were needed in order to make the project a financially viable one. Seven issues later, on 4 February 1843, the editor launched the same complaint, although the will to educate and 'liberate mankind from the thraldom of ignorance and consequent crime' kept the editor and his team going for a while.  

Another unsuccessful British cultural implant was the Literary and Scientific Institute of Malta. In his Presidential address, Captain Graves, R.N. noted that there had not been much manifestation of zeal in the pursuit of science on the islands, and that while one of the principal goals for setting up the Institute was 'to benefit the natives of this Island', few of them ever came to the meetings.

One organization did grow roots in Malta however. This was the Malta Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, set up in 1852 to encourage the production of locally

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63 *The Mediterranean*, 12/11/1842, pp.7-8. The magazine did not, of course, measure up to Wallace's grandiloquent claims. It was in fact an early version of the *Reader's Digest*, featuring bits and pieces of often unconnected knowledge and information. For instance, issue no.4, 26/11/1842, carried articles on African pygmies, the invention of the steam engine, the production of gas from grapes, and the style of Turkish caricatures.

64 *The Mediterranean*, 4/2/1843, p.56. Publication of the magazine seems to have stopped soon after. In any case, no other issues are catalogued in the Valletta Public Library or at the Malta University Meitensia Library.

65 The address was published by the British Press in 1853.
manufactured goods, and the application of the sciences to the needs of Maltese artisans. Through competitions and exhibitions which the Society organized, as well as through the craft courses it offered, this society became an important source of knowledge and encouragement for craftsmen, and gave an impetus to technical education.

Generally however, there was in Malta – during the 1840s and 50s, and indeed much of the nineteenth century – neither the industrial motivation, nor the cultural background to sustain any of these new educational movements. The only growing industry in Malta was the naval dockyard,\(^{86}\) and that was really the only place where the demand for technical education was founded on actual need. As Bacchus\(^ {88}\) has argued, in his analysis of the economies of other colonies, investment in the new industries by the dominant power has tended to create a dual employment structure, one based on modern, skills-oriented production, the other on traditional activity. In Malta, the former sector was represented by the dockyard, the latter by agriculture and cotton. Calls for technical education were generally unsuccessful because people were not prepared to invest in a venture which as yet offered no lucrative incentives.

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87 The first dock was built by the Admiralty in 1850 (cf. CLARE, A.G., op.cit.).


Meanwhile, it was believed that industry would only take off when people having technical skills became available. This did not take into account the basic fact that people – especially those who, like the Maltese, had already experienced extreme fluctuations in the economy, and who had lived through one depression after another – generally prefer to take the first employment opportunity that came their way rather than invest in technical schooling which might lead nowhere. In addition to this, the traditional sector of the economy already afforded opportunities for craftsmen who learned their skills ‘from life’, as it were, and hence the incentives to invest in formal trade training were missing\(^ {89}\) unless, as in the case of the Dockyard, the opportunities were there, and the wages and status were sufficiently high as to make that investment attractive.

This explains why the Dockyard School was so popular since its inception in 1858 until it was closed down a hundred years later. The school offered elementary instruction to children of employees at the Dockyard and Naval Establishments, and apprenticeship training to youths between fourteen and seventeen years of age, first through evening courses, and later through advanced day courses. This School had its heyday in the late nineteenth century and first three decades of the twentieth century.\(^ {90}\)

As in many other countries where technical education was introduced at around this time and later, such an education really helped to promote class interests and to allay a

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89 Hence the frequent complaints, sustained up to the 1950s, that local craftsmen were so in name only.

90 ELLUL GALEA, K., L’istorja tat-Tarza, op.cit.
fear that the 'general order of things', as Pullicino referred to it, would be challenged. As an anonymous contributor to Filocamo noted, education ought to be related to the learner's station in life, for

Do we wish to make everybody change their trade through the education we offer, or do we wish that everybody develops a manly character so that they become better in the jobs they actually grew up in? We are sure than nobody doubts the answer to this question... One should not give them less than is necessary, but neither does one give more than is appropriate for their station in life.91

The Storks Commission of 1865

The period between 1855 and 1865 was marked by great economic fluctuation, so that 'in a matter of months the islands might be flung from one extreme to another, from the depths of poverty to the peak of prosperity'.92 The economy was reeling under the force of two blows: the drying up of the cotton industry, and major difficulties in commerce and trade with Sicily.93 Historically, appeals to vocationalize education have been generally linked to a country's poor economic performance.94

Reference has already been made to the various attempts at inculcating a scientific culture. Letters also appeared in the local press arguing that Malta’s economy could not possibly be placed on a solid foundation unless the Government invested in the improvement of the quality of artisan skill.95 It was argued that the diversification of the economy was not too difficult to achieve since there already existed a foundation for industries, with skilled men engaged in cabinet-making, stone-carving, jewellery-making, and in producing clothes and footwear suitable for the Mediterranean climate. All that was needed was an investment in technical education to extend these skills, and a strategy to market these industries abroad. Women too, it was held, ought to be induced into light manufacturing work such as lace-making, which could be taught throughout the district schools by competent teachers.96

91 Anon. n.d., Educazione, Istruzione Pubblica applicate a Malta. Extract from Filocamo: Giornale Medico-Scientifico e di Educazione, p.vi. This fear was common among mercantilists during the eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe (cf. ARIES, P., Centuries of Childhood, (Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK., 1973) pp 296-7.

92 PRICE, C., op.cit., p.105 and passim.

93 cf. II Portafoglio Maltese, 15/3/1863. When referring to these years, the editorial column notes that 'forse Malta non ha mai sofferto in peggiore' (p.3).

94 CARNOY, M. & LEVIN, H., Schooling and Work in the Democratic State, (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA., 1985) and it is therefore not surprising that in this decade we in fact find a distinct movement among a section of the Maltese population which campaigned for a comprehensive system of technical instruction.


96 The Malta Times, Naval and Military Gazette, 21/8/1855.
Lace schools were in fact opened by private entrepreneurs\(^97\) who received donations from the Church and various philanthropists.\(^98\) They must have achieved a good measure of success as there were calls for the setting up of similar 'institutes of industry' for boys.\(^99\) The same promoters of lace schools also organized a National Exhibition of Crafts, Manufacture and Agriculture in order to give a boost to local industry.\(^100\) Held under the auspices of the Malta Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce in February 1864, the exhibition was used to whip up a commitment towards Maltese industry.\(^102\) Sections of the press gave this event a lot of coverage. Some exploited the occasion to accuse the British of failing to invest in the industrial progress of Malta, choosing instead to make little of Maltese products.\(^103\)

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97 These were Carlo Maria Muscat and Walter Strickland (cf. Il Portafoglio Maltese, 7/3/1863). There were five such schools by June 1865.

98 Il Portafoglio Maltese, 10/1/1865.

99 Il Portafoglio Maltese, 14/1/1865; 9/5/1865.

100 Il Portafoglio Maltese, 15/3/1865.

101 Il Portafoglio Maltese, 2/5/1865.

102 Exhibitions of industry, the forerunners of the contemporary Expos, had become popular in the middle of the nineteenth century, and by 1865 had been organized in England, France, Germany and Turkey (cf. Il Portafoglio Maltese, 9/3/1865).

103 Il Portafoglio Maltese, 9/12/1865.

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Sensing the tension which had grown due to the bad performance of the economy, and which was finding expression in criticism levelled at the British for their lack of initiative in the field of industry and education, Governor Storks responded by setting up a commission to enquire into the state of public instruction.\(^104\) This commission, while noting the progress that had been made in the provision of education at the primary level,\(^105\) reported that investment in education by the Maltese government was 'much less in proportion to the population than is paid by any other country in Europe at all advanced in civilization'.\(^106\) Much to Pullicino's dismay,\(^107\) the


105 There were by then 71 primary schools, attended by nearly 6,000 children. About 9,000 children between 5 and 15 did not attend any schools, and there were still populous casals (villages) without schools. The Crown Advocate deplored this state of affairs, during one of his speeches in Parliament, and put the blame on ignorant parents who preferred to have their children earn one or two pence a week by gathering refuse, guarding a field, or looking after fowls or animals (The Malta Observer, 15/2/1866).

106 Malta Government Gazette, 8/7/1865, p.233.

107 An issue of the Malta Government Gazette (18/8/1865, No. 2233) published a lengthy comment on the report by the Director of Education, Canon P. Pullicino. The latter was furious that he had not been involved in the investigation. He complained that the report was neither fair nor accurate in its many criticisms. Governor Storks dismissed the report, but resolutions for educational reform in 1870 made constant reference to the suggestions of the 1865 Commission, and demanded to know why the Governor had seemed so anxious to
commission criticized the quality of education being offered, claimed that they saw little evidence of progress as they went around the islands testing students in rudimentary comprehension of Italian and English and competency in solving arithmetical problems.

The programmes of instruction drawn up by Pullicino were considered by the commissioners to be too ambitious and gave a distorted and inflated picture of what was in fact being achieved;\(^{108}\) many classrooms were so filthy that on one occasion the offensive smells forced the Commission to withdraw. As to technical instruction, the Storks commissioners noted that the Drawing School was attended by only one student. The same situation prevailed at Rabat, Gozo.\(^{109}\) The Lyceum was not in a much better state, with high rates of absenteeism, gratuitous promotion from one year to the next, and underpaid masters.

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\(^{108}\) In his Council speech on educational matters, S. Cachia Zammit asked why on earth were children obliged by Pullicino's curriculum to learn such unlikely terms as 'dicotyledonous' and 'monocotyledonous' (cf. Speeches delivered in Malta Council on Public Education, 1878).

\(^{109}\) In his reply to that report, Pullicino (Malta Government Gazette, ibid., p.272) protested that classes in Design had good attendance at Valletta and Floriana, and that the subject there, intended to create a better class of artisans, generally reached its aim.

Influenced, it seems, by suggestions sent to the commissioners on 20 May 1865\(^ {110}\) by Sigismondo Savona later to take Pullicino's place as Director of Education – the commission recommended that secondary education should also cater for those young people not intending to go into the learned and liberal professions, but who rather wished to qualify themselves for the civil service, the scholastic profession, engineering or commerce. The commission recommended that Greek should no longer be obligatory, and that greater importance be attached to the Schools (courses) of Design, Land-surveying and Navigation – 'schools which should afford many students a remunerative career in the exercise of a profession either in their native country or elsewhere'.

A second movement towards an education of a more practical utility was therefore launched by the Storks Report which, in actual fact, could be considered an unsuccessful attempt to restructure the Maltese economy in response to depression. The movement unearthed two important issues with regard to the school curriculum. The first was linked to the never-ending debate as to which language of instruction one should use. The pro-British argued for the vocational utility of English both for emigration purposes, and for enhancing the possibilities of employment with the British, in Malta or in other colonies.\(^ {111}\) The anti-British, on the

\(^{110}\) These recommendations are to be found appended to Savona's address, 4 March 1865, op.cit.

\(^{111}\) cf. SAVONA, S., On the Necessity... op.cit., pp.19-20. Cf. also Dr Torregiani's letter in The Malta Observer (13/2/1868) where he agrees with Dr Scirihtino's resolution in Council that Maltese should be the language of instruction in elementary schools since many students did not stay long enough to have the opportunity to learn either Italian or English. Being literate in
other hand, especially lawyer-politicians, were intent on keeping Italian entrenched in schools. The Italian language, as Frendo has shown, became the cultural signal and focus of resistance by the Maltese to the British, and was to remain so well into the twentieth century. Indeed, it would seem that the shift from Italian to English in schools had to travel, at least partly, the same ideological ground that needed to be crossed between what were gradually becoming opposing approaches to education: the liberal and the vocational.

The second issue had its roots in a more direct attempt to make education responsive to the economy by introducing vocational training in a more comprehensive manner. Formal technical instruction was just starting to make its appearance on the educational agenda in England. Indeed, The Malta Observer, which often reported on educational trends in England, reproduced a long article from The Times about the hue and cry for technical education that arose in England after the Paris Exhibition of 1867. This article reported arguments to the effect that technical education should be the responsibility of voluntary schools in the major centres of manufacturing industries, rather than the responsibility of the state at public expense.

It is important to point out that technical schooling had been established since the eighteenth century in many countries on the continent, with France and Germany leading the way, while Russia, the Netherlands, and Japan were closely following suit.

England was, however, generally trailing behind in these developments. Science and mathematics were not recognized as key curricular subjects before the 1850s and 1860s. It was really only after the 1867 Paris Exhibition and the realization that Britain compared badly with other countries when it came to industrial production and engineering achievements, that the importance of science and technical education was acknowledged. In an attempt to fill in this lacuna in education, a Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction and the Advancement of Science was set up between 1872 and 1875. A second Royal Commission, this time on Technical Instruction, was appointed in 1881.

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114 Lawson & Silver, op. cit., p.302. It is also important to note that Britain’s status as a leading and wealthy nation had grown before the rise of mass schooling, while in Germany, for instance, the secret behind the industrialization of the country lay in the highly developed technical education that had been promoted. The links between education and the economy are more apparent in the latter situation.

115 The Devonshire Report (1875) established that pupils would not be allowed to choose between literary and scientific culture before entering university (cf Morish, I., Education Since 1800, [Allen & Unwin Ltd., London 1970, p.94]).

The latter Commission set out to compare technical education provision in other countries with that of England, to consider the influence of this instruction upon manufacturing and other industries at home and abroad, and to make recommendations. The commission came to the conclusion that if England was to maintain its competitive edge in industry, it had to invest, like France, Belgium and Italy, in systematic technical instruction of adult artisans, and ensure that, as in Switzerland and Germany, all children would be provided with full-time elementary education. The curriculum would have to reflect a scientific culture, with more time allotted to the study of modern languages, mathematics, science and technical drawing.

The Malta Observer did not seem to take to the suggestions contained in the report of The Times, for while agreeing that all young persons should be trained to become 'intelligent, virtuous and active men and women', it believed that the increasingly complex division of labour required a diversification of education. Echoing the Storks Report, The Malta Observer recommended the development of specialized education in various fields, as had in fact already taken place on the continent. Young people would be induced into industrial training while still at school, gradually increasing the dose so that they would learn the 'hardest lesson for man to learn', namely the challenge 'of applying [oneself] steadily, day after day, to one occupation'. It was only by providing training in

There is great similarity between this agenda and that of the charity schools run in Malta at that time. A system of apprenticeship had been introduced at the Male Orphan Asylum, where inmates were placed with carpenters, tailors, shoemakers and others to learn a trade (The Malta Observer, 5/10/1869).

The same contributor noted that girls too had to be trained in housework, for, as a result of lack of education, the food of the household was 'unsavoury, indigestible, innutritious, and at the same time unthrifty; while the whole menage has that character of untidiness and discomfort that often drives the husband to the pot-house in England, and to the wine-shop in Malta'.

Some of Malta's leading intellectuals climbed on the reform band-wagon put into motion by the Storks commission, making a bid for an increase in science and vocational skills training at the level of the primary

Here, the maxim was that 'labour was the backbone of reformation' (The Malta Observer, 12/11/1869), and the goal was 'to promote the health, to develop the strength of the muscles and give them the pliancy and general dexterity, and to induce habits of steady and patient endurance of work' (ibid.). The parallelism between charity schools and state elementary schools is not surprising, given that both generally catered for similar socio-economic groups. As Dr Pullicino, a member of Council, noted in Parliamentary Debates on education, elementary schools were mainly frequented by the poorer classes, while middle-class children went to private schools and then to the Lycem. 'The reason', he added, 'probably was to avoid the mixing up of the children of two different classes of society' (The Malta Observer, 24/2/1868).

117 The Malta Observer, 5/10/1869.
118 The Malta Observer, 12/11/1869.
119 The Malta Observer, ibid.
school. Dr Nicolo Zammit MD, for instance, in his address to the Literary and Scientific Institute of Malta, of which he was vice-president, stressed the usefulness of science when this was applied to meet the needs of the people. He argued, moreover, that nothing was further removed from Malta’s needs than an alienating love of abstract things. Literature too, he held, had to be responsive to the practical needs of the people, otherwise it only served to ‘dissipate public energy’.

Zammit urged all present to take the torch of science to the artisan’s workshop, to put chemistry at the service of agriculture and the trades, to encourage the proletarian classes to join and set up trade and technical associations. According to Zammit, the intellectuals could help the masses rise above the social circumstances they had been living in through the ages. This they would do by making science available to all so that in this pact with technical instruction, a new aristocracy would arise, and the country would be the first to benefit:

Thought, imagination, form - in other words, science and literature, which lead us to artisanship, production - the useful. These are the laws that rule the day. Useful knowledge, no longer dedicated to the illusory attraction of imagination and rhyme, but to the harmony of a real life.

It was this new orientation, Zammit argued, which was more British than Italian in spirit, that would address the social problems of the time and lead to better life styles.

But despite the 1838 and 1865 Commissions, despite Pullicino’s efforts to introduce a technical bias in elementary schools and to channel senior students away from the traditional professions towards a scientific education in favour of agriculture, industry and commerce, despite the rise of a wealthier and more daring group of people who were potential investors in new enterprises, despite the pressure exerted on government through the press and the new demand for skilled labour from countries receiving migrants, none of these factors seems to have made much difference in the promotion of a strong bias in favour of science and technology in the Maltese educational system. So slim were the occupational chances of those opting for a technical education that the Crown Advocate, while not favouring state subsidy of those studying to enter a profession, argued during a parliamentary debate that the Government ought to perhaps subsidise those interested in pursuing studies in science. This could be done by sending Maltese on scholarships abroad. The study of sciences, it was argued, ‘did not in Malta place those who possessed them in a position to make any pecuniary profit except in so far as they qualified them to one or two chairs at the University’.

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120 Il Portafoglio Maltese, 15/3/1863, for instance.
122 Ibid., p.32.
123 Ibid., p.8.
124 Ibid., p.11.
125 The Crown Advocate as reported in The Malta Observer, 13/2/1868.
The classical form of education, popular with the 'old humanists' and exercised in their public schools, gymnasias, and colleges in England and in the Continent, was the preferred form of education at the Lyceum and the University of Malta. Attempts to include industrial and technical courses in elementary and secondary schools had failed, despite Pullicino's efforts to carry out the recommendations of the 1836 commission. Education past primary schooling looked towards the traditional professions, and this trend was further strengthened when the Jesuits, proscribed from Sicily by Garibaldi in 1860, found refuge in Malta where they opened and ran a seminary and a boarding school in Gozo. Laferla notes that these schools attracted the élite of Malta and Gozo as well as of Sicily. Courses in theology, philosophy, rhetoric, and the humanities were given in preparation for University. This form of education was held in high esteem, and indeed Laferla notes that the Jesuits exercised enormous influence on educational thought during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The hankering after a classical education represented the older Malta, with its roots deeply embedded in an Italianate culture, with its high priests being the clerico-professional classes. The new cultural forces unleashed by the British, with their belief in free enterprise, the spirit of initiative, and the march of technological progress, was bound to clash with the traditions that had been embedded in Malta for centuries, and which, with the rise of nationalism in Europe, were to be rejuvenated.

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The Keenan Report: 1880s

In education, that clash is represented by the figures of Pullicino on the one hand, and Savona on the other: the former a cleric steeped in classicism, responding half-heartedly to the different mentality of the British and the commissioners and experts who were brought over to examine his work; the latter ever ready to promote Britain and the British as Malta's hope of sharing in modern progress. Attacked and often vilified in the anti-colonial press as a collaborator, Pullicino was, in actual fact, closer in spirit to his accusers that they seemed to have realized. This culturally conservative group was soon to gather strength, and to put obstacles in any attempt to reform education.

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126 LAFERLA, A.V., op. cit., p.255:
127 ROWSELL, F.W. Parliamentary Papers 1878, iv (C.2033); KEENAN, P.J., Report on the Educational System... op. cit.; JULYAN, P., Report on the Civil Establishments of Malta, Parliamentary Papers 1880, xlii (C.2684),
attempt to introduce compulsory education at the primary
level, and the use of English as the language of instruction.
The latter measure could not but trigger off the already
growing opposition against the anglicization of Malta.

Of particular significance is Keenan's suggestion that
industrial education be attached to a more general
elementary instruction - a suggestion which had been
placed by Austin and Lewis forty years earlier. Keenan
noted the 'seafaring interests of the colony' and that 'if any
section of the Maltese community is entitled to a technical
education, the seafaring classes have a paramount claim to
it'. He therefore suggested the setting up of a school of
Seamanship and of the Science of Navigation in the
neighbourhood of the harbour, for 'No more utilitarian or
more hopeful project could be conceived than the
establishment of a great school of this class'.

Keenan was therefore surprised to find so little in the way
of technical education. In nearly all the schools, girls were
taught Needlework, 'the making of flowers', and lace-
making, 'in perfect consonance with the pursuits and wants
of the female population'. Boys were taught wood-carving
(in Valletta, Floriana, and Cospicua), printing and wood-
engraving (in Valletta) and wood clock-making (at Luqa).
Although the level of technical instruction was generally
very good, Keenan noted that nevertheless it did not seem
to attract many students (only 59 out of a total of 757 male
pupils attended the technical classes in Valletta, Floriana
and Cospicua). Technical instruction was 'invariably given
at extra hours' and, what was worse, did not make much of

a contribution to the economy of the islands. Neither the
science of agriculture nor of navigation were taught, and
hence the main requirements on land and on sea were
neglected.

Thus, Keenan concluded, boys' technical education was
'too inappreciably connected with any great industry to be
regarded as little more than an artistic branch of
education'. He recommended the reorganization of the
Lyceum's subject groupings so that a student's course of
studies would be more directly linked to the requirements of
a future occupation, and encouraged the efforts made to
teach Mechanics, Mechanical Engineering (a course which
had started in 1873), Land Surveying and Navigation.

No doubt, Keenan had a number of reasons for high-
lighting the necessity of technical education. To begin with,
one of the main features of British educational policy in the
colonies was to promote practical instruction so that the
natives could contribute to the local economy. This policy
had intimate ideological connection with the nineteenth
century individualistic ethic which Julyan, in his report on
Malta's Civil Establishments, found lacking on the islands.
Julyan had argued that it was unbenevolent for a country to
be 'doing gratuitously for the public what it [the public]
ought to do for itself'.

128a KEENAN, P.J., op.cit., p.43.
129a Ibid., p.43.

130a JULYAN, P., op.cit., para.254, quoted in FREndo, H., op.cit.,
p.9. Many a pro-British Maltese citizen pointed to the sense of
initiative of the 'mother country', arguing that the Maltese
could gain a lot by imbibing the same morality. Dr Torreggiani thus
argued in Parliament that these qualities of self-reliance and
initiative were not 'habitually found in any people of the Latin
race' (as quoted in The Malta Observer, 12/2/1968). Cf. also
Furthermore Keenan believed in the reformatory potential of work. Industrial schools would thus cater for the education and training of destitute orphans, or of children neglected or abandoned by their parents, and who might be in danger of associating with the criminal classes. Keenan takes his cue from Mr John Lenthaline C.B., 'the distinguished inspector of Reformatory and Industrial Schools in Ireland, who has had a considerable experience of the Industrial school system in many of the countries of Europe in order to propose the setting up of two reformatory industrial schools, one for boys, the other for girls.

There must have been support for Keenan's recommendations to develop technical education and to synchronize it more closely to the needs of Malta's industry. As we have seen, the pro-technical/vocational/utilitarian lobby had already voiced its opinion over the need for 'useful knowledge'. This lobby became active during a depressed economy, and particularly when foreign commissioners made recommendations which coincided with its views.

The support came from the reformist camp. S. Cachia Zammit, for instance, argued in favour of a more utilitarian education which would be a means of self-improvement for the masses, and revived the suggestion made by the 1836 Commissioners, that there ought to be political economy on the University curriculum. As a Council member, Cachia Zammit wanted school reform, because the progress of the people did not only consist in liberty, in the improvement of state legislation, of habits and culture, but also in the development of production, in equitable distribution, and in good use of wealth. The law is not only guided by law and morals, but likewise by economical laws.

He thus wished to see differentiated schooling established in a more trenchant manner with various levels 'corresponding to the various ends and the manifold destinies of the human family'. He referred to the different functions exercised by the Lyceums and Technical Institutes in Italy as an example of what he meant. Cachia Zammit considered it to be a moral and economic duty 'to render common to all the degree of culture necessary to every citizen for the proper performance of his duties, for the exercise of his rights, and to every artisan for the acquisition of skill and knowledge in his art'.

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135 Salvatore Cachia Zammit was a landowner and member of Council who often spoke on educational matters. At first he was on Savona's side, but was later to join the Partito Anti Reformista.


137 CACHIA ZAMMIT, S., ibid., p.11.
Similarly, F.V. Inglott, Collector of Customs, clearly influenced by Kay-Shuttleworth’s industrial education policy, wrote to Keenan saying that the schools in the villages should abound in technical teaching of special industries, particularly the female schools. But over and above the question of technical education, it was the equally utilitarian issue of the choice of language of instruction which was to act as a catalyst, promoting the transformation of the pro- and anti-British block into two political parties, one in favour of reform and led by Sigismondo Savona, the other consisting of Anti-Reformists. The latter contested the anglicization of schools and the costs that they, as part of the professional class, would incur if they had to support the reform expenditure through increasing tax contributions, should elementary education be made free for all. As Blouet notes, Keenan’s proposal of compulsory and free elementary education for all was rejected ‘partly because the Council did not want to spend money and partly because the anti-reform group did not like the type of education to be offered’.

138 Inglott had trained as a teacher at Battersea College under Sir Kay-Shuttleworth’s supervision, and had formerly been an employee at the dockyard naval service (cf. PRENDO, H., Party Politics, op. cit., p.17).

139 Supra, p.40

140 KEENAN, P.J., op.cit., Appendix E, p.121.

141 BLOUET, H., op.cit, p.161.

The Pro-Keenan Education Lobby

Nevertheless, support for technical education did gather momentum after the Keenan report. Savona was appointed Director of Education in 1880, and he set about implementing many of the commissioner’s recommendations. Savona frequently refers to Keenan’s suggestions in his 1883 report on educational institutions. His report shows how free education was being extended to the children of the poor in most of the villages in Malta and Gozo, and how the problem of child labour wrought havoc to such plans and provisions. There is no doubt that Savona was attracted by the modernizing implications of Keenan’s report, and his vocationalist thrust can be seen in the way he extols the learning of English as the indispensable means for all classes of the working population to get on in life.

Reforms were initiated at the Lyceum where a ‘modern department’ was set up alongside the classical department, the latter leading to the Faculties of Arts and Sciences at the University, the former leading to employment with the civil service, navy and army, or in commerce, engineering, land surveying, and so on. Scientific courses at University were considered to be of crucial importance by Savona, who noted that this was ‘an age when science has made such rapid strides and has invaded all departments and all walks of life’. Savona was, however, as moderate in his technical education policy as in his approach to the language question, and he attempted to weave together different strands of thought in a pragmatic manner. Thus, he was not

against the teaching of Italian, besides English, at the university, lyceum and upper classes of the primary schools. As to technical instruction, he agreed with Keenan that 'the materialistic and utilitarian qualities of technical knowledge require to be chastened by an infusion of liberal education'.

Savona's educational policy regarding vocational and technical education began to reflect the difficulties which other countries were experiencing in attempting to make their burgeoning educational systems respond to the needs of a modern age. As McCulloch points out in his comparative analysis of educational trends from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, the tension between the aspects of education that were to become known as the 'vocational' and the 'liberal' produced different kinds of educational arrangements in different national contexts. In some cases, it was deemed appropriate to combine features of both traditions within the same institutions; others supported the development of both in separate institutions; others tended to emphasize one at the expense of the other.

The policy pursued by Savona with reference to the tension between vocational and liberal education was ultimately that pioneered by Pullicino before him, namely an attempt to graft aspects of the one upon the other. A

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143 SAVONA, S., La Questione della Lingua, (Valletta, 1884), translated from an article in Malta Times, 26/1/1884.
144 SAVONA, S., ibid., p.39.
145 McCULLOCH, G., The Secondary Technical School... op.cit., p.16.
number of people\textsuperscript{148} supported Savona's graft formula. Others however, wanted to see educational set-ups established specifically for the teaching of a technical education. Among the most influential was Dr N. Zammit appointed to see to the sending of objects to the 1886 London Exhibition of Industry of HM's Colonial and Indian Possessions.\textsuperscript{147} Zammit argued that one of the key reasons that held Maltese industry back was the lack of any large establishment dedicated to the technical education of the artisan class who, while skilful, were not open to technological innovation.

This, he argued, was partly due to the scorn showered on practical activity by the intellectual and cultured classes in Malta. He urged the latter to shed 'vain illusions and motives of self-conceit... [to reduce] the empty phantoms of imagination to the realities of a productive and fruitful active life' so that 'a solid alliance, constant and unshakable in its hereditary usages, be formed between scientific theory and practical labour'.\textsuperscript{148} He explained that at all levels of education there ought to be the doing away of the 'marked distinction between intellectual and industrial culture', and the development of a new attitude so that 'instruction and industry [would] move together and help each other'.\textsuperscript{149}

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\textsuperscript{148} These people were S. Cachia Zammit, to whom reference has already been made, A.A. Caruana, who followed Savona as Director of Education, S. Flores, the director of Flores College at Valletta, and Dr L. Mancé.

\textsuperscript{147} ZAMMIT, N., \textit{Malta and its Industries}, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., p.18.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., p.19.

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., p.19. Zammit noted the many industrial companies and societies which had failed in recent years, and remarked that such failures were a great deterrent to the spirit of enterprise (cf. p.17, and f.n. No.8, p.64).
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a means of developing the country's industrial base, as in
Zammit's plan, but as a means of reforming the young.

Even Savona, despite his enthusiasm for Keenan's
recommendation to establish industrial schools, ended up in
the same pitfall when he promoted the Maltese version of
ragged schools as a way to 'reclaim from pauperism and
vice thousands of children who, if left to the mercy of their
parents or guardians, could not fail to swell the ranks of the
criminal classes'.

Other initiatives taken around this time by the church and
individuals from the moneyed class were also begun
much in the same spirit and gave rise to local charitable
institutions such as those which then prevailed in
nineteenth century Europe. A large number of institutes
of charity were in fact established in the last decades of the
nineteenth century in Malta, and many of these provided

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153 SAVONA, S., On the Necessity..., op.cit. 12.
154 The Catholic Church's activity in providing social welfare
developed a new impetus from the 1860s onwards in response
to the challenge of international socialism.
155 Such institutions had been developed in France by the Abbé
Rousseau, who in 1866 founded the *Orphelinus Apprentis
d'Auteuil*, and in Italy by Don Bosco.
156 cf. SULTANA, M., L'Opera Socjali tal-Knisja f'malta permezz ta'
I-Istituti tat-Tfal, c. 1880-1945, (Unpublished B.Ed. Hons
dissertation, Faculty of Education, University of Malta, 1987).
Sultana mentions 16 institutions/conservatories.
Children with instruction in manual trades as well as a grounding in elementary education. The intention behind these institutions was generally to help children, youths and adults who, because of destitution or other unfortunate circumstances, were either likely to be tempted to embark on a life of vice and crime. A literary, and above all, a moral education would counter these tendencies, and the development of skills in a trade, while not being of particular benefit to the country's economy, would ensure that graduates of the institute could earn their own living.187

Such were the intentions behind the setting up of St Joseph's Institute at St. Venera, The Salutary Reformatory, and the schools run by the Sisters of Charity. By far the most organized, in terms of the vocational instruction it offered, were the Conservatorio and the Istituto Tecnico Vincenzo Bujea. The latter taught mechanical and marine engineering, joinery, carpentry and cabinet-making to Maltese and Gozitan artisans. The Institute made available a wide range of technical books and magazines, and even had a collection of models of engines which could be used as visual aids. The Bujea Institute was to be often referred to and recommended as a model for technical education development in Malta in a number of Government Reports in the early twentieth century.158

Conclusion.

At this point it is important to make a synopsis of some of the main issues addressed thus far, before proceeding with the historical account. While there seems to have been, under the influence of the British, a movement in favour of scientific and technical education, this innovation was directed, from the top down, and indeed seemed to be too alien to the cultural configuration prevailing in the country. Malta's industries were either underdeveloped or nonexistent, and its capitalists were more willing to invest in finance rather than in the possibilities which the second phase of the industrial revolution made available to entrepreneurs. Pullicino, caught as he was between responding to British influence and his classical training as a prelate, did introduce forms of manual and technical education in schools. But as we have seen, his commitment to these initiatives was doubtful, and in any case, few seemed to consider the innovations useful at the time.

Savona, whose efforts were more in tune with the modernizing influence of the British, and in particular with Keenan's recommendations, proceeded cautiously with introducing technical elements in Malta's educational system. More importantly, the various movements which arose to promote local industrial development pointed

187 Such attitudes were still rife in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Laferla, the Director of Education, complained, for instance, that the Compulsory Attendance Act had created disciplinary problems in schools because 'objectionable children' with 'criminal tendencies' were made to stay at school against their will. In his opinion, the only way to deal with such boys was to send them to a 'truant' or an 'industrial school' (RWGD, 1924-5, M1). Indeed, another Director of Education, J.R. Vassallo, was in 1934 still claiming that there was a need for an industrial school for those who were not properly cared for by parents, for those who played truant, and for those who required discipline (Report of the Education Department, 1948-1954, p.xxxii).

158 cf. Daily Malta Chronicle, 7th September, 1920, p.3.
towards the need for vocationalizing education. Thus the stage was set for the setting up of the first state technical education institution in 1893. This Technical and Manual School, while never being successful or influential, represents an important development in vocational education as separate from mainstream education. It is this innovation which heralds a new era in technical education for the twentieth century.

CHAPTER THREE

VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Social and Economic Background

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 placed Malta "upon the major British imperial seaway, the Mediterranean route to India."¹ Thus as the headquarters of the Mediterranean fleet, Malta saw the development of military installations, with investment going towards the building of docks (from 1871 to 1892) and major harbour works, such as the building of the breakwater (from 1907 to 1909). Further investment went into defence consolidations, such as the building of the Victoria lines of defence in the 1870s. The Suez Canal also brought about a sea-trade boom in Malta. Ships called at its harbours so frequently that it became, for some time, the main coaling station between Britain and the East.

The late nineteenth century saw an increasing number of Maltese find employment with the British colonial administration, giving up traditional occupations such as

¹ BLOUET, R., Story of Malta, 4e, (Progress Press, Malta 1989), p.165.
cotton growing and agriculture in favour of the more rewarding ones in the British-led sector, and of commercial affairs in connection with importation and transit trade. By 1891, close to 9,000 people were in conveyance and storage, over 17,000 in commercial jobs, less than 10,000 in agriculture, and another 8,000 were merchants, dealers and agents while some 20,000 men were unoccupied. 5,528 young women and girls obtained their livelihood as domestic servants with wealthy Maltese and with English officers and families of Services personnel stationed in Malta.2

Malta's increasing dependency on the colonial rulers for a livelihood represented a grave danger since the British could not be relied upon for a constant and continued investment in public expenditure. Indeed, the successive peaks and troughs of spending brought about relative affluence only to be followed by abject misery and widespread unemployment. The unchecked growth of the birth rate made matters worse, and with the trebling of the population between the mid-1800s and the mid-1900s,3 emigration had to be increasingly resorted to as a 'solution' to economic distress.

The sea-trade boom that augured so well for Malta in the 1880s and 1890s waned with the improvement of steam engines. Ships could take longer journeys without the need to call for provisions and supplies at Maltese harbours as often as they used to. As a result, entrepôt trade decreased and opportunities for employment with the military became less and less frequent. At the turn of the century, harbour construction works absorbed much of the available labour, but when this project was completed, the situation of dependency became even more starkly evident. In addition to this, the first world war disrupted trade, which in turn reduced government revenue and led to shortages and high freight rates. Food prices rose while no parallel rise in wages was effected. After the war, food prices remained substantially high, while military spending declined rapidly and employment opportunities dried up. As a consequence, bread subsidies had to be introduced, a programme of public works was started, and salaries of government employees were increased.

Such fluctuations of fortunes and the general lack of security regarding livelihood occasionally led to protest, strikes and even riots. These, however, appeared to have no real direction and were more likely to be ultimate signs of despair. All in all, with the exception of a few enlightened personalities such as Manuel Dimech, the Maltese were, perhaps necessarily, co-opted and silenced. When protests broke out, constitutional appeasements were offered by British governors to local politicians with the promise that in due course, the Maltese would have a greater say in the running of the internal affairs of the islands.

The 1921 constitution in fact provided for the setting up of a bi-cameral government, and political parties were formally set up. Elections were contested by the Labour Party, the Anglo-Maltese Party - which was pro-British and which later merged with the Maltese Constitutional Party to form the Constitutional Party - and the Partito Nazionale Democratico which, in 1926, merged with the Unione Popolare Maltese to form the Nationalist Party. As political parties became more organized and rooted in mass-based concerns, it also became increasingly clear that there was a

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need for the Maltese to gain not only political but economic autonomy as well, although at times such hopes appeared to be dashed by insurmountable difficulties.

During the 1930s, for instance, world economic depression slowed down Malta's flow of emigrants and shackled early attempts at diversifying the economy. A little progress was achieved in the fields of tourism, light industry and agriculture, but larger projects, such as the attempt to attract a British shipbuilding and repairing company to start operations in Malta, did not materialize.¹ The economic situation only got better in 1936 when the rising threat of war made the British aware of the need for a rearmament policy. This meant larger budgets for defence spending in Malta. However, it was not before the end of the second world war that Malta was to come to grips with the underlying economic problems of a fortress economy. And even then, there was an initial period when little hope could be generated to envisage a sustainable economy for Malta. Indeed foreign consultants such as Sir Wilfred Woods despaired of any real future for local industry.

By 1955, Britain had taken responsibility for the promotion of a diversified economy on the islands, making available development funds amounting to twenty two million pounds in the form of grants and loans. Most of this went into encouraging the setting up of new manufacturing industries, with incentives such as low-rate leasing of factories, tariff protection and tax holidays - being offered. The dockyard changed hands a number of times until responsibility for it was assumed by the Maltese government in the early seventies.

¹ BLOUET, B., op.cit., p.190.

The celebration of the political withdrawal of the British from the islands in 1964 was tarnished with the subsequent announcement, in 1967, of Britain's intention to curtail overseas defence spending. This meant that a considerable number of Maltese people employed in defence establishments would become redundant. Protests and representations succeeded in persuading the British to slow down the process of the 'run-down', in order to give enough time for economic development plans to generate the jobs envisaged. Shortly after attaining independence, Malta led by the Nationalist Party then in power, entered into a mutual defence and assistance agreement whereby Britain would rent, against payment, the use of military facilities on the islands. This agreement was later re-negotiated and extended by the Maltese Labour Party, elected to government in 1971. The last vestige of British presence on the island, was withdrawn eight years later.

Education

Provision for mass schooling towards the end of the nineteenth century, while increasing, was still lagging behind developments in England and on the continent. Primary education had not yet been widely implemented. The key political actors were less concerned with education than with religion, politics, power and finance.² The movement

² This account depends on several sources, the most useful of which were FREndo, H., op.cit.; BLOUET, B., op.cit., and ZAMMIT, E.L., A Colonial Inheritance, University of Malta 1984.

³ One of these complex intrigues led to the resignation of Savona from his post of Director of Education on 14 May 1887 (cf. LAFERLA, A.V., British Malta, Volume 2, [Aquillina & Co., Malta
against compulsory education was strong, and took different forms.

It appears, for example, that some took their cue from a peculiar interpretation of the voluntarist lobby popular in Britain in the 1840s. They argued that the policy of compulsory education was an attempt by the colonial government to intervene in the moral formation of the young by promoting the Protestant faith, and thus worked against the interests of the Catholic religion. And so, partly due to such fears, a bill to make elementary education compulsory was rejected in 1872. Casolani wrote two letters with reference to the ‘educational crisis’ of the time, pointing out that, as Cardinal Manning had argued when referring to the English situation, ‘compulsory education, as a penalty on neglect, and a protection against social danger, is undeniably within the competence of the state’. Casolani

1947], p.62).

7 The voluntarist movement in Britain, led in the main by non-conformists, set out to ensure that the lobby for compulsory education would not give the privileged Church of England ecclesiastical control of instruction (cf. LAWSON & SILVER, A Social History of Education in England, op.cit., pp.274-276).

8 CASOLANI, C., Two Letters suggested by the Present Educational Crisis, (translated from the Corriere Mercantile Maltese, and reprinted by Burns & Oake, London 1872). Casolani points to the fact that Catholic education had to be part and parcel of all instruction within the school. He warned against Protestant intervention in schools, referring to a particular school in which ‘teacher, director, and books... are all Protestant, while the school in question is subsidized by public funds for Maltese young men and boys who cannot be otherwise than Catholics’ (p.28).

therefore favoured compulsion, but insisted that this should in no way privilege Protestantism in Malta.

But it was class politics rather more than religion that withheld progress in education in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. As has already been noted, there was a general fear among the local moneved class that extending education to the masses would bring about social upheaval. Frendo De Mannarino, addressing the 1898 Commission for educational reform, warned, for instance, about the danger of having people aspiring to move out of the class in which Nature and divine Providence had placed them. These ‘spostati’, as he calls them, would scorn manual work, so that no one would be left to fix engines, sew clothes, or repair shoes. Education was there to help people be happy in the class they were born in; any other way would lead to socialism, which ‘wishes to remove every class distinction designed by God Himself in His Eternal Book’. Attendance at school was largely determined by class, with the large majority of students at the Lyceum and the University hailing from the middle class. The status quo, therefore suited the interests of those who had financial and cultural capital. Others, like Savona, argued for a change, wanting

the sons of the nobility and the gentry, of the professional and commercial classes, [to] sit on the same benches with the children of shopkeepers, tradesmen and even artisans - an admixture which, far from being objectionable, is in my opinion, greatly to be encouraged, for whilst the latter may learn better and more refined

9 FREND De MANNARINO, S., La Scuola Primaria: Studi Comparativi e Proposte di Riforma, (Malta, 1898), p.17.

10 ibid., p.18.
manners from the former, these, in their turn, are frequently led to admire and to value the superiority of those who are socially their inferiors.¹¹

The University Senate too noted that a third of State aid in education went to children of the middle class:

If the available funds were not limited, if the children of the poor were all enabled to receive free primary education, if the teaching appliances and the school buildings left nothing to be desired, and if the pay of the teachers was adequate in all classes, such a distribution might possibly be defended. These conditions are, however, quite unfulfilled and, for this reason, there must be a large number of children for whose education the State makes no provision whatever... The State pays from 5 to 30 times as much for the children of the comparatively well-to-do portion of the population as for children of the poor. This is an absolute reversal of the principles upon which the systems of national education of all countries are based.¹²

While, therefore, the local elite might have been justified in voting against the funding of some of the infrastructural spending that the British were pushing for, since these would, in the main, be enjoyed by the latter and not by the general populace,¹³ the same argument did not hold with respect to education.


¹² Vice-Chancellor’s Annual Report to the Senate of the University: 1892-3, (Government Printing Press, Malta 1893), p.12-13 of the Senate’s comments.


This class conflict manifested itself most forcefully in the question of the language of instruction. This had become an issue of contention ever since the recommendation, made by Austin and Lewis, that students be taught to read and write Maltese, then Italian, and finally English, which was to be taught through Maltese. This policy was pursued by Pullicino until 1880. Then, following Keenan’s anglicization policies, Savona pushed for the study of English as soon as children had learned Maltese. Italian would thus be limited to the senior classes. In 1888 Italian was again given precedence over English, when it became the first foreign language to be taught concurrently with Maltese. Finally, in 1898, it was decided that Maltese alone would be taught during the first two years of elementary schooling. The parents would then be given the option to decide whether they wanted their children to learn Italian or English.

A group of primary school students and their teachers from Qala, Gozo (c. 1910).
The Nationalists had opposed this decision, offering as an alternative the system of pari passu, that is, the simultaneous teaching of Italian and English. A survey was carried out in 23 schools in order to determine parents' views on the matter. This survey showed that in 11 schools everyone had opted for English. In the other 12 schools, the lowest percentage of those choosing English was 85 per cent (in Malta) and 79 per cent (in Gozo). The Nationalists protested that it was deceitful of the British to claim that there was a choice, since the colonial rulers had ensured that all jobs in Malta, including the low-status ones, required proficiency in English. Study Italian", noted Cini ironically, 'choose the Italian language, and you'll be free to die of hunger. On the other hand, study English, and you'll receive honours, nominations for positions, and jobs'.

With the Anglicization policy which followed at the turn of the century,

all kinds of pro-English trappings were assiduously promoted: schoolchildren taught to sing songs in English, more teachers sent for training in Britain; better prizes for students passing Oxford local examinations; and the translation of the catechism into English by Dr Enrico Magro, inspector of elementary schools, in order to popularize the knowledge of English among the lower classes and to provide acceptable literature printed in the vernacular and at the smallest possible cost'

The emphasis on English was defended by the Governor on the grounds that language proficiency would open the doors to employment with the Services at the Dockyard and in public works projects.

Much of the struggle with reference to education in the early twentieth century therefore revolved around the issue of establishing and extending elementary instruction, rather than with diversifying the schooling system. Compulsion was still 'impossible' as long as funds were not voted so that buildings could be rented, bought or constructed to accommodate those who were requesting to join day schools. Only about 35 per cent of all children of school age, that is above three and below fifteen, received an education in state or private schools. In January 1898, 6000 applications for admission into Government elementary schools were turned down for want of rooms to accommodate them in.

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14 Daily Malta Chronicle, 24/12/1898.
15 CINI, A., La Libera Scelta, ossia la Questione della Lingua in Malta, (Tamburo, Siracusa 1901), p.22; and La Grande Mistificazione del Signor Chambriani, ossia Il Valore delle concessione fatte dall'Inghilterra a Malta ed all'Italia nella Questione della Lingua, (Malta, 1902), p.10.
16 FRINDO, H., Party Politics..., op.cit., p.102.
When in 1901 the British government managed to override the local Council and obtained funding for education, health and infrastructural development such as drainage, water-works and roads, progress was slowly made in the building of more primary schools and the situation did improve. However, in 1903, there were still 3245 children who wished to enrol at school but who had to be turned away. Such a situation naturally precluded the launching of a campaign to attract those children who did not wish to attend schooling.\textsuperscript{20} By 1910 there were 86 schools in Malta and Gozo, the highest enrolment during that year being 20,157 students.\textsuperscript{21} There were four secondary schools, with the largest, the Lyceum, catering for around 400 students. But attendance at the elementary schools was irregular, and the vast majority of children dropped out at the age of ten or before in order to earn money for the family, with the result that 'whatever they may have learned fades rapidly from their mind, and they revert to a state of illiteracy'.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{The First Technical School: 1893}

Meanwhile, an important milestone was reached in the development of technical education with the setting up of a technical school in 1893.

The vocational schooling lobby which had taken Keenan's recommendations to heart led to developments in the technical education system in Malta. Some of the technical elements that had been grafted on to mainstream

\textsuperscript{20} RWGD, 1904-5, M28, para.174.

\textsuperscript{21} RWGD, 1901-10, M22, para.146. There were 38 schools for boys, 32 for girls, and 9 for infants.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Report of the Royal Commission on the Finances, Economic Position, and Judicial Procedure of Malta, 1912}, p. 21. Needless to say, higher education was attended by a small number, and was reserved exclusively for boys. In 1911-12 there were 168 students at the University, the majority of whom were from the professional classes, the wealthy, high grade officials, merchants. 26 were sons of shopkeepers and 23 came from the working classes (cf. Mowatt Commission, pp.40-1 of the Appendices to the Report).

\textsuperscript{23} RWGD, 1924-5, M.2. Ten years later, the situation was still the same (RWGD, 1934-5, p.318).

\textsuperscript{24} RWGD, 1946-47, p.443.
schooling were discontinued. This was true of the 'School' (i.e. course) of Navigation at the Lyceum, which had been set up in 1873 but which, owing to the substitution of steam for sail navigation, was no longer in demand. Dr. A.A. Caruana, appointed Director of Education in 1887 on Savona's resignation, followed his predecessor's approach to education. He was keen to have science 'claim a large share of the student's attention', and favoured English as the medium of instruction because of the career opportunities which proficiency in that language opened up.

Caruana was instrumental in launching the first state school wholly dedicated to technical instruction, and which catered for the training of young apprentices in carpentry, joinery, carving and stucco work. This initiative reflected developments in England and on the continent, where vocational education was becoming more and more detached from on-the-job, apprenticeship-type instruction and taking the form of regular courses of instruction in specifically educational institutions. This trend was reinforced by the Samuelson Report, published in England between 1882 and 1884, which attributed the industrial success of a number of European countries to the vocational instruction offered to young and adult students.

The 'Technical and Manual School' opened its doors at Valletta in 1893, and Caruana notes that this school, together with the course in practical mechanics for fitters to be started at the Hamrun Railway Station, would be of great value to local industry. He argued that 'at a time when almost all civilized countries are devoting public money to the purpose of technical education, it is specially desirable that the Maltese should be afforded opportunities for developing their marked natural aptitude as handiworkmen.' The university Senate frequently expressed its support for this school, saying that 'every encouragement ought to be given to the opening of other, similar schools affording the bulk of our boys of the labouring classes the best means of fitting themselves to gain, later on, an honest and remunerative employment.' A document written in 1897 by Flores - director of a private educational College - and addressed to a Select Committee appointed to inquire into and report upon the organization of the Education

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26 Ibid., p.10.
27 Vice-Chancellor's Annual Report... University: 1890-1891, (1891) p.31.
28 Vice-Chancellor's... University: 1891-1892, (1893), p.3. Caruana had proposed the setting up of an Industrial School of Cabinet-Making in 182/1892. The University Senate had found this proposal gratifying, and noted that a school for fitters was also being contemplated by Government.
29 WARDLE, D., The Rise of the Schooled Society, (Routledge &

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32 Vice-Chancellors' Annual Report... University: 1895-1896, (1897), p.5.
Department, captures well the utilitarian spirit that had been on the rise since the mid-nineteenth century.

Flores compared a boy's brain to a cask, which 'no wise man would take the trouble of filling... If the contents would be of no use whatever afterwards. This world of ours after all is a truly practical one, with far less of poetry in it than we once imagined'. Education, he argued, was not a 'mere pastime but a stern and practical necessity'. It was necessary to focus on channelling knowledge to students, through the system of subject options, which would prove useful in the calling for which a boy was destined. He therefore strongly recommended the setting up of more technical schools so that these would give the general instruction which was necessary for the education of all persons, 'as well as the special instruction applicable to certain groups of industries'.

This kind of technical education, he continued, had proved to be the mainspring for the economic success of countries such as Germany, France and England, and it would bring similar benefits to Malta. For one thing, it would stop 'the daily overwhelming influx of foreigners who take the bread from our artisans who, although skilful, lacked the knowledge that could only be obtained from a sound course in technical education.

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23 Flores, S. Some Suggestions on Education in Malta, (G. Muscat, Malta 1897), p.12.
24 Ibid., p.13.
26 Ibid., p.15.

Practical work was recommended for all levels of education up to the University. Dr Manchê's proposals to the same Select Committee stressed that practice was 'preferable to mere theory'. Major reforms were carried out at the tertiary level where the Senate was abolished, and English became the medium of instruction in some subjects. By 1888, a course in Veterinary Science had been introduced at University, attracting sixteen out of a total student population of ninety-seven. In 1905, a chair in

Professor W.F. Nixon (centre) with colleagues and apprentices from the Railway workshop.

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37 Manchê, L. Education in Malta, (G. Maistre & G. Rizzo, Sta Lucia, Malta 1896), p.5. Dr. Manchê was professor of ophthalmology at the University.
38 Vice-Chancellor's Annual Report... University:1897-1898 (1898).
Mathematics and Practical Engineering was established in the Faculty of Literature and Science, a post which was held by Professor W.F. Nixon up to 1934.39

Even stalwart supporters of the Nationalist camp, who were often more liberal in their philosophy, echoed this new note of utilitarianism. As Cini pointed out,

No one among us goes to school simply for the sake of being a letterato or a scientist; everybody studies in order to have a means of earning a living.40

It would probably be...true to say that rather than antithetical, liberal and vocational education were seen to be complementary to one another. While, as we have seen in the previous chapter, there were those who favoured one over the other, and who thought that activities of the mind were more noble, enriching, or dignified than those of the hand, economic vulnerability and dependence necessarily led to a degree of pragmatism in the approach to education. The issue regarding the aims of education - including the issue regarding the language of instruction - tended to become confused because educational investment was to be appropriated by the colonial power, and hence

39 Nixon was a London University engineering graduate and a Whitworth scholar. From 1910 onwards, he organized evening classes in electrical engineering and practice, and in marine engineering at the Lyceum. When the railway stopped operating in 1931, the railway workshop became the Government Training Workshop, and Nixon was appointed Superintendent, a post he held in addition to his University commitment (cf. Myers, J., 'The developing pattern of technical education', 1968, p.5, cyclotyped).

40 CINI, A., La Libera Scelta..., op.cit., p.22.

the definition of education posed a political, not a pedagogical problem. Other forms of vocational education, such as the preparation for the professions, appeared less 'utilitarian' not only because of the class status the occupations enjoyed, but also because they were relatively economically independent of the ruling colonial force.

Top-Down Provision: 1900s.

There were a number of initiatives which attempted to promote technical education. These included the reintroduction of a technical section in the primary schools in 1903, the setting up of a small technical school attached to the Railway Office, training an average of twenty apprentices in its workshop,41 and the opening of a new reformatory industrial school for boys in 1904/5. There was also practical instruction in gardening offered at the Botanic Gardens annexed to the University.42 Technical courses were offered in Government elementary schools at Valletta, Cospicua, Floriana and Hammun, and later at Sliema and Tarxien. These courses were not well attended, and in fact the one at Floriana had to close down in 1908.43 The Railway technical school however fared much better, with demand proving higher than the supply of training places.

41 RWGD, 1903-4, p.34.


43 RWGD, 1906-7. The average annual enrolment in technical classes at Valletta, Floriana and Hammun was 39. F.J. Reynolds, the Inspector of Elementary Schools, commented that the work done in these classes was generally good, but regretted that the number of pupils was so small (RWGD, 1910-11).
and with its apprentices finding work in the Dockyard and with private firms. 44

Despite this official support for technical and vocational instruction, it does not appear that those who were keen to get an education were attracted to this new form of specialized provision. The 'Technical and Manual School' never managed to attract more than an average annual intake of twelve students. The trades they learnt were, as in previous innovations in technical education, of little moment and only minimally linked to the economic needs of the island. 45 The school fell under the care of the Malta Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce between 1900 and 1903. It was then handed back to the Department of Education only to be closed down in 1906. 46

It seems moreover, that all other technical education initiatives remained framed within the reformatory and compensatory framework which was popular in the nineteenth century. This was most clear in a project launched by Alfons Maria Galea, a philanthropist, who in 1905 provided funds and land in order to establish a reformatory school and invited the Salesian Brothers to run the school according to the *metodo preventivo* of Don Bosco. The government provided additional funds and supplied furniture and tools. 47 Here, as elsewhere, the provision of technical instruction was considered to be an alternative education for students who differed from colleagues in the mainstream.

Other private initiatives in providing technical education were rare. Fr Gwann Mamo (1878-1933) organized the teaching of trades such as carpentry, printing, bookbinding, tailoring, shoe-mending, agriculture and electrical fitting at Paola and Tarxien. This was part and parcel of his pastoral palace of Marquis Scicluna at Naxxar, and at the Stella Maris church in Sliema.

44 RWGD, 1911-2.
45 These students in fact ended up doing decorative work at the

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work, and he in fact opened a boarding school where academic subjects were taught during the day, and trades during the evening. It seems that the Director of Education, A.V. Laferla, admired this school and visited it often.48

Fr. Ġwann Mamo

The Mowatt Commission: 1912

Despite the lack of interest in technical education on the part of the general populace, the economic depression following the first decade of the twentieth century brought about renewed calls for investment in vocational education. As has already been pointed out above, the turn of the century brought with it a short period of economic boom due, in the main, to the increase of Imperial spending, and especially to the building of the breakwater at Valletta.49 Once this spending stopped, the islands suffered a great economic depression. Unemployment soared and the Maltese experienced general misery. A Royal Commission known as the Mowatt Commission was set up in 1912 to report on the various aspects of the socio-economic situation in Malta. This commission noted that previous prosperity had an artificial nature, depending not on production for internal consumption and external trade but rather on work for the government and the foreign governing class.

Another factor which contributed to the economic depression was the stiff competition coming from the newly-developed commercial harbours of Algiers, Tunis and Port Said, which attracted entrepôt trade and undertook the building, fitting out and repairing of mercantile marine. Fewer ships coaled in Malta, or discharged or took on board large cargoes. In addition the Imperial garrison in Malta had been gradually reducing its numbers since 1902. This meant that the industries of Malta had to bear the loss of about £400,000 a year.50


49 Wages rose by 100 per cent, and work was so plentiful that foreign workmen from Spain, Italy and Africa had to be employed (Cf. Report of the Royal Commission on the Finances, Economic Position, and Judicial Procedure of Malta, including evidence taken before the Royal Commission and Appendix, 1912).

50 Ibid., p.11.
The radical and rapid change in imperial policy and expenditure wrought havoc among the Maltese who had grown dependent on the economic activity of the British. Wages of workmen, both skilled and unskilled, fell by half. An appeal, signed by three thousand persons, was sent to the commissioners in an effort to impress on the royal inquirers the fact that the majority of Maltese were unemployed, that 'misery, poverty and hunger' reigned in the villages. Letters were also sent from a number of parish priests.

The Mowatt commissioners met with many of Malta's leading personalities in industry and the professions in order to formulate a plan for economic recovery. They noted the problems that had been highlighted by previous reports (including lack of water, wood, coal and iron). They also remarked on the general lack of initiative, unwillingness to pay taxes, as well as the lack of trust in Maltese craftsmanship and fear of local competition, which led local capitalists to invest in foreign securities rather than in the development of industries. Indigenous industry was either non-existent, insignificant, or weak and agriculturists were 'ignorant of modern methods of cultivation'. Even lace-making had received a blow since it had to compete with cheaper foreign machine-made articles.

The major proposal for the revitalization of local industry was a system of temporary local monopoly, which would guard the investing capitalist from local competition for a limited period, but which would not operate against imported goods and hence would not work against the interests of the consumer. One other recommendation which came up with persistent frequency from a good number of persons interviewed by the commissioners was that education ought to be more practical and technical-oriented. Mr Joseph Howard, then Managing Director of A. Cousins & Co., Cigarette Manufacturers, had been the President of the Society of Arts.
said that there was no technical school in Malta, and no technical instruction through adequate apprenticeship training. Standards for craftsmanship were low because, since people married early in Malta, the young man set up his own shop as soon as [he] can handle the instrument without cutting [his] fingers... without having gone through any study from the technical point of view. Industriallists did not offer much in apprenticeship training either, but tried a lad out, and fired him if he did not catch on quickly enough. The lack of technical and commercial schools and institutes was to the detriment of both local industry and emigration, since Malta could not compete with foreign skilled workmen. Because of this, Howard argued that schools should not waste time teaching Maltese at the elementary level, but that they should focus on Italian and English, so that after students left school they could read

Manufactures and Commerce, and was later to become Malta's first Prime Minister. He had a keen interest in technical education, was appointed by the Chamber of Commerce as a member on the Management Committee of the Bugeja Technical Institute (cf. Daily Malta Chronicle, 7/19/1920), and was to argue for the need of the setting up of a Polytechnic on the same lines as industrialized countries (cf. Sant, M.A., Sette Giugno 1912: Yqanqat u Tibdil, (SKS, Malta 1989, p.137).

59 Mr Howard notes that they did so as soon as they were earning two shillings a day (Ibid., p.294 of Appendix).

57 Ibid., p.292 of Appendix.

58 Ibid., p.292 of Appendix. A. Caruana Gatto, Advocate and member of Council, argued along the same lines (cf. p. 427 of Appendix).

the industrial technical journals and booklets that were being published in Italy, France and England. Dr Lawrence Manche similarly argued for the need of high quality technical education, which would not be taught at the Lyceum or University, but in specialized agricultural and mechanical trade schools. Others wanted to extend the provision of technical education to the elementary schools, since 'it is no use knowing how to read and how to write, and sometimes even knowing classics, if you do not know something technical."

All in all, however, the Mowatt commissioners, while often responding to these suggestions in a positive manner, also noted that such initiatives involved more expenditure, and observed that one could not overload the elementary school curriculum. They were, moreover, less inclined than the Maltese they interviewed to belittle local craftsmanship, and were less keen about technical education even though they were aware that 'a great many people [wanted that]

59 These technical booklets began appearing in Maltese in 1918, and were sold near the entrance of the Dockyard at Cospicua and in many other places (SANT, M., op. cit., p.137).

60 Ibid., p.338 of Appendix to the 1912 Report. Another person interviewed by the Commissioners, F. Mattul, argued along the same lines (Ibid., p.364).

61 Caruana Gatto, A., ibid., p.427 of Appendix to the 1912 Report.

62 Ibid., p.338 of Appendix.

63 Ibid., p. 427 of the Appendix.

64 Ibid., p.292, p.296 of the Appendix.
the elementary schools throughout the Island should be conducted on the governing principle that it should fit the boys and girls for the particular means by which they expect to make their livelihood.65

They were apparently convinced by the Director of Education who argued in favour of a basic education at the primary level - an education confined to reading, writing and arithmetic.66 Dr Magro had contested the extension of technical education in primary schools, stating that

the population of the schools, even in the small villages, is so mixed here that we cannot have, as you sometimes have in England, schools of one character, like technical schools or rural schools or anything like that. We must adopt a mean, because even in the smallest villages sometimes the people who send the children to our schools do not intend their children for agricultural pursuits, therefore if we give them a rural education we should be teaching them something that they do not require. If we keep ourselves to industrial, then, perhaps it would be another section who would object. Therefore we have to take the mean.67

Junior technical schools had started in England in 1905, and while apparently quite popular,68 were not considered by educational leaders in Malta as an innovation that could be imported, at least not until the 1930s.

The Great War

Dr Magro's views seemed to take precedence in the educational policy that was pursued after the Mowatt Commission's report. Little, if any, state initiatives were in fact undertaken in favour of technical education, and the 1917 Report on Industrial and commercial policy merely repeated, practically word for word, the recommendations Keenan had made thirty-eight years earlier, proposing the setting up of a school of Navigation and a refectory. The Committee also pointed at the example set by the Bugeja Institute, arguing that similar schools should be developed, with each school specializing in a particular trade.69

The war, however, brought in its wake various technological developments and engendered a more acute awareness of the need for technical skills. Like the Napoleonic and Crimean Wars, the First World War brought an artificial economic prosperity in a number of sectors of the Maltese economy, generating intense activity at the Dockyard, so that the level of employment at the arsenal more than trebled.70

Under these circumstances, the technical education which had been offered at the Dockyard School ever since

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65 Ibid., p.324 of the Appendix.
66 Ibid., p.21.
67 Ibid., p.186 of the Appendix.
69 Report of a Committee... Commercial and Industrial Policy after the War, 1917.
70 MALLIA-MILANES, V., De La Salle College: A Study in Growth, (De La Salle, Cospica 1979).
1858 became greatly sought after, representing as it did lucrative and secure employment. The Dockyard School was then catering for student-apprentices who followed a very demanding four-year course. According to the De La Salle archives, a number of private schools sprang up around the Cottonera area to prepare students for the Dockyard's apprenticeship exam. Some of these were run on a small scale, while others, notably De La Salle College, built its reputation and an increasing student population on the success it registered in placing its students in the Dockyard School.

Some four hundred candidates from all over the Island sat for this examination twice a year to fill an average of some thirty to forty places each time. Taught by English graduates and high-ranking naval officers, having at their disposal a well-equipped science laboratory, obliged to constantly compete for a place in six-monthly tests, these Dockyard School apprentices became thoroughly grounded in both a general and a vocational education, and many prominent Maltese personalities were graduates of that college. Thus the Dockyard School, though small, represented the only initiative in technical education on the part of the British.

Indeed, when in August of 1917 the Maltese authorities asked the Military and the Navy to offer technical instruction to other Maltese youths, the answer was negative. Only the Army eventually accepted to train forty youths each year in such trades as carpentry, blacksmithery, and tailoring. This reticence in providing technical education was later to be criticized in an important report, which said that 'not enough attention was given in the past so that our young people would be of more service to the Empire by providing them with technical instruction and a good education, on the grounds of which we would then be in a favourable position to compete with other British subjects or foreigners.'

The depression which followed the war - and which led to the Sette Giugno Riots of 1919 - gave rise to further calls for the industrialization of the Islands, and the usual appeals for the setting up of a comprehensive system of technical education. A board was set up by the local government in 1919 with the view of achieving these ends. The report of the Board for Technical Education appeared a year later. Technical instruction was seen to be of utmost importance given that the proportion of unskilled to skilled labour was extremely high. The board stated that 'no real progress can be expected until the rising generation receives practical technical instruction in sufficient numbers to modify this proportion materially.'

Two main strategies were identified to bring about this progress: the first was to construct a new Central Technical School, the second was to expand the existing institutions,
namely the Bugeja Technical Institute, the Railway Technical School and the Dockyard School. Plans for the central school were drawn up, and a curriculum was created 'for the training of men, young men and boys (say over thirteen and a half years of age) at any time in the daytime and in the evening'. No opportunity would be lost to train people, who would be invited to attend handicraft lessons in their spare time. The expansion of other training set-ups was also planned, with Government aid being envisaged, and with the Navy being asked to help in setting up a training ship for boys intending to go into the Mercantile Marine Service. Since the setting up of a shipbuilding industry was contemplated, it was recommended that the Dockyard should extend its services of instruction. It was calculated that these plans would need a lot of capital, and some proposals - such as that of buying a ship from the Navy in order to train young seamen - had to be given up because of prohibitive costs. However, the report ended by arguing that

both capital and annual expenditure will be fully justified if as a result Malta produced from its population a due proportion of skilled artisans.

Back to Liberal Education

But these grand plans were not to be realized. Indeed, the approaching inauguration of a new political constitution -

77 ibid., p.3
78 ibid.
79 ibid.

which was to give Malta self-government in all areas except in issues related to defence and other reserved matters - modified the vision regarding the function of education in Malta. A British expert, W.N. Bruce, was brought over to Malta to act as a consultant, and under his influence a much more liberal view of education was promoted.

Bruce in fact met with a Board of Education on which at least two of the eight members were staunch supporters of technical education. These were Mr. J. Howard and Count A. Caruana Gatto. Bruce must have heard views on the need to establish technical education from these two gentlemen, and in any case, copies of the 1919 report would have been made available to him. He in fact did recommend to the Director of the Elementary Schools and to the Representatives of the Union of Elementary Teachers that primary schools should introduce practical instruction into the course of studies from the age of ten or eleven upwards. However, his purpose for doing so was different from the one which must have been uppermost on the minds of those who wanted to make education more responsive to the needs of industry. Rather, Bruce saw practical instruction as a solution to a fundamentally educational, not industrial problem, i.e. that in adding a practical element to schools, education would be considered more attractive by parents, and by reluctant students.

Indeed, Bruce's view of education, and particularly of secondary education, was that it ought to be concerned with giving young people a 'general grounding in the main

81 ibid., p.5.
elements of modern culture which is more and more coming to be recognized as the condition of higher studies and professional and industrial life.\(^{82}\) This orientation would give technical schools "the foundation of liberal training for want of which those institutions have so often failed."\(^{83}\) He moreover urged schools not to give in to parental pressure to make education related too narrowly to the immediately utilitarian, for this, in the long run, would lead to blind-alley occupations. He thus argued that

the best preparation for a commercial career [for example] is not to study and master the skills of shorthand, typing or bookkeeping. School should teach geography, industrial and commercial history, and the development of modern scientific discoveries. Intelligent children can be trusted to learn the more mechanical operations of commerce and trade in evening classes.\(^{84}\)

The liberal approach was to be emphasized even more strongly at the University level, which 'greatly needs to be strengthened as a place in which knowledge is pursued for its own sake.'\(^{85}\) Again, Bruce argued that it is this non-utilitarian spirit that would ultimately lead to the best results, since it was liberal education that had been 'most fruitful in producing the triumphs of Applied Science'. The betrayal of that kind of education would lead to mechanical and unprogressive teaching.\(^{86}\)

Bruce did not exclude industry from his educational project, for he did argue for the need of equipping the University 'for the task of undertaking special investigations bearing upon the development of industries on the Island'.\(^{87}\) But his main concern was with the emergent needs of an increasingly (constitutionally) independent nation, where the skills of citizenship were to be fostered, rather than with the industrial and material needs of the country. His emphasis was therefore on the liberal: even adult education ought not to be solely technical,\(^{88}\) and he specifically highlighted the distinction between 'education' and 'instruction'.\(^{89}\) Education was thus to help develop a corporate spirit - an essential quality in the inculcation of the idea and practice of citizenship.

Bruce was clearly an educator in the progressive liberal mould, urging decentralization of the growing administrative departmental bureaucracy so that education would be better placed to respond to the individual needs of its clients.\(^{90}\) He also promoted the idea of equality of opportunity according to ability and irrespective of social background,\(^{91}\) the development of private and church schools so that a variety of educational orientations and organizations would lead to

\(^{82}\) ibid., p.8.
\(^{83}\) ibid.
\(^{84}\) ibid.
\(^{85}\) ibid.
\(^{86}\) ibid., p.8.
\(^{87}\) ibid., p.11.
\(^{88}\) ibid., p.8.
\(^{89}\) ibid., p.9.
\(^{90}\) ibid., p.4.
\(^{91}\) ibid., p.5.
pluralism, and a curriculum which was dynamic and not determined by examinations which, he argued, in themselves often proved to be good servants but bad masters.

The vision for education that Bruce brought with him reflected the economic, social and cultural dynamics that were taking place in England at that time. While there had been many calls for the expansion of technical education in Britain, and while the war had fanned concern over levels of investment in industrial education and research, there was little agreement with the view that technical education ought to be other than an end-on and minor programme to what was considered to be the real goal of schools, i.e. general education. Technical education in Britain in fact did not take off until 1956, despite the committees and reports that addressed the subject. This was mainly due to the fear that in responding to the needs of industry, education would be reinforcing and reproducing a form of life which many liberal educators could not approve. There were fears that vocational instruction would inevitably take its colour from the industrial system, which has pressed education in its service.

Bruce’s recommendations, therefore, seem to have somewhat watered down the appeal for vocational education as an answer to Malta’s economic problems, even though the economic grounds on which his educational philosophy was founded differed radically from those of the country he was addressing in his report. The latter point is important because when the depression of the mid-twenties struck, and Malta found it absolutely necessary to export its unemployment problem, the issue of technical versus liberal education flared up once again.

The Influence of Emigration

The awareness of the lack of educational provision generally, and vocational instruction particularly, was heightened when emigration was again adopted as a key policy in addressing Malta’s excessively large population. A Department of Emigration was established in 1918 in order to better co-ordinate these efforts. Emigrant-receiving countries were becoming more discriminatory and had started stipulating requirements for entry. These often included basic literacy, proficiency in the language of the target country, and work skills. Prospective migrants thus had to be screened before leaving Malta. Many were however, found to be lacking in many of these respects. Indeed as many as ninety percent were illiterate.

H. Casolani, the superintendent of emigration between 1918 and 1930, was soon pointing out the necessity of literacy, the importance of knowing a European language, and the increasingly common requirement from receiving

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92 Ibid., p.6.
93 Ibid., p.7.
96 BLOUET, B., op.cit., p. 179. The president of the committee in charge of emigration was Mr Joseph Howard. This fact further explains his interest in having technical education established on a firm footing in Malta.
countries that intending migrants must possess agricultural and other technical skills. Under his pressure, the government’s labour bureau set up a Migrants’ Training Centre in 1928 to help assure passage for Maltese migrants to Australia. The Centre operated within the Istituto Tecnico Vincenzo Bugia, and offered six to ten week courses in construction work, bush work, Trade Union rules, colloquial English, and general knowledge.

Casolani wrote very thorough reports about the activities of the department and was especially trenchant in his critique of an educational system which, according to him, produced nothing but ‘clerks’. He bemoaned the fact that hundreds of youths from the middle classes were ‘unloaded every year by our public schools’, and while a minority of these did follow a University career to enter a profession, and a few others succeeded in getting a post with the government, the bulk, whose literary and business training is most incomplete – are thrown upon a market that is already overloaded with their kind. They are the flotsam and jetsam who daily gravitate between Strada Reale and this

97 RWGD, 1923-4, B13, paras.44, 47.
98 RWGD, 1927-8, C24.
99 RWGD, 1927-8, C24. The Training Centre proved to be very popular, and between 1928 and 1929, 275 men attended courses there (RWGD for those years, Y2-3). The Centre was eventually transferred to Valletta, and in 1932 was used as a Labour Training Centre not only with prospective migrants, but also to train the unemployed, whose numbers had grown due to world recession. The centre closed down in 1933 (RWGD, 1932-33, IV).

Department to be told there is nothing doing, and that nobody and no country wants them.

The native of Malta, argued Casolani, could never compete on a foreign market of labour, because ‘he is usually a Clerk – or an illiterate’.

Casolani, therefore, consistently urged for a change of mentality, and argued strongly that Malta ought to follow the lead established by Italy and England among others. The former had established special courses in professional and technical education for intending migrants, while the latter had developed vocational courses, farm training and technical colleges for all types of students. Casolani warned that it did the economy and migration efforts no good to keep on producing indifferent clerks rather than skilled agriculturists and poultry farmers, carpenters and cabinetmakers, builders and bricklayers, plumbers and electrical fitters.

Casolani’s critique of a classical form of schooling was thorough and influential. This kind of schooling, he stated, not only failed to respond to the economic needs of the country but was also ‘anaemic, and doled out, at first, by ill-paid and incompetent teachers, and for many years in the crudest form’. He urged a radical reform of elementary and secondary education so that it would fit citizens ‘technically and in other ways, in accordance with labour requirements of other countries’, rather than let boys drift into blind-alley

100 RWGD, 1924-5, C2, para.9.
101 RWGD, 1926-7, C5, para.17.
102 RWGD, 1924-5, C2, paras. 11, 12.
occupations, ending up 'a nuisance to themselves and to the island'. He was in favour of a mixture of specialized training and literary instruction from the earliest classes of the primary school to the highest level of the secondary schools, because the economic and cultural realities of the times were changing.

'Our sons', he pointed out, 'must be made to understand two salient truths. The first that there is no shame in manual labour. And the second that it is useless to hanker after clerkships, and private secretariats which no longer exist except in novels, when thousands of jobs, on the land, await them, all the world over, if they are properly equipped.' He therefore suggested that the Maltese educational system look at experiments in technical education on the continent, though to his mind, the best system for the island would be 'with much modification and adaptation... the system of St Patrick's Salesian Institute at Sliema, which turns out youths who are the embodiment of what a young migrant should be'.

Casolani's lobbying for technical education seems to have been sufficiently influential to warrant a reply by the then Director of Education, A.V. Laferla, who referred to Casolani's comments in one of the yearly reports on the educational system. He acknowledged that elementary schools were presently constituted to give a pupil 'a general education which, by developing his intelligence and general ability, will enable him to fittingly take up his duties as a citizen and as a worker. Other countries have gone further than us and aim at also making him 'useful and handy' through Technical Schools'. He basically agrees with Casolani, saying that 'bookish lore by itself will not help a young man to obtain his living', and that 'we must wake up and, at a very early date' do what other countries were doing.

Laferla however, carefully goes on to distinguish between general and vocational education and to emphatically restate the dichotomy between the two by saying that 'I quite agree that our system by itself does not place the future citizen in a position to get on in life. This does not mean - and on this point we must be very clear - that general education is to be jettisoned or watered down but that vocational training must complete it.' He therefore proposed that at around age thirteen, boys should have the opportunity to attend a junior technical school which would prepare them for practical work.

Casolani's views, rather than those of Laferla, were to be echoed in the political manifestoes of the various political parties which contested elections after the 1921 constitution gave Malta the right to self-government. These manifestoes insisted on the need for technical education, even if this

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102 Ibid., C6, paras. 28,31.
103 Ibid., C7, para.32.
104 Ibid., G7, para. 35.
105 Ibid., G9, para.37.
focus on useful education emerged from, and expressed
different class interests. From the very first electoral
programme of the Malta Labour Party and henceforth in all
subsequent manifestos, the teaching of technical skills was
identified as an important goal. We find a similar insistence
in the electoral programmes of the Nationalist Party and the
Democratic Action Party.

Restructuring Education: the 1930s

Laferla, influenced by the call for technical education from
a number of camps, was further convinced by the need for
change when the influential British Hadow Report of 1926
proposed the division of children on the grounds of ability,
and addressed the issue of practical and technical
education, with particular reference to junior technical
schools.\footnote{Hadow Report, The Education of the Adolescent, (HMSO,
London 1923), in MACLURE, J.s., op.cit., pp.179-187.}
The new emphasis in British educational thought
reflected the economic depression raging across the world,
and hence stressed realism, vocationalism, and the
importance of bringing into the school elements of the
world of the child - both physical and mental. This implied a
diversification of curricula depending on the pupil's abilities
and orientation.

Laferla must have been exposed to similar educational
currents at an Imperial Education Conference which he
attended in London in 1917.\footnote{This Conference took place between June and July, and Laferla
was Malta's representative among forty five participants from
other countries in the Empire.} As he was to report in his

\footnote{RWGD, 1929-30, Mfi.}
This had to change because it had a number of shortcomings: everyone received an education which led nowhere in particular, no discrimination was made between those who were intelligent and those who were not, between girls and boys, between those who wished to proceed to secondary education and those whose future was in the workshop or the field. Such an education led working-class boys to aspire for middle-class occupations, and hence to despise their father's calling. Girls were not being prepared for the home, and as a result they held housework in contempt.

The second phase of educational establishment in Malta would change all that: there would be an emphasis on the formation of a well-trained teaching staff, technical education would be set up for boys, while domestic education would be provided for girls. In accordance with Catholic thinking at that time, girls' schooling would be separate from that of boys, for 'a girl's main object should be the 'home' and every system of education should aim at preparing her to take her place fitting therein'. Needlework would thus be started from the very lowest stages of elementary schooling, and housecraft would be taught during the last two years of a girl's school-life.

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114 Darmanin, M. points out that Pope Pius XI's encyclical letter Divini Ilia Magistri, which encouraged the segregation of pupils according to gender, was published in December 1929 (cf. DARMANIN, M., 'Gender Differentials and Subject Choice in Maltese Secondary Schools', in SULTANA, B.G. (ed.), Themes in Education: A Maltese Reader, (Mireva Publications, Malta, 1991), p.133 and l.a.).

115 RWGD, 1929-30, M3.

116 RWGD, 1929-30, M3.

117 RWGD, 1930-31, M1.

118 RWGD, 1929-30, M3.

119 Total number of unemployed for 1 January 1932 stood at 8660, or double the average number that was normal for Malta (RWGD, 1930-31, Y3). The unemployed were not required to register, but there had been calls for those who wanted to register for employment with the government. In 1933, the number of these had risen to 9204, and by 1936, unemployment was being considered 'the most serious question of the day', with no relief coming through emigration, which had, for the past six years, been reduced to a trickle, due to world recession and the steady stream of clerks and public school boys who are not easily absorbed anywhere' (RWGD, 1935-6, p.165).
future workers seem a responsible, attractive, indeed necessary initiative. It was also clear that the labour market, at that time, could not absorb those working-class students who aimed at achieving social mobility through an investment in education. The compulsory attendance act of 1925 must have increased the number of this group of people, adding further pressure on an already saturated labour market.

In addition to that, the same compulsion law led to the entrapment of 'difficult' children within schools, and practical and manual education was seen to be of educational value in order to motivate students to learn. Indeed, Laferla reported experiments that had been carried out with 'mentally deficient' children who succeeded in learning numbers through handwork (plasticine, weaving, beadwork and drawing). Parents who had previously neglected their children now took better care of them because they realized that they too were capable of achieving something.\textsuperscript{120} Technical education would thus answer to economic necessities by differentiating curricula. It would meet class and gender challenges by obstructing social mobility and redirecting girls back to domesticity, and would rectify educational difficulties by providing an alternative route to learning. Silver's words about developments in education after the Shadow report are particularly relevant to illustrate Laferla's views. He said:

\begin{quote}
the vocational, the manual, the practical, were seen as entering or overlapping with the traditional territory of the liberal or general curriculum, and were often perceived as enhancing its purposes - notably with those pupils who required additional motivation.\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

In other words, at least at the official discourse level, vocational education was seen to have a dignity and a power of its own, as long as it was conducted in a liberal spirit, and that indeed 'vocational education is in the fullest sense also liberal'.\textsuperscript{122}

\section*{Technical Schools}

Within a few years of the announcement of the restructuring of the educational policy, boys were receiving instruction in woodwork in ten centres in elementary schools. Gardening was taught in other schools, while girls were given lessons in design, weaving, bookbinding, tapestry-making, upholstery and domestic subjects.\textsuperscript{123} There was a Handwork Central School housed in the Auberge de France, and a Tailoring School was opened in 1934 for students between 13 and 17 years of age. A Housecraft School was started at Floriana in 1931, and home nursing, babycraft, cooking and table manners were taught.\textsuperscript{124} Female students from the elementary schools visited this school once every fortnight.

\textsuperscript{121} SILVER, H., op.cit., p.161.


\textsuperscript{123} RWGD, 1930-31, M1.

\textsuperscript{124} RWGD, 1933-4, K3-K4.
Of the various efforts on the part of the education department to respond to calls to make education more linked to the needs of the economy, the most useful was seen to be the setting up of technical education as a separate service. While the Commissioner of Labour was partial to the education offered at the Dockyard, he also noted with approval the efforts of the department of education, for these would ‘give a value to... men and women... [they] would give a value to their lives... to what they can do’, thus leading to a sense of worth and social contentment. He also argued that real technical education should start at the age of twelve or thirteen, and go on for six years.

The Commissioner of Labour therefore argued that the initiatives at the elementary school level were useful so far as they served to stimulate thought in the direction of technical education. He drew a distinction between ‘vocational training’ and ‘technical training’. The aim of vocational training was to-ground students in several skills in order to help them in choosing a trade which they could later pursue – ‘handicrafts’. It was merely the instruction of the hand and eye as a necessary complement to general education. Technical training looked at the theoretical and scientific knowledge connected with a craft. The Commissioner’s preference was for technical education, which gave adequate attention to both theory and practice, where skills were taught by competent masters who tested and certified the level attained by their pupils, to the satisfaction of fellow craftsmen.

This was what the Technical School at Mrieħel, opened in April 1930, set out to achieve. The school offered a biannual four-year course in woodwork, metalwork and agriculture to boys who were twelve years of age and above. While completing their elementary education, these technical students would also gain ‘a foundation of technical knowledge, practical and theoretical’. It was envisaged that another four technical schools – three in Malta and one in Gozo – would be opened in the near future. Here two thirds of the time was to be spent on academic subjects, while one third was allotted to practical ones.

It seems that few thought that this school would achieve any positive results, and in fact recruitment was haphazardly organized, with the headmaster touring the last classes of primary schools to invite students to continue their education in this novel way. By 1934, however, the syllabuses at the technical school were raised to City and Guilds levels, and good results were achieved by students who qualified as teachers of handicrafts and who were employed in the Handicraft Centres opened at Marsa and Żejtun. By September 1939 the school accommodated 150

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127 RWGD, 1930-31, Y3.
128 RWGD, 1930-1, M1.
129 RWGD, 1931-2, L2.
130 CAMENZULI, J., op.cit, p.268.
131 RWGD, 1931-2, L2.
students, and the foundations for a senior technical school to cater for three hundred boys were laid at Corradino.\textsuperscript{132}

Despite these efforts to introduce a technical bias in elementary schools, and a prestigious and comprehensive technical education at the secondary level, Laferla repeatedly warned that the project would go to waste if, after such a long investment, graduates from the technical school did not find employment. He in fact hoped that Government, the Army, Navy and Air Force could absorb some of the students every year.\textsuperscript{133} Laferla was also worried that parents still held the traditional prejudice against technical education, scorning manual work and wanting their sons to go to the Lyceum or a secondary school.

Laferla was right to focus on the need for a structure of rewards if technical education was at all to take off and to be seen as a valuable alternative by parents. As things stood at the time, technical education had to face the two main difficulties experienced in England. The first was that grammar-type schools still enjoyed the 'reflected glory of their former esteem'; the second that the latter schools still provided 'the chief avenue, within the state system of education, to occupations of the highest social and economic standing'.\textsuperscript{134} In Malta, the second problem was even more enhanced, since not only the more prestigious, but often the only occupational openings were in the civil

\textsuperscript{132} MYERS, J., op.cit, p.6.
\textsuperscript{133} RWGD, 1936-7, p.506ff.

service, and this required a clerical, rather than a technical type of education.

In a sense, therefore, academic schooling was the most vocational educational alternative available.

\textbf{The War Years}

The war years wrought havoc on educational development in Malta, with school buildings being taken over by the Services and Civil Government Departments, while teachers were absorbed by the Services or seconded for duty with War Emergency Departments.\textsuperscript{135} In addition to this, the outbreak of infantile paralysis in January 1943, led to the closing down of whatever schools were left.

With the war drawing to a close, the new (Acting) Director of Education, J. Brennan, was faced with a major challenge as, 37,000 children - 10,000 more than in 1939 - had to be accommodated in schools. This meant requisitioning houses for the purpose and putting all infant classes on half-time schedules so that the same classroom, equipment and teacher served for two groups of children. Brennan wanted to take in all the children who wished to attend school, and he thus developed a system whereby 30,000 pupils would receive 24 hours of instruction weekly, while the remaining 7,000 infants received 15 hours weekly. By July 1945, 80

\textsuperscript{135} RWGD, 1945-6, p.359; also the report on the Maltese educational system by C. Ellis, reproduced in the \textit{Times of Malta}, 13/1/1943 and 14/1/1943.
per cent of all children in Malta were attending school, even though compulsion was not in force.  

A British expert was also sent by the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies to report and make recommendations regarding education as organized under siege conditions in Malta. C. Ellis noted the many problems, including the stripping of the curriculum of everything except basic subjects in a reduced and frequently interrupted schooling. The question was how best to make do under such conditions in order to 'achieve the greatest good for the greatest number of children in these days of stress [when] much educational orthodoxy will have to be abandoned.'  

Perhaps in the belief that the war was soon to end, Ellis recommended increases in teachers' salaries, the introduction of compulsory education, the setting up of a teachers' training college, and the development of technical education. He pointed out the need for more specialized educational services for mentally-retarded children, for better medical services in schools, and for a team of inspectors for secondary schools. 

A whole section of the report dwelt on technical education. Ellis suggested that school-leavers could be helped in their transition to employment. He noted that the Maltese parent did not have a high regard for technical schooling, and that heads of primary schools seemed to be less than keen to recommend transfer of promising boys to the technical school. A serious problem which Ellis noted with the Mirehel technical school was the fact that students often left after one and a half or two years, grabbing the first employment opportunity that presented itself. 

Given the enormous challenges to reconstruct Malta after the war, Ellis argued strongly that 

The people of Malta and Gozo must be converted to the view that for most of their sons technical education is more suitable than secondary. Something in the nature of a mission or a crusade should be undertaken by the Department of Education to hasten their conversion. The gospel of technical education should be preached repeatedly. 

His contribution to that 'mission' was to recommend that the Marsa technical school be completed, that a closer association between Government technical schools and the dockyard be established, that a school of Navigation be set up, that agricultural courses be given in elementary schools in the north part of the island in addition to evening courses in modern farming methods to older boys and prospective migrants. He recommended that the technical school should offer a course in masonry and that an extensive curriculum in vocational training be offered during the day and evening classes for adolescents and adults, with workshop practice in industry and at the dockyard. Scholarships to British polytechnics and senior technical institutes would ensure that the promising technical students would have the possibility for further education. 

Ellis also wanted that the staff teaching technical subjects have training with other teachers in pedagogy, and that an inspector be appointed to supervise technical education. 

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136 RWGD, 1945-6, pp.359-360. 
137 ELLIS, C., op.cit., p.3. 
138 Ibid.
Noting that the Housecraft School and the Handiwork Schools had been closed down during the war, he recommended that they be reopened as soon as possible since 'Many of the children in the elementary schools have a stronger desire to make things rather than to acquire bookish knowledge.'

Ellis' appeal to the Department to 'preach the gospel' of technical education came at a time when there was a general fear in Malta that once the war was over, the Defence establishments would discharge many of their employees en masse. The war had in fact brought about many financial benefits to the Maltese, providing opportunities for employment and high wages and salaries, leading to an optimism that once the war was over and conditions returned to normal, the gains made would result in a considerable improvement in the standard of living. Having fought side by side with the British, and having contributed valiantly to the war effort, the Maltese Imperial workers, especially those employed at the dockyard, became increasingly bitter about the lower wages they earned in comparison to the British when doing the same kind of work. This disgruntlement eventually led to the organization of a massive strike by the dockyard workers - an event which generated support from other workers and which led to the formation of the General Workers' Union in 1943.

The strike signalled the first major attempt on the part of Maltese workers to organize themselves, and it was considered by the British to be portentous enough to warrant a full investigation by an Admiralty economic adviser, Mr N. Macleod. Of particular relevance, in the subsequent report, is Macleod's constant and not so subtle reminders that the Islands might no longer be seen as an investment by the Defence Departments once the war was over. The theme of economic dependence, and the threat that Malta would starve if the British lost interest in Malta, were to hang like Democle's sword from 1945 onwards.

Sir Wilfred Woods, reporting on Malta's financial position after the war - when self-government was still not restored to Malta - broached the subject, noting the Islands' near total dependence on employment paid for from U.K. funds, just as in the past it was dependent on funds imported by the Knights. 'It does not seem reasonable', he concluded, 'to expect industrial development of sufficient magnitude to add materially to Malta's national income'.

Local industry was to be encouraged and regulated by a series of five-year economic plans, but any attempt in that direction was likely to be small and have minor impact.

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139 ibid.
Woods’ evaluation of the situation must be kept in mind as we look at the attempt to re-establish educational services—technical and general—in the post-war period.

The Post-War Era

The attainment of self-government in September 1947, through a constitution which granted universal franchise, saw the formation of a Labour administration. No clear majority was obtained in subsequent elections in 1950, 1951 and 1953, until the Malta Labour Party, led by Dom Mintoff, again secured government in 1955.

The manifests of the two major parties—the Malta Labour Party and the Nationalist Party—together with those of the Democratic Action Party and Progressive Constitutional Party, featured sections on the need for the development of all educational services, including technical education. The latter was considered to have a key role to play in the economic reconstruction of the Maltese Islands, a role emphasized in particular by the Malta Labour Party which, in its manifesto for the 1950 general elections, for instance, recommended that trade schools should be established in Malta following the model of those found in Turin.

Interest in technical education was of course fanned by the fear that Britain would reduce its defence establishments on the Islands, and that Malta would thus be faced with an economic catastrophe of the first order unless industrialization was not set into motion.

The key post-war challenge facing the Department of Education was the introduction of compulsory elementary education. Woods had noted that there was a general sense of expectancy in Malta with regards to the development of social services, and this was especially true of the unanimous desire to have primary education for all. He noted that such demands could not be ignored, even though the cost of accommodating 13,000 more children together with another 9,000 pupils who were attending schools on a half-time basis required massive expenditure. 1185 additional classrooms had to be built and the salaries of 900 more teachers had to be paid. Woods pointed out that

with the introduction of a form of Government controlled by an electorate which is almost certain to be based on universal franchise, it would be impossible for His Majesty’s Government or the Malta Government to continue to tolerate [this] amount of illiteracy.\(^{145}\)

The pre-war effort to establish and extend technical education had been brought to nothing during the war. The very foundations of the Senior Technical School had been blitzed. Furthermore, the general bias against this form of education was still entrenched in the Maltese people. Brennan noted that the only technical education available was at the Msiehel Government Technical School, which had reopened in 1944 and which was attended by 127 boys, at the Engineering Training Workshop at Hamrun, which catered for around seventy apprentices, and at a small Tailoring School, which had half that number of male students.\(^{146}\)

Brennan criticized parents for considering technical education to be ‘suitable only for those who had no brains

\(^{144}\) ibid., p.34.

\(^{145}\) ibid., pp.34-5.

\(^{146}\) RWGD, 19467, p.458.
or very little primary education.\textsuperscript{147} He also deplored the fact that primary school headmasters did little to fight this prejudice. He tried to persuade parents that the Mriehel School, like the Junior Technical Schools in England, taught not only craft technology but other subjects as well, so that 'with the technological subjects the boys receive an education which preserves a balance between the needs of the workshop and those of the wider world'.\textsuperscript{146} This fact was obviously not being appreciated because the school seemed to attract boys from poor backgrounds in the main, many of whom dropped out before the courses were completed, being only too keen to grab the first employment opportunity that came their way.

Therefore, the problem assailing technical education was, to the Department, a question of lack of status. The Director of Education, in an attempt to rectify the problem, tried to find an educational solution to what was fundamentally an economic problem, and made entry to the Mriehel School regulated by the same examination that was set for the academically-oriented and prestigious Lyceum. Since the boys would be admitted at the same age, had to pass the same examination, and pay the same fees as those charged at the Lyceum, the school would be 'toned up'. The result was however, that, given the same conditions, parents preferred to send their boys to the Lyceum which seemed to them 'to hold a wider scope and brighter social prospects'. Indeed, less than half of the places available at the Technical school were applied for.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{147} RWGD, 1945-6, p.361.

\textsuperscript{148} RWGD, 1946-7, p.459.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., p.459. In 1947, 1204 students applied to enter secondary schools, with technical schools attracting only 78 applicants.

\textsuperscript{150} RWGD, 1948-1954, p.XLV. By the end of 1949, 127 students were attending full time instruction in woodwork and metalwork, 25 in cabinet-making, 153 were following marine and electrical engineering courses.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., p.361.

\textsuperscript{152} RWGD, 1948-9, p.345.
The Schuster Report: 1950

The efforts of Brennan, and of his successor J.P. Vassallo, were supported by the recommendations of Sir George Schuster who was commissioned by the Government to investigate and report on Malta's economic and financial structure. Like Woods, Schuster noted the dangerous, near total dependence of the Islands on employment within - and expenditure by - the British Services, and while he was less pessimistic than the previous economic advisor regarding the potential for industrialization and development policies, he cautioned that 'if one is to be realistic one must realize that no grandiose or magic solution of the existing problems is possible'.

Apart from some development measures, emigration was recommended as the traditional solution to Malta's unemployment problems, although the Islands' chances to strengthen its economic viability would increase if there were to be a serious programme of technical education to create a critical mass of skilled craftsmen. He recognized, however, that a policy of emigration would seriously jeopardize the benefits of the technical education programme, since emigrants were likely to include a fairly high proportion of skilled craftsmen. Nevertheless, he urged the government to give 'an absolute priority' to catering for technical instruction at all levels within the scheme and to the construction of new schools.


On Schuster's advice, an Industrial Training Committee, under the chairmanship of the Director of Labour, was set up in late 1949. The Director of Education was a member of this board, and J.P. Vassallo reports that this committee 'went deeply into the question of technical education and
made recommendations which... met with the approval of a number of experts who have since visited the islands. UNESCO, whose educational aid policies were then favouring the diversification and vocationalization of educational systems in developing countries, provided funds to help the refurbishing of the physics laboratory at the Hamrun Technical School, and by 1953, 383 students were applying to enter that school compared to 98 in 1948. Students on roll at the Mrieħel Technical School doubled between those years to reach a total of 169. But despite this apparent progress, the rate of course completion was discouragingly low in both schools, where only seventeen or eighteen students actually completed the course every year. The Director of Education considered this to be a serious failure and correctly attributed the high rate of drop-outs to the lack of outlets at present offered to those students who terminate the courses. Without any suitable incentive... it is impossible to persuade the majority of parents to let their sons finish the courses.

Once again, the attempt to instigate economic and industrial growth by providing skilled human capital seemed to be jeopardized by the fact that people wanted that employment opportunities would first be available in industry. Only then would they be willing to invest any further in technical education. In other words, the 'law' that supply creates its own demand was certainly failing to work. In this no-win situation, the recommendations of the Industrial Training Committee were apparently shelved, with the excuse that they were found to be too costly and insufficiently appealing to the younger generation who, as research has consistently shown, is often very much aware where employment opportunities lie. The latter reason is more likely to be the case, as an economic report later revealed that grants given by the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund for the development of technical education, amounting to £45,000 in 1945 and £83,000 in 1950 had not been used. Only £12,500 had in fact been spent by 1955.

Despite these set-backs, the Department continued its policy of stressing the need for technical education, echoing the 1949 Committee's recommendation to set up a technical institute as well as trade classes to meet the needs of local industrialists. The former would cater for prospective technicians in engineering, and would be equipped with laboratories, machines, tools and scientific apparatus, while the latter would train those who aspired to


156 RWGD, 1948-1954, pp.XLII-XLV.
be craftsmen in the various trades. The education share of
the social equipment project envisaged that by 1953 the
school population would increase by 12,500. 1,222 more
primary school classrooms were required. A new Lyceum for
boys and a secondary school for girls had to be built in
Malta, while a combined Lyceum, a girls' secondary school
and boys' trade school complex were needed in Gozo. It was
projected that another hundred classrooms were required to
expand technical education, with twenty of these earmarked
to set up a girls' trade school. A Housecraft Centre was
planned.169

The Industrial Training Act

The above plans, like the recommendations of the
Industrial Training Committee, were to remain unheeded161
for at least another decade. More promising was the passing
of an Industrial Training Act in 1952, which provided for the
regulation of the employment and training of apprentices.
Through this Act it was hoped that attractive schemes of
training would be created, so that indentured apprentices
would have an incentive to complete their education and
become craftsmen.162 It also placed a new responsibility on
employers who in the past had failed to invest in the
training of their workers. As the Director of Labour
complained, 'The view is prevalent in some quarters that

160 FIROTTA, J., Fortress Colony..., op.cit, Volume 1, p.333.
161 BALOGH, T. & SEERS, D., op.cit. p.XXIII, para.89.
162 RWGD, 1949-50, p.479.
163 RWGD, 1948-9, p.344. Foreign workers in fact were allowed
into Malta on the condition that they provided training to local
employees. But this policy proved difficult to regulate and
enforce.
164 Ibid., p.345.
165 Report of the Department of Education (RDE), 1948-1954,
p.XLVI.
and Guilds examinations, and the most successful went on to further technical education.\textsuperscript{166}

At around this time, Industrial Training Centres were also set up in Malta and Gozo on the advice of the International Labour Organization Mission.\textsuperscript{167} These centres offered two-year courses for young male adults between the ages of 16 and 18 plus, as well as ten-month accelerated courses, more industrial than educational in focus, aimed at preparing semi-skilled labour for local industries, and for those who intended to emigrate. These courses proved particularly popular with the latter group, and it led to a situation where, with the exodus of over 11,000 migrants between 1953 and 1954, the skilling of the pool of labour was being enjoyed by target countries rather than by Malta. Indeed, the Director of Labour reported that "Employers have made representations to the Department on the situation arising out of the tempo of emigration", but he could not do much about that since "it is naturally difficult to place an embargo on the migration of skilled workers".\textsuperscript{168}

Fears of the run-down of Maltese manpower by the Imperial Government led the Maltese government to see emigration as the only possible solution. The official programme of mass emigration in the post-war period had seen 20,036 register to leave the Maltese shores in 1947.\textsuperscript{169}

With Malta's population growing at 8,000 a year, this policy made sense but it also carried its disadvantages since the steady drain of skilled men 'further disturbed the prevailing unbalanced ratio between skilled and unskilled workmen'.\textsuperscript{170} A total of 10,875 emigrated in 1954, and while this certainly helped in reducing the pressure of surplus population, it was considered by the Minister for Emigration, Labour and Social Welfare to be positive only if Malta did not lose an inordinate proportion of its skilled workers, and if the diversification of the economy proceeded as planned.\textsuperscript{171}

**Thomas Balogh and Human Capital Theory**

The problem of investing in the skilling of a work force, only to lose those skills to another country through emigration, was also highlighted by Thomas Balogh in his 1955 report on the economic problems of Malta.\textsuperscript{172} Invited to Malta to help the newly-elected Labour Government in its estimation of the economic needs of Malta and of the help that could be offered by Britain, Balogh - a left-wing fellow of Balliol College, Oxford - arrived in Malta in May 1955 with his assistant Dudley Seers. Balogh calculated that Malta had lost up to half of its skilled manpower. Even the Dockyard, despite its intensive and costly apprenticeship training scheme, had suffered a net loss of skilled workers in 1954, and was constrained to retain the services of those

\textsuperscript{166} RDE, 1955, p.28. This further education was to be provided by the College of Arts, Science and Technology, the establishment of which will be discussed below.

\textsuperscript{167} RDE, 1955, p.30.

\textsuperscript{168} RWGD, 1953-4, p.522.

\textsuperscript{169} cf. Legislative Assembly Debates 18/12/1947, quoted by

\textsuperscript{170} PIROTTA, J., *Fortress Colony...*, Vol. 1, op.cit., p.122.

\textsuperscript{171} PIROTTA, J., ibid., p.124.

\textsuperscript{172} PIROTTA, J., *Fortress Colony...*, Vol. 2, op.cit., p.305.

\textsuperscript{172} BALOGH, T. & SEERS, D., op.cit.
who were due for retirement.\textsuperscript{173} Balogh was, of course, aware of the no-win situation in this regard, for a considerable decline in emigration would make it very difficult to find jobs for the labour force. With a population doubling in 25 years, it was impossible now, or in the foreseeable future, to satisfy the ensuing demand for jobs, houses, and social capital, 'even if there were enough room (and water) in the Islands'.\textsuperscript{174}

Like many other economic experts and consultants before him, Balogh\textsuperscript{175} identified the excessive growth in population and the dependence on the expenditure of the Services as the key challenges to Malta's well-being, and despite the fact that unemployment was not rampant, and that living standards were higher than before the war, the islands were facing a most severe crisis due to the steady rise of a budget deficit and the exhaustion of War Damage and other funds. The proportion engaged in manufacturing industries had fallen from one fourth of the whole population in 1851 to an eighth in 1948. Agriculture and fishing were being neglected, and the fastest growth occurred in commerce - where Maltese imports were close to double the exports - and in the professions. 'In the last resort', concluded Balogh, 'all the incomes and employment on the island are derived from the U.K. government, as

\textsuperscript{176} would rapidly be revealed if for any reason it were abandoned as a base.'\textsuperscript{176}

Balogh placed the blame for Malta's vulnerability squarely on the British, whose policy towards Malta had been almost entirely based on their own military needs. He considered that this in itself constituted 'an unanswerable case for adequate help to the Islands in their present effort to find alternative sources of employment'.\textsuperscript{177} He believed that British firms could be persuaded to build branch factories in Malta, and argued that it was a cheaper solution for Britain, in the long run, to help Malta stand on its own feet economically, rather than to leave the Islands reliant on grants. The problems were many, and included a lack of water supply and poor electricity distribution and harbour facilities. On their part, the Maltese had to realize the importance of investing in education at the primary level, and in technical education which had been 'shockingly neglected despite insistent advice from practically all expert advisers'.\textsuperscript{178}

The British could help by providing technical experts, skilled foremen, middle managers to bring the technical and managerial firms up-to-date. 'Maltese workers', he argued, were 'equivalent to British manpower for the same jobs, given the same tools'.\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{173} ibid., p.6, para.15.
\textsuperscript{174} ibid., p.7, para.19.
\textsuperscript{175} Balogh indeed remarks that it was 'astonishing and ominously significant' that so much of the 1912 Royal Commission's Report still applied to Malta in 1955 (ibid., p.7, para.22 f.n.1).
\textsuperscript{176} ibid., p.9, para.28.
\textsuperscript{177} ibid., p.11, para.41.
\textsuperscript{178} ibid., p.28, para.117.
\textsuperscript{179} ibid., p.25, para.100.
Balogh's views were very influential with the Labour Party leader, Dom Mintoff. Both men agreed in integration with Britain as the constitutional solution to Malta's economic problems. Balogh tended to strengthen Mintoff's belief that he was pursuing the right path in the latter's efforts to equip Malta with a viable economy while at the same time give the Island the widest measure of self-government short of independence. He also must have influenced Mintoff greatly in the educational policy to be pursued, for although the Labour Party had, since its first manifesto for the 1921 election, highlighted the necessity of technical and trade education, it was Balogh who formulated the most coherent 'human capital' approach to education. Balogh had in fact been one of the better known exponents of the utility of vocational education in the development of economies, and had promoted that view in a number of British colonies besides Malta, including some African countries and India.  

Others besides Balogh were promoting the idea that technical education was the road to economic development. Reggie Miller, the CWU's General Secretary, informed Mr C. J. German, a labour expert brought over to Malta by Mintoff in 1956, that there was a need for technical education to be developed at the University level as well, so that personnel would be found to manage new industries. Mr German, while praising government initiatives in technical training and the apprenticeship schemes offered by the Admiralty, noted the lack of co-operation in the provision of training by some firms, and the relative lack of a reward structure for apprentices. This did not help Malta's endemic shortage of skilled labour, a problem which had historic roots but which was gaining more serious proportions given the goal of promoting the industrialization process. In addition to this, not only did emigration diminish the already small pool of skilled workers, but those who were trained often left their trade to work with the Government, attracted as they were by security of tenure.

The view that education was the solution to economic difficulties was being pushed by influential international agencies such as Unesco, the International Labour Office and the World Bank, all of which pursued funding policies which promoted diversified education systems in developing countries, and provided loans to governments that followed their advice to vocationalize schooling. England too at this time was pursuing technical education with increased vigour. This kind of schooling was in fact being presented as an 'alternative road' in education, the view being influenced by the new psychology of the time which proposed that there were two different kinds of students, one that preferred abstract thinking, the other concrete

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183 BENAYOT, A., op.cit.
operational tasks. A state of educational reports were published, all arguing for the role of education in stimulating the economy. With local and foreign opinion moulders pressing for education as a key strategy in the plan to diversify the economy, a comprehensive plan for vocationization was prepared in Malta.

The Labour Party and Technical Education

Mention of this ambitious plan can be found not only in the reports of the education department, but also in a report by D. Crichton Miller. The latter was invited to Malta in 1956 to report on the developments in education in Malta for the period covering the first twenty-one months of Labour Party Administration. The evaluative report appeared in 1957, and it suggested 'ways in which these developments [in education] can be effectively related to the economy of Malta'. Crichton Miller noted the comprehensive and detailed plans to extend technical education in Malta, and was 'much impressed by the care

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187 ibid., para.41.

188 ibid., para.66.

189 ibid., para.41.
Higher level courses were also planned, and these would be organized at a Polytechnic. This project had been proposed by Mr J.C. Jones, the Technical Education Adviser to the Colonial Office. Whether this project would indeed materialize was still 'shrouded in mists of uncertainty'. A separate Department of Technical education was created to look over these many developments in a more efficient manner, and while Crichton-Miller considered this to be a 'curious arrangement', he thought that this was justified, given the organizational demands.

Crichton-Miller was therefore generally supportive of this new vocational direction. Indeed his recommendations were to develop education further on the same lines. However he did not fail to demonstrate the possible pitfalls of such a strategy. He pointed out the need for a less academic form of secondary schooling which would teach commercial subjects, but still bring students up to a GCE level. He also argued for the need for raising the standards of science learning for those choosing sciences. He advised that more space be made for it in the curriculum even if this meant the virtual exclusion of cultural subjects. 'Unless this line is adopted', he warned, 'the attempt to produce high class scientists and technologists in Malta will be prejudiced from

194 Crichton-Miller, D., op. cit., para.46.
195 ibid., para. 42. The first, and only, Director of Technical Education in Malta's educational history was Mr J. Axissa. His department rejoined the Education Department in 1959.

As Crichton-Miller correctly pointed out, the main problem was one which had already been experienced in previous attempts to vocationalize curricula and schools. The British expert thus warned that:

So far as the economy of Malta is concerned, education can play only a secondary part. If employment is of the kind which rewards highly qualified workers, then young people will be ready to undergo the training. The facilities for such training will be there, but they will not be properly used till the incentive exists.

Crichton-Miller in fact emphatically warned against the apparent assumption that educational development could lead economic development. The grand plans to construct a Polytechnic, which required a large capital expenditure, could only be successful if the school managed to attract the able students. And this was unlikely unless and until the people, parents and pupils alike, can see that success brings rewards that compare most favourably with those that fall on the University graduates'. Falling that, there would be an understandable reluctance to invest in further

193 ibid., para.35.
194 ibid., para.67.
195 ibid., para.79.
technical education. Crichton-Miller therefore explained that the Government was going to pay a high price in assuming that economic development would indeed come about, and that the rewards for technicians would indeed be there. He thus concluded that it was 'not possible to recommend that money should be spent on new buildings in the hope that this condition' of industrial development 'will be fulfilled'. It was wiser to focus on the lower levels of junior and senior technical schools and gradually expand to meet rising demands.  

Investment in Technical Education

Crichton-Miller’s warnings were relevant and timely. Malta’s attempts to attract British industrial investment were generally falling miserably, despite the various incentives offered by the government. On Balogh’s advice, preference was given to labour intensive industries, since these did not generally require a large capital outlay. Heavy Industry was unadvisable because it gave little employment for the space occupied, because of the possible pollution caused, and because it accentuated the problem of poor water supply.

But the co-operation of the British was not forthcoming. Furthermore, emigration possibilities were narrowing down. The final blow came in 1957 with the publication of a White Paper on future British Defence policies. Fears, which had arisen after the war, that the Services’ Department would be reduced were confirmed as the paper indicated Britain’s intention to implement world-wide reduction in defence investments over the following five years. With the dockyard’s future in jeopardy at a time when industrialisation in Malta had not yet taken off, and with the pool of unemployed rising as emigration prospects diminished dramatically, the future for Malta’s economy could not have appeared more dismal.

Under these circumstances, there were few options available to the government in its attempts to develop the local economy. A focus on technical education was an understandable reaction, since it is generally believed that it is much easier to reform and control school systems than economic ones. As a result, the first in a series of five-year economic plans dedicated a separate section to technical education, showing that the development of technical education which Crichton-Miller had noted three years earlier had been sustained. This 1959 development plan stated that in any attempt ‘to diversify the Maltese economy by attracting industries to the Island, a high priority must obviously be given to technical education’.

Investment in technical education at all levels proceeded at full speed. A full £1,036,272 were earmarked for

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195 ibid., paras.46, 68-70.
197 ibid., para.78.
development of technical schools, compared to £1,547,750 for both the primary and secondary sectors. Teachers were sent on scholarships abroad to train in the teaching of technical subjects.

1956 saw the laying of the foundations of a Technical Institute and the first Secondary Technical School. Both were located at Corradino. A second Secondary Technical school, situated at Hamrun, and established in 1959, aimed at catering for 1,000 female students.

The Technical Institute, it was hoped, would accommodate up to 1,000 students in a building equipped, staffed and organized on 'modern lines as becomes an institution of its magnitude and importance'. This institute would bring together the dispersed services of the various technical schools on the island and the cost was to be funded by a Colonial Development and Welfare Project.

Technical schooling of this sort would have ideally been aimed at students who were sixteen years old and above, but since the school-leaving age in Malta was fourteen,

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201 ibid.
203 These schools included the Hamrun (on average catering for 300 students) and the Mriehel schools (300 students), the Nautical and Wireless Telegraphy School (180 students) and the Tailoring School (120 students) at Msida, the Apprentices' School at Marsa (330 students), the Government Industrial Training Centre (GITC) at Marsa (80 students) and the Gozo Technical School (55 students). The average number of students was calculated from different Department of Education reports from 1957 to 1962.

students could not be expected to re-enter the educational system after a two-year absence. School-leavers sat for a competitive examination and entered technical schools where they had a common curriculum during the first year. They then specialized and sat for City and Guilds examinations at the intermediate level after three years and at the advanced level after five. While the focus was on developing trade proficiency, attention seems to have been given to provide 'ample opportunity for [the student's] general education to be continued... as the skilled craftsman must be a well educated person conscious of and able to fulfil his
duties as a Catholic, a member of the family and a citizen'.204

The Technical Institute in fact had to face much the same kind of problems encountered by previous technical education initiatives. According to reports by the education department, the Institute tended to attract the ‘wrong’ kind of student, one who generally lacked a sufficiently high standard of general education. It also suffered from a low status, to the extent that the Director attempted to ‘tone up’ its image by having a tie and a badge added to what had previously been the uniform of the Hamrun School.205 The success of the Institute was moreover undermined by the lack of qualified teachers as well as by the lack of funds to buy the necessary equipment.

Secondary Technical Schools were presented as ‘an alternative type of school to the Grammar School with which they share a common entrance examination’, and, like the Grammar School, led to General Certificate Examinations. The technical bias in these schools took up a small portion of the timetable and had ‘an informative and educational purpose quite different from that which aims at training a craftsman in his trade’.206 They combined ‘high cultural levels with the development of practical experience’, and were ‘admirably suited for the needs of our times’.207

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204 RDE, 1963, p.22.
207 ibid., p.16.

Much effort was made to give Secondary Technical Schools a high profile. In fact, the second economic plan, drawn up by a Nationalist Government in 1964, stressed the need for consolidating technical education at all levels ‘to meet all demands of industry under each of the various categories of skill, from the professional level to craftsmen and other skilled labour’. The plan placed ‘particular emphasis’ on ‘the increase of the facilities available for secondary technical education in order that a sufficient flow of students may be available for professional and other more advanced technical studies’.208

Parents’ prejudice against technical education was however evident both with regards to the Technical Institute and the Secondary Technical Schools. The Director of Education in fact had to insist that these were two different kinds of schools, between which ‘there is, in reality, no connection’ and ought not to be confused with ‘non-selective forms of secondary education’.209

It appears however, that Secondary Technical Schools did catch on, and by 1967 the Director of Education noted with satisfaction that increasingly large numbers of parents were choosing to send their children there. This was true not only for boys’ schools (at Paola and Naxxar), but also for schools catering for girls (at Hamrun), and revealed ‘a more enlightened attitude to secondary education... [This change was] welcome since no one can pretend that all boys and

209 RDE, 1964, p.16.
girls will profit from one single type of secondary education.\textsuperscript{210}

It is worth noting that changes in attitudes towards technical education were not the result of supply, but of demand factors. The Director himself noted that as local industry developed, there was an increase in the need for technically qualified students, and the posts offered were becoming more and more remunerative.\textsuperscript{211} The marked preference for grammar schools was still there, but by 1969, on the eve of the introduction of secondary education for all, a total of 2,700 boys and 1,564 girls were in secondary technical schools, with a large percentage having given this type of schooling their first choice. An annexe had in fact to be opened to the girls' school, first at St Venera, and then at Birkirkara. No doubt, the newly-founded guidance and counselling services must have helped in the channelling of students to different forms of secondary schooling, and the emphasis on testing must have given legitimacy to the tracking of students.\textsuperscript{212} However, the key to the popularity, even 'prestige', enjoyed by the secondary technical schools was at least partly due to the development of a structure of rewards in the labour market for those who completed a technical education.\textsuperscript{213}

This prestige was also heightened by the fact that the plan to cater for technical education at a higher level through the establishment of a polytechnic had, in fact, been realized by the mid-sixties. The first economic development plan had noted that 'if the rising generation is to be persuaded to look with greater interest at the possibility of a career in industry, the educational ladder in applied science and technology must be completed by the establishment of a higher institution, such as a Polytechnic, providing courses up to degree standard. This is also necessary to meet the eventual needs of industry'.\textsuperscript{214} This higher institution was in fact a logical extension of the belief in the human capital theory as an integral part of the strategy for economic diversification and development, and was to be 'the crowning achievement of future technical education in the Islands'.\textsuperscript{215}

The commencement of Technical education at a higher level was very modest, with a range of courses being offered in makeshift premises in Senglea towards the end of 1959. However, the Government saw to requesting funds from the United Nations to cover the cost of building the institution and to providing technical staff from the United Nations. In 1960 the request was approved.\textsuperscript{216} Construction started in

\textsuperscript{210} RDE, 1967, p.36.
\textsuperscript{211} RDE, 1968, p.46.
\textsuperscript{212} A Council of Europe expert from Sweden, Ms M. Vestin, helped set up a guidance and counselling section in Malta in 1968, while a Unesco consultant, Mr C.J. Tuppen, helped in the development of a testing unit. Maltese teachers were sent abroad to specialize in both areas. (Cf. RDE, 1969, p.14, pp.26-7; VESTIN, M., Recommendations, 1968 cyclostyled; TUPPEN, C.J.S., Malta: Educational Assessment in Schools, Unesco, Paris 1970.)
\textsuperscript{213} RDE, 1969, p.46.
\textsuperscript{214} Development Plan for Maltese Islands 1959-1964, op.cit., p.55.
\textsuperscript{215} RDE, 1963, p.38.
\textsuperscript{216} RWGD, 1959, p.27; 1961, p.27. £450,000 were provided by the Colonial Welfare and Development Fund, while Unesco offered
1962, and a year later, courses were offered to 370 students in the blocks that had been completed.\(^{217}\) Located in Msida, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology became fully operational in 1966, and the number of students grew rapidly, so that there were 1430 students in 1969 when in 1963 there had only been 370.\(^{218}\) The College had modern equipment, laboratories, local and foreign staff,\(^{219}\) and three departments, one in Hotel Administration, another in Commerce and Business Studies, and a third in Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering.

Links between the MCAST and Industry were co-ordinated by the Careers and Guidance service. The latter also helped a foreign consultant to carry out a manpower survey to assess the skills needs of industry.\(^{220}\) While there was a steady growth in student enrolment, from 410 in 1963 to 752 in 1966, around forty per cent failed to complete the courses. Moreover staff was difficult to come by.\(^{221}\)

When the Labour government came to power in 1971, it was to consider the MCAST as 'a white elephant inherited from the Nationalists'. The MCAST and the secondary technical schools alike were criticized for giving too much importance to theory and not enough to practice.\(^{222}\) The MCAST was in fact transformed into a 'New' University in 1977.\(^{223}\)

Problems with Technical Education

While the reports of the department of education from the mid-1950s onwards tend to present a rosy picture of the burgeoning technical education services in Malta, there are long-term educational plans, transmitted in many cases through complementary efforts and further related studies by Unesco, had their major impact. (SOBEL, L., 'The Human Capital Revolution in Economic Development: Its Current History and Status', Comparative Education Review, Vol.22, 1978, p.250).


\(^{222}\) Cf. speech by Dr J.Cassar, reported in L-Orizzont, 17/3/76 and 18/3/76.

\(^{223}\) L-Orizzont, 29/11/77. The Labour government made this part of the package of tertiary education reforms, "ensuring" that sciences would be given more importance than arts, and that the new institution would no longer carry the stigma of being the caretaker while the 'old' university remained 'the master' (L-Orizzont, 29/11/77 and 14/9/79).
strong indications that this sector was not working out as well as expected or as officially portrayed. The plan for educational expansion, which was to lead to the introduction of secondary education for all under a Nationalist Government in 1970, brought with it a series of reports by foreign consultants. These provide a critical appraisal of the efforts of the Department of Education, and are an invaluable source of information. In his report on educational planning, J. Cameron noted for instance that 'The distinction maintained in Malta between grammar and secondary technical schools is artificial', \(^{224}\) while L.J. Lewis observed that the latter schools sought 'to approximate themselves to the grammar school image instead of developing their own independent character. Also, there are indications that teachers in the grammar and secondary technical schools are jealous of each other'. \(^{222}\)

A report by R.B. Cluff,\(^ {226}\) a Unesco consultant to Malta on educational testing and measurement – noted in 1971 that the economic development and productivity on the islands was being jeopardized by the 'waste and misuse of the country's only natural resource, the intellect of the people'. The most able children were still being attracted to select grammar schools, where they were taught languages and arts, and where 'nominal attention' was given to science and technology. The assumption seemed to be that 'bright young people', once educated in the classical education,


\(^{225}\) LEWIS, L.J., op. cit., p.4.


could learn later to do all of the important things which needed to be done. This assumption might have been valid at one time, many years past, but today in a technological/scientific world it is subject to great criticism and challenge'. \(^{227}\) In addition to this, the 'amazingly well-equipped technical schools and institutes... are poorly organized and used... [with] no overall system. Each institution and each course is terminal and an entity in itself. There are no planned levels of advancement from one institution to another'. Enrolment was low in all technical education establishments and could be doubled. The MCAST was 'probably less than one quarter utilized'. There was little possibility of students changing courses if they realized that they were not interested in a particular track. The result was that about 70 per cent of those enrolled left without completing their course. \(^{228}\)

Cluff considered these problems to be serious, given Malta's ambitions for economic development. He failed to understand why the technical institute continued to be used as a dumping ground to which 'teachers and headteachers encouraged those boys who were least happy and successful in school to apply'. He therefore proposed a system whereby all children would spend ages 11-13 in a comprehensive middle school, where all would have courses in general education and in Vocational, Commercial, and Home Industrial subjects and Fine Arts so that children would be able to discover vocational interests and talents. Thus,
all youngsters could be given introductory technical courses to permit them to become acquainted with various fields and to gain experience which will help them make decisions and choices at the conclusion of the middle school. Basic courses in wood-working, metal work, radio and electronics, plastics and perhaps printing, textiles, aeronautics, culinary arts and hand crafts, taught at a very elementary level, would be sufficient to enlighten and spark interest in those specially endowed. Girls, in addition to home arts, should be allowed to participate in such programmes if they feel so inclined.229

This, according to Cluff, would encourage many of the brightest children who were 'technically endowed' to enrol in secondary technical schools (ages 14-16). Here they would go deeper into clerical, mechanical, electrical, agricultural, woodworking, automotive or domestic science trades. If these procedures were followed, technical schools would attract a more normal enrolment of children of all ability levels, and technical education would ultimately be elevated to 'new levels'. Students could switch tracks once in the secondary school, moving in any direction between technical, grammar or general types of schooling. Technical school graduates could decide to go into further education at a college level (ages 17-18) in a technical institute, and thence to the MCAST for a degree course.230

229 ibid., p.15.

The Technical Education of Women

If developments in technical education for men in the post-war period were substantial, the case was certainly not true for women. As has been seen, much of the provision for women emphasized the traditional domestic-oriented skills, and the closest the curriculum came to preparing women for work outside the home was in a two-year course at the Housecraft School which prepared young women for employment in hotels and restaurants. Generally, women found unpaid employment in their own homes, or worked as domestics in the homes of Service personnel.

It is true that the second world war did for Malta what the first did for Europe, that is, it fostered the emancipation of women. Women were in fact employed in growing numbers to fill posts traditionally occupied by males, and took up responsibilities in the Civil, Imperial and Services Departments. However, while 'the need for female labour caused by the war helped the Maltese woman to acquire an important economic role [and] contributed to the loosening of the social strictures that hemmed her in and prepared the way for the acquisition of full political rights',231 the opposition to this emancipation was very strong. This opposition came not only from males generally, but also

231 PIROTTA, J., *Fortress Colony*, Vol.1, op. cit., p.12. Pirotta quotes the *Times of Malta*, 4/7/1944 which reports that by mid-1944 there were 1,038 established female employees and 1,234 temporary ones employed by the Civil Government.
from a patriarchal political system and an even more patriarchal Catholic church.\footnote{232}

The Acting Director of Labour, while reiterating the belief that arduous and skilled work could be best done by males - a belief which was prevalent at the time - did express reservations about the fact that there were 24,000 single women who did not work, and who could thus be considered as 'potential industrial workers'. 'Such a large number of 'idle' women in Malta represents a potential source of national income hitherto practically untapped because of the urgent necessity of allocating all jobs available to the unemployed males'.\footnote{233} In addition to this, female employees were obliged to resign from work on getting married, a practice which appalled Balogi, who considered this to be a 'deliberate and thoughtless wastage of valuable talent and priceless technical knowledge'.\footnote{234}

By 1963, the Director of Education could claim that there really existed no purely technical training for females in Malta's secondary schools.\footnote{235} The secondary technical school for girls at Hamrun, opened in 1959, did not provide much in terms of a 'technical bias'. While the boys' school offered options in technical drawing, metalwork and woodwork, besides physics, chemistry, biology, general and agricultural science, the girls' school predictably focused on needlework, cookery and home economics. Science was excluded, though typewriting, shorthand, commerce and principles of accounts were eventually added.\footnote{236} While, as will be seen in the next chapter, the seventies brought with them further developments in vocational schooling for both male and female students, the emphasis on the channelling of the latter towards the household economy remained a distinctive feature of the 'technical' education provided by the state.

\section*{Conclusion}

This chapter gave an account of the development of technical education from the foundation of the Technical and Manual School in 1893 to the setting up of an intricate system of technical education services in the post-war era up to 1971. A number of characteristics were seen to have plagued the initiatives taken throughout that eighty year period, and these included:

\begin{itemize}
  \item a. the tendency for technical schools to attract the least motivated and achieving students,
  \item b. the utilization of these schools by mainstream educational institutions as 'dumping grounds' towards which they could channel problematic students,
  \item c. the low status of the vocational schools within the overall schooling system,
\end{itemize}

\footnote{236}{RDE, 1969, p.32.}
CHAPTER FOUR

THE RISE OF VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

The Economic Background

The Labour Party was elected to government in 1971, and this political change ushered in reforms in almost every aspect of Malta's social fabric, including education. As the 1973-1980 economic plan points out, the main challenge facing the Islands was the development of economic independence, the diversification of a hitherto fortress economy, and the concomitant target of the creation of enough jobs to absorb all the workers engaged in the British Defence Sector. As had been established in the first development plan, focus was to be placed on the setting up of a local technological and research base. This was to be sustained by the fostering of adequate industrial skills in the educational system.  


The stark reality of British withdrawal from the Islands was the loss of 5,000 jobs held by Maltese employees working with Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force. Another 1,400 Maltese uniformed personnel serving the British forces in Malta and overseas, and 1,400 Maltese indirectly employed with the British services as maids, taxi drivers, and so on would end up jobless. A *Times of Malta* editorial vividly captures the anxiety that was generated due to the rundown of the British forces, scheduled to leave the Islands by 1979:

> When there are already 6,000 registered unemployed, does the GWU really believe that jobs can be found for the additional 7,500 breadwinners about to find themselves redundant? How are they going to feed the families? By queuing for the dole which Mr Mintoff concedes to them or by being made to emigrate to Libya?  

There were predictions that the numbers of unemployed would swell to 19,000 by the end of 1972, while others calculated that the loss of the British services would have an effect on local private enterprise, including night-clubs, the building industry and all sorts of private trade. 'Imagine', said a correspondent for the *Times of Malta*, '23,000 jobless, and the chain reaction will start'.

While the economy was eventually to fare better than most thought it would, 1970-1974 were particularly challenging not only because of the loss of jobs with the British, but because the international energy crisis and unprecedented inflationary pressures made the situation worse in many ways. Registered unemployment rose to 8,083 by March 1972, and would have kept rising had the Government not created emergency labour corps which absorbed as many as 7,810 persons in 1976.

Malta's traditional solution to economic crisis, emigration, was again resorted to, with 3,585 leaving the island in 1973. But world recession meant that more and more receiving countries would impose restrictions on the flow of immigrants. By 1976 emigration figures had gone down to 1,366. In addition to this, insufficient employment opportunities in the receiving countries resulted in another flow of unsuccessful migrants returning to Malta. This swelled the ranks of the unemployed even further. Indeed, early in 1977 the Government embarked on a publicity campaign in Australia, Canada, the United States and England to request Maltese migrants there to make every effort to stay in those countries and not flood the local market.

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7 *Times of Malta*, 26/4/72.
8 RWGD, April 1975 - August 1976, p.96. These figures include the Pioneer Corps, the Dirghajja il-Maltesin, and Auxiliary Workers.
10 RWGD, April 1975 - August 1976, p.99. The report notes that severe emigration restrictions were imposed by Australia in October 1974.
market. Still, in 1978 5,499 migrants returned to Malta compared to 1,428 who left the islands.\textsuperscript{11}

Malta’s attempts to attract foreign investment - an endeavour which began in the post-war period and which was reinvigorated after the independence of the islands in 1964 - led to the establishment of a manufacturing base. This accounted for just seventeen per cent of the total number of gainfully employed in the early sixties, and increased to about thirty-three per cent during the late seventies.\textsuperscript{12} However, the government’s strategy to attract labour intensive industries to Malta was based on the provision of cheap labour. Differential wages for males and females meant that the former, rather than the latter, moved into the new manufacturing sectors in the clothing, textile, and electronic equipment industries.\textsuperscript{13} Opportunities for women in semi- and unskilled labour meant that women were attracted to work, and indeed female employment as a percentage of total number of gainfully occupied increased from just over 18 per cent in the early sixties to about 26 per cent in the late seventies.\textsuperscript{14}

Malta’s efforts to become a viable economic unit included investment in tourism and agriculture besides manufacturing. The rapid increase of tourism during the seventies was probably the most important factor which accounted for the satisfactory performance of the Maltese economy, though this boom in tourism was heavily undermined by world recession.\textsuperscript{15} Unemployment figures soared again between 1980 and 1984, and the Government had to impose a wage and price freeze in its 1983 budget.\textsuperscript{16} The economy fared better after 1985, but unemployment was still relatively high in 1986, with 8,499 registering for work, and 2,534 in emergency labour corps.

The change of government in 1987 brought about a revision of the role of the state in the economic sector. The Nationalist administration preferred to back productive activities indirectly rather than to lead or participate directly in them. The new government also gave up on the Labour Government’s import substitution policy in order to promote a free market and generate a competitive environment for the local manufacturing industry.\textsuperscript{17}

Ultimately, the different attempts by successive Maltese governments to expand local production, generate more employment opportunities, and to phase out the traditional dependence on British expenditure were by and large successful.\textsuperscript{18} The two major political parties in Malta shared a common belief that the key to economic success was the wise investment in human resources - and this implied,}

\textsuperscript{11} RWGD, April 1978 - August 1979, p.107.
\textsuperscript{12} BRIGUGLIO, L., op.cit., p.193.
\textsuperscript{14} BRIGUGLIO, L., op.cit., p.195.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p.193.
\textsuperscript{16} RWGD, January - December 1982, p.100.
\textsuperscript{17} RWGD, January - December 1988, p.168.
among other things, careful investment in a vocational form of schooling and in technical education.

The Educational Background

The introduction of secondary education for all in 1970 reflected, in intention if not in reality, the growth of an ideology of equity which had gained world-wide currency in the sixties. The idea was that schooling could be used to address cultural deficits and to bring about greater social equality. But the celebration of individualism also meant that a liberal curriculum based on the humanities would become more attractive than a vocational one, since the latter was seen to develop only one aspect of the student’s potential.

The Malta Union of Teachers, participating, as it often did, in international fora on educational development, promoted similar ideologies. It made a case for comprehensive education at the secondary school level ‘without any rigid organization into the three types; namely

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19 The Newsom Report and the Plowden Report, published in England in 1963 and 1967 respectively, reflect this view. A number of educational officers interviewed by the present author attested to the influence that these reports had in the formulation of local educational policies.


21 The MUT was set up in 1919, and its history is traced by DARMANIN, M., ‘Malta’s Teachers and Social Change’, in LAWN, M. (ed.) The Politics of Teacher Unionism: International Perspectives, (Croom Helm, Kent 1985).

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Grammar, Secondary Technical and Technical. In such schools the needs and interests of every individual child are adequately looked after. The object of such schools is not merely academic or vocational but it includes the social integration of the child.22

In the Union’s view, all children between the ages of five and fourteen would attend the same type of school. It recommended a common curriculum for the Lower Secondary Schools, but at 14+, students would proceed to a Vocational Training Centre to follow a trade or skill or to an Upper Secondary School to ‘specialize’ in a considerably reduced number of subjects.23 Vocational Training Centres were to offer courses of a minimum of one year’s duration, although students ‘should be encouraged to follow courses involving intensive practice and preparation of one, two or more years’.24 The union also recommended a list of trades that could be taught.

By calling all senior secondary schools ‘Upper Secondary’, the Union hoped to eliminate the prejudice against Technical Schools, brought about by the tripartite system that had been adopted and promoted by the Nationalists.

Similar views were reflected in the recommendations put forth by the Graduate Teachers’ Association. The Association suggested that an educational system should be

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22 Malta Union of Teachers, Recommendations to a Revised Education Act, 1968, p.10.

23 ibid., p.11.

24 ibid.
set up to cater for the educational needs of all students, irrespective of their social status or mental ability. While there was a divergence in the views of the members, regarding the structure of secondary schooling, there was an agreement that schools ought not to be selective, competitive or exam-regulated. There was an emphasis on a general curriculum which included practical subjects, and a specialization and differentiation at the upper-secondary level at 13+. All electives, technical or otherwise, would leave open opportunities for further and higher education. One way of achieving this was to have the same type of teacher education for those teaching technical as for those teaching academic subjects. While the view was expressed that schooling should be responsive to the economic needs of the country, the emphasis was clearly placed on the full development of the individual. Every other goal was secondary to this.

Restructuring the Educational System

The economic and ideological challenges facing the Labour Party in 1971 made contradictory demands which could not be easily reconciled. These demands made themselves manifest with special clarity in the field of education. On the one hand, the Labour Party had to entice foreign investors to Malta by providing them with cheap skilled and semi-skilled labour. On the other it had to promote the workers' cause by increasing the material and social standing of the manual labouring class.

The 'economic challenge called for an educational policy which was closely linked to the needs of the economy. This link was stronger than the teachers' unions would allow. It was very much in line with the educational policy historically adopted by the Labour Party in the post-war period, and logically led to the privileging of vocational schooling. The ideological challenge, on the other hand, called for an educational policy which was more akin to the teachers' unions' perspectives for it emphasized the importance of fostering the individual needs and differences within a comprehensive system of education.

The Labour Party attempted to respond to both challenges, and by October 1972 announced its intention to restructure the educational system through the adoption of a seven-year educational plan which would be closely synchronized with the economic plan for 1973-1980. The Minister of Education, Agatha Barbara, highlighted the ideologies underpinning the educational plan, saying that the reformed system would operate in such away as to provide everybody with the same opportunities in education; to improve the status of manual workers, at the same time increasing the personal competence of the individual and his awareness of his contribution towards the country's development; to foster encouragement so that Malta attains economic independence; to alter the Maltese educational system from one based on the English system to one designed to meet Malta's needs and at the same time compatible with the system obtaining in Western Europe; to nurture among the Maltese and Gozitans freedom of thought and a sense of responsibility of the individual.
Among the ideological elements contained in the Minister’s budget speech on education, we find the valuing of a common curriculum for all children, irrespective of their abilities, up to at least the second year of their secondary schooling; the introduction of remedial work with students who found difficulty in learning; the valuing of subjects above and beyond the traditional basic academic ones. Students would be able to choose subject clusters after their second year in the secondary school, and despite the mixing of abilities within the same class, each group would be in a position to sit for at least six subjects at GCE ‘O’ level. Private schools, while not being abolished, would no longer be subsidized and helped in the same manner as before. The elitism and exclusiveness of some of these establishments was seen to contradict the general belief against selection which was guiding the reforms. The University could no longer simply cater for those students wishing to enter the professions. With the democratization of education, there would be many more young people wishing to follow higher education, and therefore the University was to cooperate more closely with MCAST especially in courses in engineering, commerce and business studies.

According to the Minister of Education, the reformed system would do away with a number of educational and social injustices. Particularly unjust was the social discrimination between students and the fact that children were being made to choose between one cluster of subjects and another very early on in their lives. The new system would bring instead the establishment of humanitarian principles: justice with everybody, equality of opportunities, social mixing, democracy, the possibility of full development of every person, a wise and smooth transition between primary and secondary education, a stimulating environment, happy children...and a generation brought up in a true educational system.

The emphasis on ‘offering to all children the opportunity to develop to the best of their ability’, had to be linked to the need to build a new Malta, with an independent economy, based on industrial development, with a full and wise use of its manpower potential.

The ideological goal led, therefore, to the planning, and eventual implementation of such reforms as comprehensive schooling up to the end of form 2, the introduction of area secondary schools, the abolition of examinations in state schools, the introduction of regular assessment on a monthly basis, and the formal removal of inter and intra-school streaming. As the Minister explained, the reforms would be three-pronged and would lead to the reorganization of secondary schooling, the introduction of trade schools, and the extension and consolidation of technical institutes.

The last two aspects of the reform package sought to meet Malta’s economic challenge and signalled that a major investment in technical education would be a must.

27 Agatha Barbara’s education budget speech, delivered on the 25/9/1972, and reported in full in the L’Orizzont, 29/9/1972, p.7.
28 Ibid.
29 L’Orizzont, 31/1/72, p.5.
30 Press release by Minister of Education, reported in Times of Malta, 12/2/72, p.11; L’Orizzont, 24/2/1972.
31 At one stage, there seem to have been plans to establish a large trade school on the island with the help of the ILO. The Times of Malta, 15/12/1972, in fact reports that A. Delattre, a
Secondary technical schools were considered to be 'technical in name only', while technical institutes and the MCAST were accused of not having a clear sense of direction.

Thus the four secondary technical schools catering for 4896 students reverted to the status of area secondary schools and instead a new form of secondary schooling - one which specialized in vocational instruction - would be set up. In these new trade schools, seventy-five per cent of the curriculum would be dedicated to vocational skills training, and twenty-five per cent to traditional academic lessons. In her educational budget speech, Ms Barbara claimed that

We have never had solid instruction in trades. We could not tolerate this situation and at the same time expect to face, in an effective manner, the demand for technical workers and tradesmen which the industrial expansion of our country is aiming for.

While the official discourse on trade schools stressed their economic function, it is clear that these new schools were to respond to other needs as well. In the first instance, and in accordance with the general educational and political ideology of the Malta Labour Party, trade schools were to help change parents' traditional negative attitude towards trade and technical education. Parents and the general public would come to see that there was nothing degrading in manual work. Trade Schools were also to perform an educational function, in so far as they would respond to the special educational needs of groups of students 'who either show a particular inclination for a trade, or for those who are not particularly keen to follow an academic education'. In this way, it could be ensured that 'the personal competence of each individual' would be increased.

The new schools would not only cater for Malta's emergent economic needs, but would also offer an appropriate and attractive education to students who, after eight years of basic education, either felt attracted by a particular trade, or else did not have enough ability or motivation to continue academic education. This new form of education might even 'motivate students who did not wish to continue attending school, to further educate themselves by taking a course of studies which is more relevant to them'. It was hoped that this kind of education would 'give them a new interest in school which might make them decide to stay on after school-leaving age'.

32 L-Orizzont, 29/5/72, p.8.
33 Education statistics reported in Times of Malta, 15/2/72, p.15.
34 L-Orizzont, 29/5/72, p.8.
35 Ibid.
36 A. Barbara, education budget speech, as reported in Times of Malta, 24/5/72, p.2.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 F. Chetcuti, Chief Inspector, in a letter to a school psychologist, dated 7/1/72.
would be a 'serious' education in trades which would meet the contemporary and future needs of the Islands. The Minister expressed her intention to introduce legislation so that those who did not have a Trade School certificate - a certificate which would be recognized as an industrial qualification by the Common Market - would not be able to find jobs as skilled or semi-skilled workers.

A third, political function that trade schools were to serve was the control of the serious unemployment problems which plagued Malta as it tried to restructure its economy. As has already been noted, emergency labour corps had been established to mop up some of the unemployed. Another 'solution' was to raise the school-leaving age from fourteen to sixteen. However, reluctant school-attenders who found themselves blocked from entry into full-time work had to be offered a palatable alternative to the 'irrelevant' academic schooling which was then being offered. As trade schools promised to reproduce the workshop environment, besides continuing with general education, these were thought to be attractive to those who were either unable or unwilling to pursue traditional courses of study. Speaking at the MCAS at the opening of a Commonwealth Seminar on 'Youth and Development in Malta', Ms Barbara pointed out that the spectre of a blind alley on leaving school must be faced to be fully appreciated. The problem of unemployment among youths, enmeshed as it is in social factors and economic pressures, has become urgent and explosive.

40 Correspondence between the department and heads of trade schools on 10/11/73 shows clearly that there were plans to raise the school leaving age to seventeen by October 1974. These plans were later abandoned.

Besides the setting up of emergency labour corps, the alignment of training to industrial and other economic needs, and the carrying out of scientific manpower surveys, 'the imminent introduction of trade schools,' noted Ms Barbara, 'is another feature of my Government's programme of vocational training for potential school-leavers, who would otherwise join the ranks of the unemployed'.

A group of nine international educational experts were invited to Malta in late 1972 to advise the government on the reforms. Among these experts were Professor P. Streuten and Dr R. Jolly - who specialized in the link between education and the economy - whilst Professor L. Valli and Dottore D. Vincarelli were Italian consultants on the trade school project.

41 *Times of Malta*, 20/4/1972, p.11.; the same theme is taken up in A. Barbara's defense of her government's policy to extend the school leaving age to sixteen, when the nationalist press accused her that her motive for doing so was to contain unemployment (cf. *Abbozz tal-Ligi dwar l-Edukazzjon*, 15/7/74, pp.1713-4). A. Barbara considered that this bold pen function was one of the main achievements of the trade school system (ibid., 15/7/74, p.1704). Several members of the pioneering team of instructors in trade schools mentioned that the new schools attracted hundreds of boys who would have otherwise left school and worked as bus conductors, in quarries, collecting rubbish, or generally roamed the streets.

42 *Times of Malta*, 12/12/72, p.2.

43 The other members were Prof. H. Rec, C. Price, T. Burgess, A.E. Adams, and P. Vanbergen.
Planning the Trade Schools

As has been shown in previous chapters, the Labour Party’s emphasis on trade and technical education dates back to the early 20th century. ‘Trade schools’ had been specifically mentioned in the 1951 MLP electoral programme which referred to the Italian vocational schools in Turin as a possible model for meeting local needs.

Twenty years later, in October 1971, Ms Barbara embarked on a tour of various European educational systems including the Italian vocational school set-up. This was followed up by a vote of £468,000 on the part of the Italian government to help the Maltese government establish trade schools. Aid consisted in the provision of school equipment and tools as well as a team of Italian experts in various trades. The team, headed by Dott. Domenico Vinciarelli, was to train staff, act as consultants, see that the new machinery was properly installed and that the workshop environment in schools was organized to meet all security specifications. According to the Italo-Maltese agreement, Italian technical and cultural assistance on this project was to last two years.

44 Times of Malta, 12/2/72, p.11.

45 This financial aid fell within the context of an Italo-Maltese agreement signed in July 1967 when the Nationalists were in government.


The Rise of Vocational Schools

The earliest direct mention of trade schools that the author could trace in the departmental files was in a letter dated 6/10/71 by the Assistant Director of Education, A. Raimondo, to Ms Barbara. In this letter recommendations for establishing ‘Junior Vocational Schools’ were made. Raimondo, together with a vocational schools committee, planned that the new schools would be intended for 13-year-old boys and girls who for one reason or other did not want to follow the traditional type of secondary education.

According to Raimondo the courses to be organized in the junior vocational schools should be considered of an equivalent standard to those held in secondary schools and should contain a considerable element of general education so that the pupils will not feel it to be inferior to those attending secondary schools. Teachers too were to be of the same standard and status as in other schools, and the vocational aspect of the course should be more of an induction than of specific types and should have facilities for training in various fields so as to determine the aptitude of the pupils. The ‘teaching for employment’ should not be done ‘in an amateurish way’. Able and willing graduates of the new schools could take up further training in technical institutes and industrial training centres. This letter is quite important because it reveals that Departmental opinions regarding the function of trade schools did not converge with those of the Minister, who tended to think that the new trade schools would mainly cater for low-achieving students.

47 Mem., correspondence, etc., regarding trade schools are to be found in file 602/71, Department of Education, Bletisseb.
The Vocational Schools Committee

By early December 1971 the Minister of Education and Culture had seen to the setting up of a Vocational Schools Committee with the brief to plan the introduction of trade schools, to find appropriate sites for these schools, to write up curricula and syllabi, to buy the equipment required and to recruit instructors. The members of the committee were all males and seven were employed with the education department. In its first meeting the committee minuted that 'these vocational schools are to have as their main aim the training for employment—and emphasis should be based on practical training'. During subsequent meetings, the committee made a number of decisions about the role and function of trade schools. Thus, 'the standard of the practical teaching aimed at' would 'as far as possible approach that of a craftsman'. The committee also established the types of trades that would be taught, the duration of the courses, and the type of students who would attend. While the initial plan had been to have vocational schools for both boys and girls, by February 1972 it had been decided to focus on males first. The new schools would therefore cater for boys who were over thirteen years of age who were still attending secondary schools. Courses would be of three year's duration.

The committee also recommended that the 'first year or two at the trade school [would] be general technical courses so that [the student] would have the opportunity to make up his mind about his future career'. By the time the first circular to Heads of schools was issued late in January 1972 announcing the intention of setting up the new schools, it became clear that there was some difficulty in reaching a consensus on whether the course would be two or three years long. Furthermore the committee was undecided as to the ratio between the amount of practical instruction and general education that pupils would be given. There seemed to be a general agreement that, due to the tender age of the students, certain trades were more appropriate than others, and students could take these individually or in clusters. A variety of trade lists appeared in the minutes and recommendations of the committee, most of which contained the following: Woodwork, glass reinforced plastics, bench fitting, lathe turning, sheetmetal work, blacksmithing, welding, electrical wiring, plumbing, plastering and tile laying, painting and decoration.

Areas of Contention

While the committee responsible for the setting up of trade schools was bound by the parameters set by the educational policies and politics of the Ministry of

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48 The education department people were A. Raimondo (Assistant Director of Education), F. Chetcuti (Inspector of Technical Subjects), A. Azzopardi, R. Borg, F. Charles, and G. Vella (Heads and Assistant Head respectively of Technical Institutes). P. Micallef was the representative of the Minister of Education, while G. Agius represented the General Workers' Union.

49 Minutes of meeting held on 7/12/71.

50 Minutes of meeting held on 2/2/72.

51 Asst. Director of Education to the Minister of Education, dated 3/1/72.
Education, there nevertheless emerged a number of important differences between the members of the committee themselves, and between the committee and the Minister of Education. These areas of contention need to be highlighted because by doing so, the different visions for these new educational 'spaces' can be more easily identified and evaluated with the wisdom which hindsight accords us.

a. Target Student Population

The first contentious issue which arose referred to the nature of the student population that the vocational schools were to be set up for. Early correspondence as well as pronouncements by the Minister of Education allowed a wide interpretation as to the identity of the targeted student groups. These were to be youngsters, who for one reason or another did not want to follow the traditional type of secondary education.²² By February, these students became defined not so much by their ability or desire to learn a trade as much as by their inability or lack of motivation to do well at school.²³ In a letter requesting a school psychologist to suggest aptitude tests for students applying for entry into the new schools, the Chief Inspector, Mr. F. Chetcuti noted that the vocational schools were

obviously not meant to take children of low intelligence and low attainment only, but as an interim measure, it is expected that the first places will be filled by this type of pupil, since others stay on longer in Secondary School and go to the Technical after finishing secondary school.²⁴

It is this message which, above all others, seems to have been communicated to Heads of boys' secondary schools when Raimondo informed them officially about the intention of having vocational schools.²⁵ One Head who was present at the meeting wrote back to the Assistant Director a few days later congratulating the department for the initiative, saying that

Students will, through the Scheme, realize that education caters for all levels of attainment and aptitudes and will thus be rendered more meaningful and relevant.

The question regarding the target student population for trade schools rose again and again, and in many ways depended on the demand for vocational schools as well as on changing departmental policy on the role and value of mainstream schooling. At one stage, for instance, there were more applicants than places for trade schools, and it was decided that students with a good record of scholastic achievement in the secondary school and with 'vocational

²³ Thus, in response to a query by the MUT, A. Barbures' private secretary specified that vocational schools would respond to a long felt need to 'cater also for those children who are past the age of 14 are bound to leave school for ever...[and] who are not inclined to study for the GCE or City and Guilds examination and who would prefer to learn a trade so that they could find employment in Industry' (Letter dated 12/2/72, and signed A. Falzon).
²⁴ Letter dated 7/1/72, and copied to Asst. Director of Education.
²⁵ This meeting was held on 2/1/72. Circular No 11/72, dated 27/1/72, formally announced the intention of the Department to open vocational training schools, and was sent to all Heads of boys' secondary schools.
aptitude' would be preferred.\textsuperscript{56} This meant that academically motivated and achieving students were leaving secondary schools to join trade schools. When this pattern repeated itself after the restructuring of trade schools in the late seventies, the department of education noted 'concern' that 'trade schools are recruiting boys who would profit more from a five-year secondary education in the long run'.\textsuperscript{57}

The department took upon it the task of studying 'how low ability students can be switched to trade schools along with brighter ones'. This was based on the premise that when trade schools were first started, they were considered 'to suit low ability students (age 14+) who did not want to continue secondary education'. The education officer in charge of planning noted that with the incentives introduced by the department to attract students to the trade schools, there was always more demand than supply, so that the best students were ending up in trade schools.\textsuperscript{58} Among the incentives mentioned were remuneration during the fourth year, the promise of employment at the end of the course, and a higher chance of being accepted on apprenticeship schemes.

Needless to say, those who had promoted trade schools as an alternative and equal type of secondary education were not quite happy with the depiction of trade schools as inferior schools, nor with the plan to strengthen secondary schools by weakening the vocational ones. An Education Officer in charge of trade schools challenged this view head on, saying that

\textsuperscript{56} Government Gazette, 11/5/73, p.1341.

\textsuperscript{57} Memo by Education Officer in charge of planning to Director of Education, dated 5/5/81.

\textsuperscript{58} ibid.

Trade Schools were actually set up in order to complement government's industrialization plan set out in the early 1970s. The aim then was to diversify our industrial sector - from one geared to servicing and maintaining a Military Base run by servicemen, to a sector dependent on manufacture, ship repair and light engineering industries, run entirely by local personnel. We can never hope to achieve this goal unless we have a strong well-trained and well-educated labour force at craft level capable of being trained in the supervisory level when the time and need arises. The idea that Trade Schools were set up to cater for low ability students was unfortunately put forward by the majority of Secondary School Head Teachers. These schools were regarded as a safety valve which was to relieve them of as many difficult pupils as possible. Authorities had to boost Trade School courses by introducing a fourth year with remuneration and a promise of employment, in order to kick off this stigma.\textsuperscript{59}

Many of the pioneering teaching staff who were interviewed by members of the Trade School Research Project confirmed the above Education Officer's views, alleging that end-of-year examination results were tampered with in secondary schools so that the undesirable students could be channelled to trade schools. Others said that guidance teachers would fill in the applications for students who were habitual absentees, directing them to trade schools.

b. The General and Vocational Curriculum

A second area of contention arose with reference to the ratio of vocational to general education that might be adopted in

\textsuperscript{59} Letter dated 5/5/81, held in file 602/71/62B.
the new schools. The Minister seemed to prefer students to spend three quarters of the time in workshops, while Raimondo wanted general education to have at least half of the share on the timetable. The Assistant Director seems to have won the Vocational Schools Committee over on this point, for in a meeting a number of reasons were given for this preference. Thus, it was argued that 'the boy is considered to be young and hence he still needs a good general education'.

Furthermore, the fifty per cent solution did not privilege traditional academic subjects too much since it also catered for the teaching of Technology, Calculation and Technical Drawing in the class. A third, more practical reason in favour of the equitable distribution between vocational and academic was that in this way there would be 'a saving in the use of equipment as each will be used by two classes instead of one'. In this way too 'the school population could be nearly double that required for a class which will spend seventy five per cent of the time in the workshop'. The minister's preference was difficult to meet because it entailed having more instructors though less teachers, and it was the former and not the latter who were in short supply.

The two key contentious issues - the target school population and the ratio of vocational to general education - were never completely resolved and still feature in debates on vocational schooling in Malta.

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60 Correspondence dated 3/1/72, 2/2/72.

Problems and Challenges

The trade school initiative presented a number of other challenges which were difficult to meet effectively. Many of the problems encountered were similar to those experienced by other developing countries which attempted to promote economic progress through vocational schooling. Among the most pressing of these were the setting up of suitable premises in which trades could be taught, the provision of tools and equipment, and the hiring of teachers of technical subjects. In other words, the educational aims or policies of vocational schools proved difficult to implement, in Malta as elsewhere, because of the lack of funds and specialized technical expertise.

a. Lack of Material Resources

The plan to have vocational schools in every electoral district in Malta led to the search for adequate premises which could accommodate students in classrooms and workshops. The Vocational Schools Committee had to negotiate, plead and occasionally coerce other government departments to hand keys to unused buildings which could be converted into schools. Among the buildings identified were a factory at Santa Venera, and later, a hospital at Bighi.

Most of the locations identified as potential schools required major structural modification, and it was never quite certain as to where the funds for these repairs would come from. There seems to have been difficulties in gaining co-operation from other departments, and as Mr Raimondo noted in a memo to Ms Barbara,

nothing has so far been decided about funds and we are meeting difficulties regarding adaptation of premises,
Prime Minister Mintoff giving advice regarding the conversion of Bighi hospital into a trade school.

equipment and staff. A tentative proposal has been prepared for the draft estimate to be included as a blank vote but we shall have to find funds at least for preparation and redecoration of premises now.62

The generous help offered by the Italian government in the provision of equipment, tools and expertise, seems to have all been channelled to the Umberto Calasso trade school. In other schools problems developed because there were not enough tools for the workshop sessions. Technical institutes and secondary technical schools were asked to make an inventory of all equipment, tools and workbenches which were not in use.63 When this request was not adequately complied with, Raimondo authorized a thorough survey of furniture, tools and equipment in Technical Institutes in order to ascertain which items could be spared for the new vocational schools.64

At one stage, the situation became urgent enough to force the hand of the Director of Education, who in turn asked that the Dockyard hand over any 'obsolete' material that was no longer being used.65 Despite such measures, students still had to share basic tools. By 1973, funds for purchasing the necessary tools were still not forthcoming, so that Ms Barbara’s private secretary had to instruct the Director of Education that tools required by students in the Trade Schools should be manufactured by the students with the help of their instructors in those schools. Moreover, requirements for other schools wherever possible should also be manufactured by the Trade Schools and should be considered as students’ project work.66

62 Memo dated 2/2/72.
63 Raimondo to Heads of Technical Institutes and Secondary Technical Schools, dated 16/12/71.
64 Raimondo to Heads of Institutes, letter dated 16/2/72.
65 G. Mangion, in a letter dated 24/12/71.
66 Memo dated 26/10/73. Again, a directive of 10/11/73 by the Minister of Education and Culture notes that as far as possible, practical exercises in trade schools should be productive.
In 1975, inspectors’ reports on trade schools still showed that tools and equipment were still missing, and that in some cases, the machinery being used was faulty. In other cases, tools and equipment were shunted from one school to another, so that in meeting the needs of one trade school, another was left unprovided for. When metal work no longer featured as an examinable subject in the General Certificate Examinations, the Director proposed that craft practice in the secondary schools should no longer be provided. In this way workshops and tools could be transferred to trade schools. As the demand for trade schools grew, so did the problem of providing tools and equipment become more serious. Furthermore, there was the additional problem that as tools became outdated, they had to be changed from time to time. The governmental bureaucratic processing of orders took a long time, and ‘sometimes it takes over eighteen months to obtain badly needed equipment’. Only one school, Umberto Calosso trade school at St Venera, was considered to be quite well equipped, despite the fact that heavy financial investment in trade schools was maintained up to 1985.

67 Inspectors’ report, dated 20/3/75.
68 Memo dated 1/10/75.
69 Letter from Head of Trade School to Department, dated 2/2/76.
70 Director of Education to Minister of Education, 19/3/80.
71 Ibid.
72 The following details, regarding expenditure for trade schools, were made available in answer to Parliamentary Question 5186, 1986:

b. Lack of Human Resources

The challenge of providing the necessary human resources to staff the trade schools was as daunting as that posed by material resources. Noting that one of the greatest obstacles in opening the schools was the lack of technicians, the Director of Education turned to government and parastatal departments, asking for secondment of personnel, urging co-operation in this matter of national importance. The response was not, however, very encouraging. The Malta Drydocks Corporation was willing to offer help, but wanted to have more details regarding the conditions of work of those who were seconded to the department of education. The Malta Electricity Board could only offer occasional lectures and could not release staff owing to lack of qualified personnel and the general pressure of work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Equipment &amp; Machinery Tools</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Lm12,777</td>
<td>Lm68,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Lm13,144</td>
<td>Lm74,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Lm15,339</td>
<td>Lm82,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Lm8,519</td>
<td>Lm52,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Lm135,598</td>
<td>Lm79,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Lm30,689</td>
<td>Lm54,115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For 1984, the equivalent of Lm122,670 represented further Italian aid.

73 Letter by G. Mangion, dated 24/12/71.
74 Letter by the General Manager, Planning and Control Section, dated 29/12/71.
75 General Manager of the Malta Electricity Board, 12/2/72.
By June 1972, ten people were seconded from Public Works Department, seven from the Water Works Department, two from the Port Division, one from Malta Marketing Undertaking, and one from the Post and Telecommunications Department. Even though these were not considered to be sufficiently qualified to teach in the new schools by the pedagogic adviser from Italy, Dottore Vincarelli, Raimondo suggested that these instructors might nevertheless reach the standards required.  

A list was drawn up of all those who had gone on Council of Europe Bursaries in technical education since 1967, and efforts were made to transfer these to the trade schools.

Initially the Vocational Schools Committee wanted staff to have "ample industrial experience, theoretical knowledge of the trade plus if possible teaching/instructing experience."  

Interviews with a number of teaching staff who were pioneers in the new schools indicate that the early call for applications for teachers required five years' experience in industry and high technical qualifications. When the number of applicants failed to satisfy the demand, a second call for staff was issued, this time demanding much less. Eventually, a number of technicians from various departments and from the Dockyard transferred 'on loan' to the new schools. Many saw this as a chance to better their social status, and to move to a less dangerous, white collar occupation. There was the added attraction that they would not have to work in shifts, and that they would have more free time on their hands.

Many of the pioneers, interviewed in connection with the Trade School Research Project, spoke of the weekends and holidays which they had willingly given up in order to get a number of schools ready to accommodate equipment, tools and students. Most were, however, disillusioned by the fact that their efforts were not recognized or rewarded, since the question of their new occupational status and conditions of work remained pending for three years, and was not really solved till 1987.

The Department of Education seems to have been put in a quandary over this issue. Its urgent need of staff meant that personnel unqualified in teaching had to be admitted. Even after teachers of technical subjects in secondary schools were invited to transfer to trade schools to teach craft or general subjects, the problem of lack of staff remained. Staff doing technical duties in secondary schools were thus invited to take up teaching duties in the new schools.

The department opted to use these untrained teachers without changing their occupational status. The vagueness about conditions of work, and especially about the timetable to be followed in the vocational schools as well as the number of holidays they would have, worried secondary school teachers who were willing to apply to transfer to the new schools. The MUT naturally asked for a clarification. Ms Barbara's private secretary replied saying that

teachers and other staff posted to these Trade Schools would retain their present appointment without any right for further remuneration or a change in status. This does not preclude that at some future date, posts will be established and calls for application invited.

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76 Memo by Raimondo, dated 9/6/72.
77 Minutes of meeting of 4/1/72.
This uncertainty made recruitment difficult, and was considered by the Vocational Schools Committee to be the main stumbling block to progress. Raimondo recommended that the Minister make a decision about the matter, and that the status of the staff at the trade schools should be similar to those of secondary schools, though the times of attendance will be slightly different.

One way out of the impasse was the creation of a new teaching grade - that of 'instructors'. But this measure was to have a series of consequences later on in the development of trade schools. In 1973, a decision seems to have been made by the Minister of Education, who ruled that all staff in trade schools would follow the same timetable as that followed by instructors at the GITC (Government Industrial Training Centre) at Marsa. The staff there had one month's summer vacation, while staff at other secondary schools enjoyed a two-month summer vacation plus more half-days. Raimondo noted that as the policy regarding attendance and holidays at the new schools

70 Minutes of sixth meeting, dated 4/1/72.
71 Letter by Asst. Director of Education to Ms Barbara, dated 3/1/72.
72 In actual fact, technical teachers at the Government Industrial Training Centre had been called 'instructors' since 1956.
73 Ms Barbara's private secretary in a letter to Director of Education, dated 21/4/73.
74 Letter of the Minister of Labour, Employment and Welfare in response to private secretary to the Minister of Education and Culture, dated 16/4/73.

had changed, teachers selected or seconded there were asking to go back to their former workplace. Technicians selected as instructors were given directives by the shop steward not to attend for such work. Naturally this is discouraging other Technicians and may hamper progress and we are badly in need of their cooperation. The uncertainty of the conditions of work and final status of those who will be teaching at these vocational schools is having a hampering and disrupting effect hence making progress difficult.

When teachers who had left secondary schools to teach in the trade schools realized that they would be losing so many holidays, they stopped attending school in protest, wishing to 'avail themselves of the summer timetable as in other Primary and Secondary schools'. The Minister's reaction to this legitimate protest bore the mark of her usual confrontive approach to opposition: all teachers were immediately transferred 'for refusing to perform their duty'. Raimondo suggested that since there was going to be a teaching staff shortage, the best they could do was to employ part-timers and/or get more secondments from the Malta Drydocks. General subjects and theory could be taught during the normal scholastic year so that regular teaching staff would not be deprived of their holidays. Students could be released for a day and a half to attend

75 Raimondo to Ms Barbara, 14/6/72.
76 Letter from Head of Umberto Calosso Trade School to Raimondo, dated 2/5/73.
77 Letter drafted by A. Barbara on 2/6/73. The reason for the transfer was left out in the letter sent to the six teachers involved.
either a technical institute or a secondary school, in the same way as apprentices.\textsuperscript{88}

This problem regarding conditions of work at the new schools had serious educational implications. Technicians from other departments still considered vocational schools as an attractive path to increased status, and many who were interviewed said that they hoped that by joining, new opportunities for promotions would be opened up. The duration of summer vacations was no stumbling block since they had the same working hours as in their previous place of work. But the teaching staff coming from secondary schools were not interested in transferring to the new schools, since the conditions of work were not attractive and there was no status mobility or promotional prospect as far as they were concerned.

This explains why, from their very inception, trade schools encountered staffing difficulties, and especially so in the teaching of traditional school subjects. In 1973, Raimondo noted that more secondments were needed from the Malta Drydocks.\textsuperscript{87} The departmental files contain a series of letters from a number of educational officers who complain that several trade schools lacked teachers,\textsuperscript{88} or that unqualified instructors were teaching such subjects as Mathematics, English, Maltese and Science. One education officer expressed disagreement with the change in departmental policy, which had first ruled that academic subjects would be taught by school teachers and masters, but that it had been subsequently directed that ‘the instructors available were to take on the subjects of mathematics, science, English, Maltese and even religion’.\textsuperscript{89} Indeed, the department’s educational planner argued that the only way to attract and recruit teachers to trade schools was by offering them conditions similar to those existing in primary or secondary schools. When these teachers were on holiday, the trade school programme would consist of workshop practice, theory or on-the-job (field) training.\textsuperscript{90}

The challenge of preparing instructors for their teaching duties was tackled by the Vocational Schools Committee in two ways. A number were sent for a few weeks’ training in Italy.\textsuperscript{91} The training of the rest would be catered for by an in-service course organized by a sub-committee with the help of the MCAST and St Michael’s Training College. An evening course in teaching methodology seems to have been organized at the latter institution, but it was never completed.\textsuperscript{92} By June 1972 all instructors had been selected, and a course was in fact organized by Italian consultants in conjunction with the Department of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{88} Raimondo to Ms Barbara, 5/6/72.
  \item \textsuperscript{87} Raimondo to Principal Assistant Secretary of the Establishments Division, dated 29/5/73.
  \item \textsuperscript{88} Letter dated 14/11/74, for instance, written by the education officer for religious studies, notes that several trade schools had no religion teacher.
  \item \textsuperscript{89} Notes of an inspectorial visit to Trade Schools for the week commencing 3 March 1975, and dated 20/5/75.
  \item \textsuperscript{90} Memo by the education planning officer, dated 13/1/75.
  \item \textsuperscript{91} Letter of inspector of Technical Education to Director of Education, dated 17/2/72.
  \item \textsuperscript{92} Information given by one of the interviewees from the pioneering team of teaching staff.
\end{itemize}
Education. The first crash course set out to provide information regarding pedagogy and teaching method, while the second gave details about the installation and use of the equipment which the Italian government was donating to Malta. The Italian team also taught pedagogical methods, although a number of the pioneering instructors involved noted that the standards these 'experts' aimed at were generally low, and that they themselves preferred British-type training which they had known in their previous places of work. Further courses were offered through Council of Europe bursaries – which saw instructors going for training in the teaching of technical subjects in Italy, Austria, France and Russia - and through the ILO.

c. The Need for Administrative Staff

The introduction of trade schools also required the setting up of an administrative structure which catered for their special needs. It was envisaged that heads in each trade school would have the status equivalent to that of a Headmaster of a secondary school. Such heads were to have industrial and administrative experience plus technical qualifications.

The pedagogy course was organized between the 10th and 22nd July, 1972.

This was ascertained after a number of interviews with pioneering staff were carried out. A report written by one of these following a visit to vocational schools in Brescia, Venice, Milan, Turin, Genova and Naples in March 1973, makes the same comments.

Minutes from different meetings of the Vocational Schools Committee. It seems that in establishing these criteria, the committee members were advised by Dottore Vinciarelli. The latter was responsible for the choice of the first Headmaster of

An adequate administrative structure was also required at Head Office for, as the Assistant Director of Education noted in his progress report dated May 1973, the implementation of the new technical and vocational education programme was 'highly demanding'. The posts of Chief Inspector and at least two other inspectors were required. Shortage of staff in this section would limit the 'attention which one would like to give to the MCAST, Technical Institutes and Trade Schools. In order to attain objectives based on Government policy an efficient administrative machinery is a sine qua non in this vast and fast-growing section of our educational system'. For some reason, the Ministry never in fact provided the administrative backing that the new schools required. Seven years later, the Director of Education was still complaining that the technical education section was short staffed, and that while it had an Assistant Director (Technical) and an Adviser (Dawson), 'these two have no backing'. The posts for two education officers were still vacant, and a number of heads and assistant heads of trade schools had not yet been appointed. Later still, the assistant director was appointed to cater for all secondary schools, including the technical section.

d. The Need for Educational Resources

The fast pace with which the implementation of trade school policies was planned and executed placed serious

Umberto Calosso Trade School (cf. letter dated 29/1/72).


limitations not only on the department's ability to provide adequate material and human resources, but also left little time to develop the necessary educational resources, including curricula, syllabi, text books, and other teaching material. The department's plan was to prepare schemes of work and syllabi for teachers, while at the same time leaving 'the staff ample flexibility' to innovate. Standards were to be judged by comparing the results of trade school students with those of students following the same teaching programme. The Vocational Schools Committee recommended that the syllabus for non-technical subjects would be 'an adaptation of the relevant curriculum being prepared for the new comprehensive schools'. As for the technical curricula, these were being prepared by the Italian 'experts'. While new textbooks were being ordered for the vocational schools, there were, in 1972, only enough copies for instructors. Students had to make do with what the department had in stock.

A curriculum sub-committee was set up by the Vocational Schools Committee, with the brief to develop curricula and schemes of work for the 'academic' subjects. Letters exchanged by the committee and sub-committee members indicate that as they went about their tasks, they had specific images of students they were considering, whom they constructed as being 'different' from those in mainstream schools. While in most subjects the recommendation was that teachers develop the learning that had gone on in the first two years of the secondary school, the emphasis seems to have been placed on making schools relevant to the technical and life experiences of students. Mathematics was referred to as 'technical principles' at one stage, while English became 'technical reporting'. The Maltese syllabus suggested that teachers ought to organize their discussions on subjects which were of interest to the students and which were relevant to life in a factory, or to local and international affairs. Vocabulare work and essay writing was to focus on the learning of technical words and tools which students met with in their trade.

Similarly, the teacher of religion was encouraged to respond to the 'particular needs' of students in trade schools and to adapt the secondary school curriculum accordingly. This adaptation was not to affect the themes identified by the syllabus or the general approach adopted in all secondary schools. It is interesting to note that the intention to treat vocational students just as other secondary students was not carried through. Indeed, the Inspector of religious instruction reported to the Minister of Education saying that religion teachers were facing difficulties in the new schools. Few boys were asking

99 Memo by Raimondo to Ms. Barbara, dated 9/10/71.
100 Minutes of sixth meeting, dated 4/1/72.
101 Memo by Raimondo to inspector of Technical Institutes, 26/6/72.
102 Ibid.
103 Letter (with syllabus appended) from inspector of Maltese to Raimondo, dated 27/6/72.
104 Memo from a committee member of the Kammissjoni Kateketika Nazzjonali, dated 2/8/72.
showing interest or asking for help, and this led him to conclude that perhaps the best way to reach the students was through the broaching of a list of topics for talks and discussions covering areas concerned with the students' civic, working and spiritual life. The Inspector noted that the three-year programme for trade schools was modelled 'on practically the same lines as the one covered in the Italian trade schools, at which one lesson [of religion] a week is given to all classes during the three years'.

It was thought best to let teachers of 'general' and 'cultural' subjects 'on their own', and that the syllabi be drawn on very broad lines, leaving much of what was to be covered to the discretion of the individual teacher, who would 'draw up a proper scheme of work adapted to the proficiency of the students in his charge and the material to be found in the particular school'. Teachers were encouraged to employ modern approaches,

to make use of all possible teaching aids (including a tape-recorder if he has access to one and to occasional visits to a library if it is stocked with books in Maltese), dividing a Form into two or three groups to meet the varying levels of proficiency and aptitude, and endeavour to see to the needs of individual students rather than to talk to them always collectively with some help from blackboard chalking.

The attempt to be responsive to the needs of students who were construed as being special and different had a number of positive and negative repercussions. In many ways, it treated teachers as professionals by allowing them the autonomy to interact more spontaneously with their students. Thus, textbooks in Mathematics, applied science and the various trades were to be written in Maltese by staff teaching the subject or trade.

Groups of teachers were to be set up to tackle this task, and efforts would be co-ordinated by education officers. There was a good response to this invitation, to the extent that instructors were asked to nominate only two from among the volunteers so that they would work with a co-ordinating committee. Some of the material prepared by staff in trade schools was loose-leaved in order to 'allow for up-to-date insertions'.

In addition to that, a resolution was made to brief instructors to sell the idea of co-operatives to students. Students could have practical experience in setting up such co-operatives, and instructors would be given full information about this in an up-grading course being organized by the department.

But many of these interesting and creative projects were to fail because instructors, while willing, could not offer much help as they were overwhelmed with work and did not

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105 Memorandum by Inspector of religious instruction to Ms. Barbara, dated 25/10/72.

106 Letters from various inspectors held in file 602/71.

107 Memo by Director of Education to Heads of Boys' Trade Schools, dated 9/3/78, file 602/71/49.

108 The textbook writing committee consisted of the head of a technical institute, administrators in the vocational schools, and representatives of the MLP and the GWU (cf. minutes of meeting dated 16/3/78).

109 Richard Mattezza was behind this idea (cf. minutes of a meeting of the textbook writing committee, dated 16/3/78).
have the necessary pedagogical skills to create texts. They therefore ended up translating some books in the English language to 'simplified Maltese' and to adapt them for their purposes.

Launching the New Vocational Schools

Despite the problems and challenges which the department had to face in planning for and introducing the new vocational schools, the government felt justified in being proud of its innovation, and organized a media blitz in order to raise the awareness of the need for investment in technical education at all levels. Heads of secondary schools for boys were convened for a meeting to explain the government's intention, and encouraged to co-operate.\textsuperscript{119} L-Orizzont ran a series of articles on the subject, highlighting ministerial speeches which dealt with the economic and industrial needs of a developing country.\textsuperscript{111} Some of these articles appealed to the citizen's duty to respond to the needs of the nation, while others pointed out that the only way for the Maltese to get high wages was to invest in advanced technical knowledge.\textsuperscript{112}

The Nationalist Party was condemned for insisting on the necessity of the industrialization of the nation, but doing little in terms of training students who would eventually become factory workers. The trade schools were better than any apprenticeship system, because the latter taught skills by asking the young person to copy what was observed, without knowing the theory behind the skills. Such a scheme, as developed by Ms Barbara, deserved the full support of the nation so that the plan to industrialize the nation would be achieved.\textsuperscript{113} Children who were not achieving at school were encouraged to join the new schools 'where after a three years' course they will receive a certificate which will enable them to work'.\textsuperscript{114}

The Minister of Education gave details of the new trade schools project during prize-giving speeches. On one such occasion, Ms Barbara urged parents to encourage their children, male and female, to invest more in scientific subjects so that in this way the nation would make progress in the technological world of today. She told parents that Malta had to move away from a mentality which gave pride of place to languages and similar subjects, with the intention of getting their children into secretarial and clerical work, or as doctors and lawyers: 'This attitude has done a lot of harm to our nation because we now find ourselves without such professionals as engineers, who are the backbone of industry'.\textsuperscript{115}

The first trade school was opened at Paola in April 1972. The pro-Labour press heralded this as the first step in a major plan for technical education by the government.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{110} Circular 11/72 dated 27/1/72.
\textsuperscript{111} L-Orizzont, 26/1/72; 4/2/72; 7/2/72; 28/2/72; 24/4/72; 19/7/72.
\textsuperscript{112} Many of these articles were written by a person using the nom de plume Telescop. The reference in this case is to L-Orizzont, 19/7/72, p.5.

\textsuperscript{113} L-Orizzont, 31/1/72, p.5.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115} L-Orizzont, 4/2/72.
\textsuperscript{116} L-Orizzont, 24/4/72, page 1.
The three year courses being offered to students who had completed the third form of secondary school and who were fourteen years or older would lead to internationally recognized certificates and diploma, and in the future, nobody would be able to get skilled work unless that person had a certificate from trade schools. The lack of skills was so serious that at least 6,000 of those registering for employment had no skill to offer. This meant that Malta would degenerate to a level below that of developing countries. The new school was to start with sixty six students, who would be awarded a diploma depending on how they performed in regular practical tests and a final examination.

By August of 1972, four trade schools had opened, at Floriana, Mosta, Paola, and Senglea. Another one at Hamrun was to open soon. Trade schools were portrayed as being different from technical schools in that 'the accent was more on practical work'. Ms Barbara is reported to have said that in many cases, workers who called themselves tradesmen, especially electricians, plumbers and plasterers, were not qualified to do this type of work, with unhappy consequences for those who commissioned them to do the work. The Trade Schools would also enable students to find new opportunities in other countries if they so preferred.

117 Speech given by Ms Barbara on the occasion of the opening of the first trade school, reported by L-Orizzonti, 24/4/72.
118 Times of Malta, 26/4/72, p.2.
119 Times of Malta, 29/8/72.

By far the largest vocational school was the one opened at St Venera in December 1972. Named after Umberto Calosso, an Italian socialist exiled in Malta during the Fascist regime before the 1939 war, the school catered for 420 first year students, with 780 expected to attend the second year, while during the third year the number was expected to reach 1,100. Ms Barbara said at the opening ceremony that this school marked 'a new era regarding technical education'.

The school was given press coverage, and the head of school noted the enthusiasm that the scheme had generated.

Ms A. Barbara delivering a speech at the inauguration of Umberto Calosso trade school for boys.

120 Times of Malta, 8/12/72. Signor Mauro Ferro, the Italian Minister of Industry, was present at the opening ceremony and returned Ms. Barbara's address.
among staff, pointing out that much work, such as the construction of work benches and installation of electricity were made by the teaching staff members during their summer holidays and even during weekends.121 More trade schools were opened and by the end of 1976, it was planned that there would be fifteen trade schools in all, catering for more than 3,500 students.122

Reactions To The Launching Of Trade Schools

There were different reactions to the setting up of vocational schools. A number of press correspondents, as well as the Nationalist Party,123 were concerned that the general reforms in the educational system, together with the introduction of trade schools, were being planned and implemented without consultation with interested partners and members of the general public. As a writer to The Sunday Times complained, 'the taxpayer and the teachers, who have to work out the new system, do not know yet what the system is'. The same correspondent noted the apparent contradiction that while it was rumoured that there was going to be a comprehensive system of education, the Minister of Education was, at the same time, promoting trade schools.124 The lack of consultation was deplored by many and the system of dropping hints regarding the government's intentions in the field of education - at various parents' days and prize-giving ceremonies - was considered to be 'indiscreet', a cheap way of making the reforms 'appear attractive to parents', and certainly 'not conducive to an objective study of the true merits of school reform'.125

The MUT, noting that 'the educational set-up was in for a radical change', urged the government to enter into serious consultations with teachers in order to 'clear the air of any misunderstandings which may crop up, and create a healthy atmosphere for the smooth launching of the new system'.126 The MUT became increasingly concerned when the Government failed to provide information regarding the process by which trade school staff was being recruited, their eventual status, conditions of work and holidays. The Union therefore directed its members not to apply to teach in vocational schools.127 It appears that the Labour government did not often recognize the MUT as a partner in educational planning and policy making, so that the union increasingly adopted a confrontative style in its dealings with the Ministry of Education. At one stage, the MUT delegation walked out of a meeting with the Committee of international educational experts invited to Malta in December 1972. The delegation did so because it had not been granted leave in order to finalize its submissions before the meeting was due.128

121 Times of Malta, 16/12/72.
122 L-Orizzont, 17/3/76.
123 Parliamentary Debates, Session No 76, 23/5/72, pp. 2275-9; Il-Mument, 24/9/72.
125 The Sunday Times of Malta, 9/4/72, 'Roamer's column'.
126 Times of Malta, 26/2/72.
127 MUT Circular 7/72, March 1972.
128 Times of Malta, 14/12/72, p.2.
The general complaints about lack of consultation went unheeded, and resurfaced in the press throughout 1972. While the main complaints seem to be about the process of reform, there was also some resistance to comprehensive education that, as rumour had it, was about to be introduced. 'What is really needed is not equal treatment for everybody', argued one writer in the press, 'but provision of a suitable education at a suitable pace for each individual's particular needs. Care must be taken not to destroy the good there is in the old system for the purpose of effecting change at any cost. Education is too precious a social service to be tackled with undue haste'.

The plan to have vocational schools to provide the skilled labour needs of the nation, on the other hand, seemed to have been well received by different members of the public. The press noted that 'the shortage of skilled men in some technical and industrial spheres is acute', that the widespread mentality that has 'sent more students to the grammar schools than to the technical schools' was misguided. Too much emphasis on academic schooling had led to a situation where students were passing examinations but not finding jobs. Careful planning would have to be made in order to ensure that the same would not happen with students taking up a trade. It was important for the government to specify why some skills and not others were to be taught in the trade schools, and whether this choice depended on the results of the manpower surveys being carried out. The same

newspaper indeed ended up sharing the government's enthusiasm for these schools, noting that

In this day and age when so much is being said and done with regard to trade schools, ...the accent appears to be to channel students to the trade schools and provide the necessary manpower for the day when the growth of industry requires more trained personnel. Trade schools would supply a pool of eager and trained young men to fill posts eventually becoming available and perhaps lead these students to higher studies.

The editor of the Times of Malta also noted that technical training would appear attractive once there was 'an assurance that employment will be available... as soon as they complete their theoretical and practical studies... It is therefore imperative for Government to create employment outlets in conjunction with its industrial training programme'.

The MUT agreed with the Labour government that the strong appeal of the grammar school type of secondary education can become an obstacle to change. The needs of a mass-clientele will have to be reconciled with the intellectually elitist requirements of higher education and with the labour market requirements of qualified manpower.

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129 Times of Malta, 11/5/72 and 29/5/72, for instance.
130 Times of Malta, 23/9/72, p.12.
131 Times of Malta, editorial of 1/9/72, p.12.
132 Times of Malta, 7/11/72, p.12. These comments were made in reaction to the disbanding of the Vocational Guidance Unit, which fact the editor denounced, as guidance teachers would have helped in the process of channelling students to trade schools.
133 Times of Malta editorial, 12/12/72, commenting on the opening of St Venera Trade School.
134 The Teacher, April-September 1971, p.3.
There is also evidence that industrialists responded positively to the setting up of vocational schools. Interviews with the pioneering team of teaching staff repeatedly revealed that employers continually phoned schools to ask for the best students, and that often, industries 'poached' the most promising students, inducing them to leave before the course of training was finished because of the demand for personnel at the operative level who could be trained on the job. A German Industrial Advisory Team which visited Malta in 1974 congratulated the Minister of Education and Culture 'for providing educational facilities of such high standard'. Such schools were 'a major incentive for foreign investment in Malta', and German industrialists setting up in Malta, or planning to do so in the near future, wanted such schools to have an even greater emphasis placed on 'the practical side. Therefore a further strengthening of the machine facilities is desirable'. The Advisory Team also informed the Minister of the areas of likely investment, suggesting that trade school curricula could adopt training in the respective trades. A few firms in fact offered equipment and tools to trade schools.

Most partners in education seemed to agree that the attempt to link education to the needs of the economy was acceptable. What was less acceptable was the early

127 Letter from Joachim Leuchscheidt, for the German Industrial Advisory Team, to Ms. Barbara, dated 28/3/74.

128 A case in point would be Medgold Limited, which gave all the apparatus necessary to teach silversmithing.

129 ibid.

130 'Re commendations for a Revised Educational Act', MUT, 1968. The union also proposed that there should be special training for teachers if these schools were to materialize.
channelling of students into vocational tracks, especially if the education offered to these trade school students was too skills-based. These kinds of critiques were made by the Shadow Minister of Education, Dr Ġo Mifsud Bonnici, by the MÜT, and by a number of high-ranking officials in the Department of Education. The Nationalist Party accepted that the tripartite system that it had introduced as a form of secondary education for all in 1970 was far from perfect, and indeed claimed that there had been plans to change that. However, Mifsud Bonnici argued that the Labour Party was still maintaining a system where students were channelled into three types of schools. He insisted that the so-called reforms were superficial, amounting to little more than a mere change of names. He explained his reservations about the trade school system because it encouraged the tendency that children follow the same occupational path of their fathers. Thus, he argued, channelling and tracking according to class origins would be reinforced rather than challenged. He believed that there should be a firm commitment to have

a society with one class only, and not different classes as in contemporary Malta. And I would like not to have a further crystallization of the social divisions that we have today.\textsuperscript{139}

Mifsud Bonnici, while agreeing that Malta needed vocational schools, was afraid that the emphasis would be too much on skills, and too little on general culture, which he believed was essential for everybody. He said that

if you study literature and read books, this would open new horizons on the trade you are studying. That skilled craftsman who has read literature, and reads about what's happening abroad, and who knows languages, and who reads foreign books and journals, and gets foreign experience, will himself be a better craftsman for it.\textsuperscript{140}

Mifsud Bonnici's concern that vocational schools would provide a lower-quality type of general education was eventually to be echoed by the MÜT. Noting that the new trade schools were having problems in the areas of staff recruitment and selection of students, the union pointed out that though it was sure that 'the Trade Schools are not intended to develop into dumping grounds for the misfits of the Secondary Education set-up' and though it was sure that 'the Education Department's intention is not the production of second grade citizens... good intentions ...are very poor substitutes for proper planning as the only basis for guaranteed success'.\textsuperscript{141} Indeed, both the Nationalist Party and the MÜT were to become increasingly critical of trade schools because their initial reservations regarding poor planning were well-founded.

By 1976, the Nationalist Party was claiming that the academic and civic curriculum in trade schools was too diluted, and that the vocational courses offered were too limited and unrelated to the needs of the economy. It proposed that regular manpower surveys be carried out to assess the needs of industry, that the academic curriculum be strengthened, that the equipment and tools be brought up to date, and that teaching staff be given the opportunity to follow professional courses.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{139} Parliamentary Debates, Session No 76, 23/5/72, p.2290.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., p.2293

\textsuperscript{141} The Teacher, March/April 1973.

\textsuperscript{142} KUMMISSJONI EDUKAZZJONI TAL-PN U I-MŻPN, Blixt lil-Fattur
In its memorandum to political parties in 1981, the MUT was more trenchant in its critique. On the one hand, like the Nationalist Party, it framed its educational discourse within human capital theory. It argued that technical institutes should be modernized and properly equipped so that as colleges of technological education, they would help Malta 'meet the challenges of the '80s which are being termed as the years of technological changes... There is no time to lose if Malta is not to remain isolated using relatively primitive and uncompetitive production methods'. On the other hand, the teachers' union believed that technical education should not be given at the junior secondary school level. The MUT in fact proposed the abolition of trade schools, insisting that 'the first three years of secondary education should cover a common syllabus graded in such a way as to cater for all abilities'. If vocational schools were to be retained, they should cater for students at the senior-secondary level, and specifically for those who gave 'a clear indication that they are unable to cope with further academic studies'. The Union recommended that instructors should take on further training and become regular teachers.

Besides these organized challenges to trade schools, other critiques were made within the department of education. One Head of school, for instance, wrote to Raimondo early in 1972 saying that he felt that the vocational schools scheme was 'very beneficial and highly commendable, that there was a 'dire need' for such schools, and that 'the sooner they are set up the better as many of our boys will have a good future to look forward to and will therefore not keep asking for exemption from school' and end up being exploited in the cheap labour market. At the same time, however, the Head echoed the concern expressed by the Nationalist Party and the MUT, namely that the scheme ought to cater for older pupils so that all students would be able to get a good general education. He insisted upon the importance of this, adding that 'We educate for life and society and not for jobs'.

The Ministry however, seemed more concerned with educating pupils for a job. The ratio between general and vocational education was always one of the key areas of contention. This issue was raised again and again by the Nationalist Party, by the MUT and by an education officer in charge of planning, who in 1977 argued that UNESCO and Council of Europe resolutions had directed several countries to postpone narrow and specialized training to as late a stage as possible. The education officer thought this made good sense both when the individual and the nation were considered, since in the future Malta would need 'intelligent, adaptable, flexible and skilled workmen'. Vocational training ought to be given, therefore, to literate and mature youngsters after the age of sixteen.

It is not considered in the best interests of the child, government expenditure and the labour needs of the island to give a child a very narrow and limited industrial training at age 14 when he cannot as yet make a

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143 Malta Union of Teachers, Memorandum to Political Parties, 1981, p.5.

144 ibid., p.4

145 Letter by Head of Baviere Secondary School for Boys, addressed to Mr Raimondo, dated 9/1/72.
responsible decision for himself and which will land him in a very limited range of labour opportunity. At the same time, a child can be educated through trades and crafts, manually and on work-benches. There is as much nobility in manual occupations as there is in academic work. It is the too early specialization that is wrong. A child should be given the opportunity to make a decision on the trade/job he wants to take up after (a) guidance (b) some experience of the work involved and (c) while continuing his education and (d) with the option of changing his mind (career-wise) without detriment to himself, his education and future opportunities, government expenditure and further national needs.\textsuperscript{146}

The education officer’s proposed solution was a common secondary schooling for all eleven to sixteen year-olds, with trade courses being offered as one of the options made available to students at the third form.

Finally, though teachers generally boycotted vocational schools, they soon realized that a lot was to be gained by the existence of these new, separate educational spaces. Practically all interviews with pioneer instructors in the trade schools pointed out that secondary school teachers and administrators began utilizing vocational schools as dumping grounds for unmotivated, academically low-achieving, and behaviourally ‘difficult’ students. Indeed, it seems clear that some education officers, not to mention heads of schools, considered that one of the roles of guidance teachers was to channel such students to the new schools.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{146} Memo by Education Officer (Planning), File 802/68/Vol.2.
\textsuperscript{147} Memo by Education Officer (Planning), dated 5/5/81.

\section*{Development Of Trade Schools}

The account of the development of trade schools can be organized into three specific periods, namely 1972-1979 which saw the birth and consolidation of the vocational schools, 1979-1987 which saw the ushering in and abandonment of a ‘new scheme’ for trade school students, and 1987-1992, which covers the twilight of the schools and questions their continued existence.

\subsection*{Birth of Vocational Schools – 1972-1979}

Irrespective of the critiques which emerged from a number of quarters, the Labour government sustained its investment in trade schools and provided various incentives to attract secondary students to those schools. By 1974 the student intake into trade schools was so large that the upper classes of some boys’ mainstream secondary schools had become depleted to the extent of making it uneconomic to run them there.

A committee which met to consider this problem noted that “it was impossible to plan well as long as no rational policy existed on how many students should go to trade school or how many should be kept in secondary schools”. Furthermore, the committee identified a related problem, in that more boys were being fed into trade schools than girls, with the result that ‘an abnormally large proportion of girls in relation to boys would be leaving school with a full general secondary education’.\textsuperscript{148} The department had

\textsuperscript{148} The committee was to look at the implications of raising school leaving age to seventeen, and the minutes are to be found in
Ms A. Barbara during a visit to a Trade School.

decided to focus on schools for boys. The first trade school for girls was, in fact, opened a year after those for boys.\textsuperscript{148} But by 1974, there was still only one school for girls compared to eight for boys.\textsuperscript{150} The girls' trade schools were to receive specific technical assistance from the Italian government,\textsuperscript{151} but the curriculum established in these schools was linked to traditional female crafts and the provision of workers for the newly established textile industries in Malta. Girls were offered Millinery, Sewing, Lace-making, Knitting, Crochet, Embroidery and Dress-making, but one education officer noted in his report that he wondered whether it was suitable to call these schools 'trade schools' since 'it is questionable, for example, how much production or industrial skills are involved in the curriculum'.\textsuperscript{152}

There were plans to increase the accommodation and equipment in trade schools to cater for 2000 students by the end of the Financial Year 1973/1974. Ultimately there were to be, by 1978, 3600 students in fifteen trade schools.\textsuperscript{153}

The percentage of those completing the trade school courses was not very high. This problem was accentuated when the school leaving age was raised to fifteen in 1974 and then to sixteen.\textsuperscript{154} Of the 688 students who started

\textsuperscript{148} Interview with Ms D. Mifsud, the head of the first trade school for girls, carried out by I. Cutajar and D. Attard in 1992 as part of the requirements on a course on vocational schooling. Ms Mifsud was a primary school teacher who was skilled in lace-making.


\textsuperscript{151} Cf. Part D-II of the Procès-verbal of the 4th Session of the Maltese-Italian Commission.

\textsuperscript{152} Report of an inspectorial visit to trade schools dated 20/3/75. The inspector also notes the serious shortage of staff in girls' trade schools, as well as the lack of machinery and fire-fighting equipment.

\textsuperscript{153} RWGD, 1974-1975.

\textsuperscript{154} RWGD, April 1973-August 1974, para. 4.4.
attending trade schools in 1972, a total of 388 completed their schooling in July 1975. \(^{155}\)

In an attempt to attract students to stay on longer in trade schools, a new system was introduced in 1974. Students who showed a marked proficiency in their craft were presented with the option to move into more advanced training by following a one or two year course. Those selected would receive a weekly allowance. \(^{156}\) The Government Industrial Training Centre was closed down at about this time, and this released a number of instructors who could now take up duties in the expanding trade schools sector. In 1975 and up to 1978, trade school technical facilities and staff were used during after-school hours to provide training to members of the Dirghajn il-Maltin Corps. Among the new initiatives in technical and vocational education there was the opening of the Mosta School of Craftsmen with the help of the Indian government, the re-establishment of a Nautical School, and the opening of the Fellenberg Centre for Industrial Electronics with the help of the Swiss government. \(^{157}\)

A decision was taken in summer of 1975 to admit all form three secondary school students who wanted to enter trade schools. A total of 1870 boys and 430 girls were admitted to trade schools, and this placed a heavy demand on resources. Teaching staff for girls' trade schools could not be found in sufficient numbers. \(^{158}\) New machinery had to be bought to cater for the increasing student population. Progress was registered in another direction when, following the agreement on the reorganisation of teaching grades in July 1975, instructor grades were officially recognized and a number of heads of trade schools received their appointments. \(^{159}\) This meant that instructors could finally enjoy much the same conditions of work as teachers, and that teachers in other secondary schools could be attracted to teach in trade schools.

The 1972 promise that trade school graduates would be issued with a certificate which would be recognized by local and foreign industrialists was partially fulfilled in 1978. Annual examinations on a national basis in trade subjects were introduced, and a co-ordinating working committee was set up to ensure a better liaison between vocational schools and industrialists. As a result of this policy, fourth year students were placed on outstation work in various government departments and parastatal bodies in order to get practical work experience. \(^{160}\) The working committee also saw to the maintenance and raising of trade standards, to the encouragement of students to form cooperatives as

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\(^{155}\) RWGD, 1974-1975, p.45.

\(^{156}\) L-Orizzont, 21/8/75, RWGD, April 1975 – August 1976.

\(^{157}\) ibid., pp.45 ff.

\(^{158}\) RWGD, April 1975-August 1976, p.47.

\(^{159}\) RWGD, April 1975-August 1976, p.47. The re-organisation agreement stipulated that an instructor grade II would earn as much as a teacher grade I, while an instructor grade III would earn as much as a teacher grade II.

\(^{160}\) The sixth Manpower Survey was carried out in November 1977, and with 5,139 registered unemployed and 4,575 returned migrants for that same year, there was an increasing anxiety to make education as responsive as possible to the needs of industry. (CL, RWGD, Labour and Emigration Reports, p.109).
well as to the establishment of a set-up that would be responsible for trade licences. The attempt to upgrade trade training was reinforced when it was decided to screen and select applicants for entry into craft courses by basing entry on the standardized results of secondary school annual examinations in English, Mathematics and Maltese. 161 An attempt was made to produce textbooks on trade subjects in Maltese, but despite a lot of enthusiasm, and some success in the wood and metal trades, the project was abandoned because it was difficult to find Maltese vocabulary for the technical terms. 162

While, at one stage – due to various incentive packages already described – trade schools for boys were attracting more students than they could cater for, and while a good proportion of these were motivated and academically successful, girls’ schools did not fare well at all. 163 Indeed, one education officer noted that

In order to create interest and motivation in Girls’ Trade Schools a new programme of activities aiming at efficient housekeeping, has been drawn up. 164

161 RWGD, April 1977 – August 1978.
162 This explanation has been given by most of the trade school instructors who were interviewed and who had been involved in the project.
163 Education Officer (Planning), reports that most girls came from ‘Group 2’ streams in the secondary schools, while seventy per cent of Group 1 students went to the boys’ vocational schools (Planning Paper 12/82, dated 22/5/82). Group 1 represented the more achieving students.
164 Memo dated 1978 in file 602/71/62, addressed to Asst. Director of Education.

A Tiered Educational System – 1979-1987

The year 1979 brought about some crucial educational changes which represented, in fact, a turn-about from the comprehensivation policies established in 1971-1972 by the same Labour government. These policies had proved unpopular, and in any case, the general opinion was that they had not worked. Secondary school age students were divided into two groups, whereby Group 1 represented the ‘motivated and academically successful’, and Group 2 those who were ‘not motivated and/or unable to follow successfully O’ level courses’. The latter were, however to be ‘given enough academic competence to be able to continue study later, if they so wish’. 155

Group 1 students either remained in area secondary schools or else, if they passed a national competitive examination, went to elite, academic state schools, named ‘junior lyceums’, which were introduced in 1981. The transition to upper secondary education was rendered even more competitive when Arabic and Physics became compulsory subjects of study in 1982.

Group 2 students were sub-divided into various streams. Thus ‘Opportunity classes’ were organized in 1984 for pupils who, after finishing the sixth year of primary schooling, were ‘found to be still mentally weak and
academically unprepared to embark on a secondary school course. Preparatory School Centres catered for academically stronger pupils who were nevertheless considered not quite ready to go to a full secondary level course. Three Junior Craft Centres were opened in 1984 to cater for all Group 2 boys in Forms 3 to 5 of area secondary schools, in order to provide 'a new type of vocationally oriented education more suited to their abilities and aptitudes'. Students here received a curriculum which consisted of forty per cent general education and sixty per cent instruction in trade training up to a semiskilled level. 'Promising students [could] be transferred to trade-schools where the courses are more specialized; the others [could], at the end of their courses... join a Craft Centre.'

The more able of the group 2 students were thus channelled to trade schools, where a common exam was to be held at the end of the third year. Successful students would be placed in Parastatal industries and government departments where, as student-apprentices, they would receive further training for another three years. Students completing this 'Extended Skills Training Scheme' (or ESTS) would then be considered for recruitment as regular workers. As an incentive, these students would receive sixty per cent of the minimum wage during their first year, sixty-five per cent in their second year, and seventy-five per cent in their third year. Those who failed the exam or who did not wish to sit for it would go on with their trade school course. At the end of the last year of the course, they would be given a certificate according to their placement in the final exam. Fourth year trade school students would moreover receive fifty cents a day, as an incentive to finish the course. It would thus take a person six years in all to qualify as a skilled worker.

This general re-organization of the educational system into tightly compartmentalised streams presumably catering for students of different 'abilities' carried implications for a tiered technical/vocational schooling as well. Craft Centres initiated students to low-level work skills, while trade schools produced craftsmen. Trade school students who became apprentices could qualify as technicians, while those who followed an academic path, through the upper secondary and the University, could become engineers. At the technician level, trade testing Boards were set up for nine

168 RWGD, 1984, p.48. Twenty-seven such classes were opened, and these catered for 387 pupils in all. These pupils had obtained less than 15 per cent in Maltese, English and Mathematics in the Year 6 Annual Examination, which was set on a national basis. The students were to follow a special curriculum and were to have 'selected' teachers.

167 Ibid., p.48. These students had obtained less than thirty per cent but more than ten per cent in the annual national examination at the end of Year 6. This form of remedial education was offered to 256 boys in fourteen classes, grouped in three Preparatory Secondary School Centres.

168 RWGD, 1984, pp.49-50. A total of 1024 boys in sixty-four classes were enrolled in September 1984. The craft centre (housed at L'ospizio, Floriana) had an enrolment of 166 students.
trades, and each board was made up of three persons, including an outside expert in the trade.

Technical and vocational courses at the post-compulsory school level were streamlined, with industrial training schemes which replicated the work of the ESTS being phased out. A number of new, specialized vocational schools for students at the post-secondary level were opened. One of the main difficulties was the provision of the required material and human resources to offer all this increased technical training, and to ensure that there was synchronisation with the needs of industry.

The New Scheme

With a more select type of student attending trade schools, a number of education officers, together with a foreign adviser on technical education, Mr E.J.B. Dawson, warned the director that

RWGD, 1983, p.98.

These included the School for Secretarial Studies (112), the Felcinebra Training Centre in Industrial Electronics (65), the School of Navigation (14), the Art and Design Centre (25), the Beauty Therapy and Hair Dressing Centre, and the Precision Engineering Centre (opened in 1985). Information from various government reports. Numbers in brackets refer to student population in those centres for the year 1984, as reported in the RWGD, 1984, p.50.

Memo by Director of Education to Minister of Education, dated 19/3/80. The same memo notes the lack of adequate and up-to-date machinery in most trade schools except Umberto Calosso, and the failure to respond to the needs of expanding and new industries in shoemaking and foundry work.
first year trade school students of both sexes [were] not reaching levels of literacy and numeracy commensurate with their personal potential.\textsuperscript{175}

Dawson, in fact, noted that there was a consensus among education officers that

the curriculum must be examined, revised and re-organized to include more... Maltese, English, Mathematics, Science etc. It was suggested that there should be a new and closer type of liaison between secondary and trade schools... A major reason for this new arrangement was to overcome the basic weakness in teaching basic but not craft subjects in trade schools.\textsuperscript{176}

This suggestion led to the launching, in 1979, of what came to be known as the 'new scheme'.\textsuperscript{177} Starting from Form 2, trade school students would spend half of their time in a mainstream secondary school to learn general subjects, and the other half in a trade school. During the first year, students would follow a basic course in general trades, and this would help them choose the trade they were most proficient in, and which they would prefer to follow in subsequent years. The time spent in secondary schools would be reduced to forty per cent and twenty-five per cent during the second and third year of trade schooling

respectively, when more emphasis would be placed on skills training.\textsuperscript{178}

Dawson was, in fact, instrumental in promoting a view that all students could do well at school if only teachers used the right approach and pedagogy. Dawson thus emphasized the utility of tying the curriculum to technical themes which would be considered relevant by students. Language teaching could focus on the spoken word, with discussions centering on topics related to project work or to a trade practice. Group work, drama, self-assessment, the keeping of a work diary to log a continuous account of progress in the various projects undertaken, all this was to help students see the relevance of teaching and learning in the week spent in mainstream secondary schools. Vocabularian work would aim for an increment in mathematical, scientific and technical terms. While many students had experienced failure in Mathematics, innovative approaches would help them realize that there were 'areas of mensuration, estimation, practical craft, geometry etc. where they [could] be successful'. But teaching about work was not merely a question of giving craft skills, but rather one which would enable the student enjoy his work and the fruits of his labours. He may enjoy his work by being involved in it, recognizing its value and his own contribution to his employer and to society and not least by questioning what he is doing, seeking to improve his own performance, reducing his own physical effort or economizing in time and materials. In other words thinking about what he is doing. All of this is

\textsuperscript{175} Dawson, reporting on a departmental meeting on the subject, held on 14/12/78.

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid.


dependent on improving the essential skills of communication, mathematics and science.\footnote{179}

Dawson’s injunctions to experiment with student-centred, progressive and holistic pedagogy were not followed. There seems to have been an agreement that ‘we should not go into modern curriculum ideas which differ much from the existing pattern in secondary schools’ since teachers were not sufficiently trained to handle them, and students would feel confused about the different approaches. Instructors were to keep the curriculum ‘functional’, related to the trade training of the student and the development of his personality.\footnote{180}

Dawson argued in favour of a strong component of general education for trade school students since the general curriculum carried a lot of weight in the formation of young citizens. He wished that the trade school curriculum would reflect

the needs and interests of the students as members of various groups, of the community as a political society whose members are active participants, of the community as a working society whose livelihood depends on a healthy economy and of the community as a living society with a culture. It should be concerned with personal development, with personal and industrial relationships and with citizenship. It must be concerned with values and the process of preparation for active participation in the adult community viewed as a political, economic and cultural society.\footnote{181}

\footnote{179} Dawson’s notes in File 602/71/62A.
\footnote{180} Memo entitled ‘On Curriculum - General Guiding Lines’, in File 602/71/62A.
\footnote{181} Dawson’s notes, in File 602/71/62A.

Dawson urged teachers in trade schools not to ‘stifle curiosity, inventiveness and imagination. Put in another way, our syllabus content should stimulate them by the search for alternative concepts or solutions so that at work or during leisure, the individual is encouraged to enrich his environment and his own life style.\footnote{182} Students had to be motivated to improve their basic education, and the curriculum was to ‘introduce them to the responsibilities of the world of work, to make them aware of their obligation to society and to help them choose a suitable career’.\footnote{183} Dawson insisted that specialization should not begin before the first two years of secondary schooling had been completed, that students should be given an experience of success at school since in life and at work, ‘the primary resource is the self’. A worker, even at the operative level, needed to have a wide cultural background and should be encouraged ‘to learn about his environment immediate, national and international and also his cultural inheritance of language, history, art, music and most importantly his own significance in society, what he may reasonably expect from it and especially what his own contribution should be’.\footnote{184}

The ‘new scheme’ was therefore an opportunity to re-assess the link between the ‘general’ and the ‘vocational’ curriculum, between the ‘mind’ and the ‘hand’. Dawson helped specialist education officers to write new syllabi. A report by the test construction unit suggested that trade school students were coping well with the secondary school

\footnote{182} Ibid.
\footnote{183} Ibid.
\footnote{184} Memo by Dawson dated 27/2/79.
syllabus in Mathematics, English, Maltese, and Integrated Science. Commenting on this report, Dawson noted that 'the academic levels measured by half yearly and annual secondary school examinations, is satisfactory especially since the trade school students have but half the teaching time of their secondary school counterparts'. Feedback from teachers indicated that the majority of students seemed to be willing, and generally of the same standard as other secondary school students, except that they 'find it very difficult to express themselves in writing.'

However, after two years an evaluative exercise showed that the scheme was not working well at all. The alternate weeks arrangement was not to the best advantage of either student or teacher. Dawson noted that there was

unrest and dissatisfaction among parents, teachers/instructors and especially the students. It is leading to increased absenteeism during the 'secondary week' which often means that a teacher will have to cope with students who have not been seen for three or four weeks. Similarly alternation is disliked by instructors who also complain that they have to spend so much time on revision of work.

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185 Report on annual examinations by the Test Construction Unit, dated 18/9/80.

186 Memo by Dawson dated 13/3/81.

187 Letters by teachers of Maltese and Social Studies, undated, filed in 602/71/62A.


189 Ibid.

190 Memo by Dawson to Director of Education, dated 6/5/81.

Dawson also noted that students felt they did not belong to the secondary school, and that many did not see the relevance of the secondary curriculum.

A 15 year old boy cannot be expected to realize that the main function of his education is not only to help him earn a living but to live as a responsible citizen aware of his rights and obligations in society.

Not only could students not understand the relevance of the academic curriculum when it was divorced from trade practice, but the alternating one-week phases of schooling was not conducive to learning and retention, and the younger and often smaller boys lacked the physical maturity to cope with a full day in the workshop.

A half day practical and half day classroom programme would be much more effective. In addition, student resistance to the scheme was founded on the fact that many had 'chosen not solely to learn a trade but to leave Secondary School'.

The rate of absenteeism and the incidence of reluctant attenders shot up soon after the new scheme was introduced. Dawson noted in fact that many reluctant students, aided and abetted by parents and some doctors, are either flagrantly breaking the law with consequent time wasting demands on welfare officers etc., or, even worse when in school, being uncooperative...
Young students in Trade School workshop.

if not disruptive. This may be and probably is worse in girls' schools.\footnote{191}

His suggestion was to amend the law which stipulated that students had to stay on at school up to the end of the school year in which they reached school leaving age. He proposed instead that students could leave on their sixteenth birthday, or allowed to find part-time employment and attend school for two or three times a week.\footnote{192}

Teachers complained that they could not control, let alone teach trade school students. One history teacher wrote to the Department complaining that 'It is difficult to discipline boys during academic lessons which they don't want to learn and you are then informed that at the Trade School their behaviour is impeccable, simply because all they want to learn is a trade'.\footnote{193} Another teacher argued that

students consider the classroom as a sort of compulsory confinement when considering the comparatively much freer conditions of the workshops during the week they spend at the school. I think this explains that sort of uneasiness they manifest in class.\footnote{194}

Trade school students were considered to be inclined to 'prefer to work with their hands than assist for explanations of rules by the teacher who compels them to remain stuck to their seat without the possibility to participate practically and actively in the proceedings'.\footnote{195}

A meeting between Dawson and teachers involved in this scheme brought up a number of other difficulties: Text books were lacking in many areas, syllabi were inappropriate, teaching could not take place without streaming students since many did not have basic language skills, and dialogue between secondary and trade school staff was lacking. There was also general agreement that an irrevocable decision was being forced on twelve year-old children, who found themselves caught in a system they could not identify with. After the discussion, those present agreed unanimously that an effective technical education could only take place if both the trade component and the

\footnote{193}{Letter to Department, dated 25/2/80.}\footnote{194}{Letter to Department, undated.}\footnote{195}{Letter from Mathematics teacher, dated 25/2/80.}
academic component formed part of an integrated programme of studies taking place in one institution. 196

One suggestion for controlling what seems to have been a chaotic arrangement was to group trade school students in secondary schools together 'to form a sort of separate stream or 'annexe' of the secondary school to which they are attached'. These would preferably be 'under an Assistant Head of school (administration)', have a 'teaching staff of their own, and if necessary their own guidance teacher'. 197 Streaming was in fact promoted by a number of education officers. One pointed out 'that the idea of having a small group of unmotivated students in each class with the hope of their being pushed forward by the rest of the class, has very often failed to give any positive results whatever'. 198 Another was to have a vocational track within secondary education, and do away altogether with viewing trade schools as separate institutions. 199 The latter idea was not likely to be acceptable given the economic and political investment made in trade schools. An influential education officer in charge of technical education rebutted the comprehensivisation proposal, arguing that from past experience, if this were to happen, the trade stream would only be looked upon as being inferior to the others. It would remove the trade schoolboy's sense of

196 Summary of meeting written by Dawson on 6/3/80, and entitled 'Trade School Curriculum - Ex-Form 2 Intake'.
197 Education Officer (planning), memo dated 2/4/80.
198 Letter dated 25/2/80, with specific reference to the Mathematics curriculum.
199 Education Officer (planning), in a memo dated 5/5/81.

belonging we have managed to develop. What I would suggest is that all subjects presently being taught by secondary school teachers to Trade School boys in secondary schools should be taught by secondary school teachers in trade school premises. Failing that a separate secondary school be set up to cater for trade school students. Arrangements should be made in order to release trade school boys in blocks rather than on alternate weeks for the first and second year, while third year students could have some sort of day release system. 200

Dawson's solution was to suggest the re-establishment of 'real trade schools where the week is divided equally between workshop and classroom time'. Teachers would have to be transferred back into trade schools, but this would not only 'improve efficiency but should establish a trade school identity of which all will be proud'. 201 The scheme lingered on for another two years, and was dropped in September 1983. 202

In this way, an opportunity to weaken the divide between trade schools and other secondary schools, and to revitalize a practical pedagogy, was lost partly for administrative reasons, and partly because teachers in secondary schools were not ready to accommodate the changes this initiative involved.

200 Undated memo by education officer (technical), in response to suggestions by education officer (planning).
201 Memo by Dawson, dated 6/3/80.
202 The decision was announced at a meeting for Heads of Trade Schools on the 4/7/83.
Trade Schools for Girls

The problems facing trade schools in general were even more pronounced in the case of vocational education for girls. An educational planner for the department noted that applications for girls' trade schools had been decreasing from year to year, and claimed that:

This year they apparently stand at around 345, when we need about 600 to go to trade schools in order to fulfill plan targets. It is obvious that girls' trade schools do not fulfill students' desires; no incentive is operating to attract girls into these schools.204

The same education planner noted that the 1980-85 Development Plan envisaged that one fourth of the total girls' secondary school population should be going to trade schools. That plan was failing, with the result that there would not be enough space for girls in mainstream secondary schools, as these had been reduced in number.

He recommended that more attractive courses be offered to girls and that a study be undertaken to see which areas in the labour market could absorb partly-trained girls. Employers would thus be aware of the training offered by the department, and once industrial needs were known, courses could be constructed around those needs. Trade schools would also attract girls if there were one year courses, besides the two-year ones, so that more mature girls who only had one year left before leaving school altogether, could apply. An education officer for technical subjects agreed that one of the main reasons for the failure of girls' trade schools was the type and lack of variety of courses offered. Besides tailoring, courses in retail/distribution, catering, hair dressing and beauty care, child care and home economics could be offered. He also wondered whether:

it is time we offered girls the opportunity to take up trades traditionally reserved for boys. Radio and TV servicing should be given another try. The Industrial electronics course which has been offered to girls should not present much of a problem if it is tackled properly by guidance officers. Some of the wood working trades may also be considered. Girls are operating most of our clothing industries, surely they could be trained to maintain the machines they operate.204

The fact that girls' trade schools attracted few students meant that only the 'below average' were to be found following courses there.205

The technical expert and adviser to the Department of Education, Mr E.J.B. Dawson, expressed his dissatisfaction with the way the girls' trade schools were working, and with the curriculum on offer, saying that:

Apart from the lack of general education of girls and young women who will be responsible for the next generation of Maltese children, there are often serious

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204 Note appended to memo by Education Officer (Planning) and dated 5/5/81.
205 Minutes of meeting for those responsible for the planning of the English curriculum in trade schools, dated 17/10/80.
disciplinary problems which the staff, normally below strength, cannot cope with.206

These disciplinary problems emphasized the role of girls' trade schools as reformatory institutions, where more guidance and counselling would help in catering for the needs of students.207 One way of getting around the problem was to introduce mixed schooling for trade school students but this idea was quickly hushed down by a number of education officers, partly because of 'psychological factors', and partly because there were no adequate facilities to carry this experiment through.208

Another way was to tack on new trades to the curriculum in the hope that this would make trade schooling more attractive. Optional subjects such as soft toy making and wicker work were thus introduced in 1975.209 Korean experts were invited to Malta in 1976 to help in developing the teaching of embroidery. Machine knitting was introduced in 1979, and a firm sent instructors to train girls on these machines.210 A separate four-year apprenticeship course in hairdressing was set up in January 1980.211 Home Economics and Personal Care were added to the curriculum in 1985.212 Home Maintenance was offered as an optional subject in 1988.213

But despite this occasional tinkering with girls' trade schooling, females failed to be attracted to trade schools. The truth of the matter was that, whatever the trade, the curriculum channelled girls to low-waged unskilled labour and generally excluded them from the possibility of following higher technical education courses.214

**Twilight of Vocational Schools? – 1987-1992**

When the Nationalist Party was elected to government in 1987 a number of reforms in education generally were introduced. The guiding policy seems to have been one which reversed the previous administration's decision to have intra- and inter-school streaming. More junior lyceums were opened and these consequently catered for a wider range of abilities. Efforts were made to revise syllabi and curricula of general education to diminish the differences between secondary and trade school education. Junior craft centres were amalgamated with trade schools, while the

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206 Note from Dawson to Director of Education, dated 22/7/81.
207 Director of Education, in response to Dawson's memo.
209 cf. report of an inspectorial visit to Floriana trade school, dated 20/5/75.
210 RWGD, April 1979 - December 1979, p.46.
212 RWGD, 1985, p.55.
school year, school day and school timetables in the latter schools were brought into line with those of the secondary schools.

The trade school curriculum was revised to give more importance to general education, and subjects such as science, Maltese history, geography, art, music and literature were included in the curriculum. On the other hand, craft and technical drawing were introduced in junior lycées. Woodwork, personal care and home economics were introduced as optional subjects in the girls' trade schools.

While the Preparatory School Centres were closed down in 1988, the Opportunity Centres were maintained by the new government. An ILO Adviser was brought over to Malta to help set up an Instructors' Updating and Training Centre, which in turn would help in the exercise of developing a curriculum for trade schools.

During this and the following year, a number of educational initiatives which were to have a repercussion on trade schools, were launched. These included the passing of an Education Act, the granting of professional status to teachers, and the promulgation of a National Minimum Curriculim for primary and secondary schools. On paper at least, the distinction between trade and other secondary schools was played down.

A report on the curriculum in girls' Trade Schools, with a view to investigating equality of opportunities for both boys and girls, was commissioned in 1989, and an electronic servicing course was introduced on an experimental basis in a girls' trade school. Some of the boys' trade schools were turned into centres for specific trades in the hope that the bringing together of students with the same interests would motivate students and reduce absenteeism from schools. New equipment was installed in these centres.

While the new administration stressed its commitment to technical education, and highlighted the role this should play in the economy of the state (with special reference to the introduction of high and sophisticated technology as well as the need to expand engineering courses), the opposition accused it of abandoning trade schools to the wind. Various parliamentary members, the leader of the

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215 The insistence on the part of the Nationalist Party - and particularly on the part of Ugo Mifsud Bonnici - that manual workers should also have a strong general education was particularly highlighted in the 1981 and 1987 electoral manifestos.


217 Ibid., p.55) The first in a series of specially designed textbooks and workbooks for trade schools was launched in 1988. Two vacancies for education officers in technical education, created through retirement of personnel, were not filled, and an Assistant Director in charge of all secondary schools, including trade schools, was appointed in 1988.

218 Fifteen girls joined the course (RWGD, January 1989 - December 1989, p.66).

219 In-Nazzjon Taghna, 31/5/90, reporting a press conference given by Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister of Education.


221 L-Orizzont, 12/12/89, p.10; 23/11/90, p.9; cf. also Parliamentary Sitting No.290, 11/10/89, where Dr Buttigieg
opposition, as well as the socialist press claimed that industrialists could not find skilled workers because trade schools were not on the list of the nationalist government's priority,\textsuperscript{222} due to the fact that there was a 'lack of material, teachers and attention on the part of authorities, as well as to the fact that unmotivated students mixed with those who were keen and able of learning'.\textsuperscript{223}

Complaints were made about the fact that instructors in trade schools could not benefit from professional status granted to teachers;\textsuperscript{224} that nearly 400 students were given an exemption to leave trade schools before the age of sixteen;\textsuperscript{225} that not enough effort was being put in the maintenance of trade schools;\textsuperscript{226} that the new emphasis on theory rather than practice led to alarmingly high rates of student absenteeism;\textsuperscript{227} that not much investment at all was being made to equip schools with new tools and materials, or with instructors trained in pedagogy;\textsuperscript{228} that workshops were neither safe nor up-to-date;\textsuperscript{229} that not enough teachers were being supplied to trade schools;\textsuperscript{230} and that teachers there were now worn out and needed training to update their technical knowledge.\textsuperscript{231}

The question of trade schools became politicized in a partisan manner, with the Labour party and its supporters claiming that these schools had previously achieved a lot for the students who followed courses in them, and in meeting the needs of an industrializing nation. One correspondent for instance pointed out that trade schools had been opened in practically every electoral district in Malta and claimed that

These schools had everything they needed as regards to tools, material and equipment, and students achieved

\textsuperscript{222} It-Torċa, 30/4/89, pp.16-17. Statistics provided by the Department and quoted in the newspaper show that thirty-two per cent of boys and thirty-eight per cent of girls absented themselves regularly from trade schools. The rates for area secondary schools was twenty-one per cent and 14.4 per cent for boys and girls respectively.

\textsuperscript{223} L-Orizzont, 29/10/91, p.7.

\textsuperscript{224} L-Orizzont, 5/7/91, p.7.

\textsuperscript{225} Mr Leo Brincat, Labour MP, quoted in the The Times, 30/10/91, who reported that boys in trade schools were given 448 lessons less per week than they should have been given between September and October of that year.

\textsuperscript{226} It-Torċa, 15/4/90, p.4.
levels which nobody ever dreamed they would reach. In fact, they used to find employment with - and sponsorships from - the best industries. All this is now over, and everything has, literally, collapsed.232

Many of the instructors and heads of trade schools interviewed in fact believed that the long-term intention of the Nationalist Government was to close down trade schools.

On their part, the Nationalist Party and its Minister of Education claimed that trade schools had never been given the attention they deserved when the Labour Party was in government. Curricula had never been prepared professionally, and there had been a serious lack of equipment from the very inception of the schools. This partly explained the high rates of absenteeism, which the Minister of Education was tackling by, among other things, appointing form masters who would be responsible for classes in trade schools. The Nationalist Party was also struggling to remove the mentality that technical education was meant for those who had not done well in academic subjects.233

Malta's future, the Nationalist government insisted, lay in preparing qualified technical workers. Thus the government promised that as an incentive, senior trade school students would receive a stipend similar to that given to sixth form students.234 The Prime Minister referred to Malta's problems in attracting industrialist investment because of the lack of skilled manpower.235 Sophisticated equipment, including computers and electronic equipment, was being made available to trade schools and technical institutes,236 and the increase of time dedicated to general subjects in trade schools synchronized with the desire of industrialists to have workers who had a higher level of basic education.237 In addition, the Employment Service (Amendment) Act of 1987 promulgated the setting up of the Auxiliary-Workers and Training Scheme to cater for the unemployed and underemployed, with the intention of upgrading available skills so as to facilitate the diversification of the economy.238

Education generally, and trade schools specifically, became one of the more important political issues highlighted in the political parties' manifestos for the 1992 elections. The Labour Party promised to update the training given in trade schools and to transform the image of technical education so that it would attract the most able students.239 It also promised to restructure and improve

232 It-Torċa, 15/7/90. Cf. also L-Orizzont, 23/11/90, p.9; 29/10/91, p.7.
233 Parliamentary session No.290, 11/10/89, Local Manufactures Promotion Bill, especially pp.442-46.
234 In-Nazzjon Tagħna, 8/2/90, p.2.
235 Prime Minister's speech at the opening of the National Careers Exhibition, reported in In-Nazzjon Tagħna, 2/5/90, p.5.
236 In-Nazzjon Tagħna, 23/5/90, p.6.
238 XWGD, January-December 1987, p.93.
239 Mifsud Bonnici, K., Education, speech made by the Leader of the Opposition at the end of a General Conference on
technical education by having three secondary educational sectors, namely Vocational Schools, Academic Schools, and Secondary Modern Technical Schools. The first would still cater for those students who would probably not benefit from a mainstream curriculum, and the emphasis there would be on remedial work. Students in the two other schools would follow a common curriculum during the first two years, and then opt to take academic subjects only, or a cluster of academic and technical subjects. The Nationalist Party maintained the emphasis, expressed in earlier electoral manifestos, on having a common secondary schooling for all up to the third form, on more general education in trade schools, on the updating of machinery and equipment, and on the professional formation of technical staff.

The MUT reiterated its former policy proposing that trade schools should be integrated within other secondary schools, and that those students who wanted to take up a vocational track could do so at the end of their second year of secondary schooling. The MUT added that vocational education must carry the same prestige as general education...must take into account the fact that there are rapid changes in working life, the need for lifelong education and the possibility of changes in occupation. Vocational education must include a solid general education and therefore the study of foreign languages.

The Confederation of Malta Trade Unions also outlined its educational policy, and among other things, proposed that the rapid development in science and the emergence of new technologies called for an urgent renewal of the technical education system.

Even more recently, and partly as a result of the Trade School Research Project, the department of education began a critical evaluation of its technical education provision in vocational schools. These efforts will be covered in the concluding chapter of this book. Suffice it to say at this stage that a thorough reform of trade schools, including a radical questioning of their raison d'être, does not seem to be on the agenda of either the department/Ministry, or the Labour Party.

Conclusion

A few summarizing comments will bring the historical account to a close. Part One of the book has shown the extent to which technical and vocational education has appealed to political and educational leaders – from the nineteenth century to the present day – as a solution to a number of economic, educational, political and ideological problems. It has also shown, however, the extent to which initiatives in this direction have generally failed either to

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241 MLP document on education, adopted at the General Extraordinary Conference, 16-17 May, 1991, paras.5.2.3-5.2.5.

242 MUT's Memorandum to Political Parties, 1992, pp.4-5.

arouse much interest in the population at large, or to attract an investment sustained over a sufficiently long period of time to generate a skilled pool of workers.

These failures can be attributed to various factors, some of which are external, and others internal to the school system. Among the former one can mention the problems generated by an educational innovation which precedes, and is meant to lead economic and industrial development. In this case, as the study of trade schools has shown, the nation has neither the technical culture that is required to value an alternative form of schooling; nor the appropriate reward structure for those students who pioneer the new system. It has neither the material resources to equip the schools, nor the human resources to provide expertise. Both resources are scarce as these are already tied up in fledgling industries which this developing country is trying to establish at the same time as it pursues its technification policies in education.

Under such conditions, it proves difficult for the innovation to attract status, either from among those in the sphere of industry or education. The former are too few to make a difference, and in any case - especially since Malta is in the early stages of industrial development - tend to require lower-level skills, reliant as they are on cheap labour for survival.

On the other hand, educators have been steeped in traditional and classical schooling for too long to have anything but suspicion for an education which appeals to the hand as well as to the mind. The entrapment of unmotivated students within a democratized educational system, where secondary schooling has been extended to all, creates pressures either to radically reform that system, or to channel the under-achievers and those who fail to see the value of the liberal curriculum, to a separate space.
PART TWO

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON VOCATIONAL SCHOOLING

Critical Perspectives

The account presented so far highlighted the historical development of technical education from its inception in the nineteenth century right up to the introduction of trade schools in the early seventies. There is an intimate link between this historical data and the critical evaluation of vocational schools in contemporary Malta. In the first place, writing history is always an interpretive, evaluative act, and the normative, questioning stance developed in the first part of the book is sustained with increased vigour in the chapters that follow. In the second place, certain trends and patterns which emerge in the analysis of vocational schools can be more easily understood when they are traced back to their economic, political and cultural roots. Claims made and questions raised with regards to trade schools are more fully and satisfactorily answered when placed within a context which is sensitive to the past, and to the interaction between education and other sites and systems of the wider social formation.
Three major claims have been made in favour of vocational schools by a number of people and governments in Malta since the nineteenth century.

- The first is that this is the most appropriate form of schooling that could be developed in response to the nation’s economic needs. Chapter Five will critically examine this belief, evaluating the extent to which trade schools have fulfilled the economic goal which they have been set up for.

- The second claim is that vocational schooling is an alternative educational path, characterized as it is by a stress on the practical, which succeeds in remotivating hitherto unachieving students. The extent to which trade schools have succeeded in achieving this educational goal is explored in Chapter Six.

- Finally, in their transition towards socialism, countries have tended to invest in vocational education in the belief and hope that such polytechnic schooling would link hand and mind, and would increase the status, and hence attractiveness of manual labour in their respective nations. The success in achieving such ideological goals, overtly expressed in the educational reforms ushered in by a Labour government in the early seventies, are addressed in Chapter Seven.

**Empirical Research on Vocational Schools**

The critical evaluation of trade schools presented will now draw directly on two sources of data - namely local empirical data and a thorough literature review of vocational schooling in developing and developed countries. The latter will enable the reader to make constant comparative analyses, locating local problems within a wider framework.

It is important at this point to give a brief overview of the provenance of the quantitative and qualitative empirical data, most of which were collected by the present author and by the team of research assistants involved in the Trade School Research Project (TSRP).

**Quantitative Data**

The overall evaluative nature of the research project required both quantitative and qualitative data, with the first providing the contours of the problematic terrain to be explored, and the second generating insights regarding the intimate geography of that educational ‘map’. While the main research tools of the former aspect of the project were surveys and questionnaires, interviews and participant observation were used in the latter, qualitative phase.

A detailed questionnaire¹ was constructed and distributed among all third year students (aged fifteen and above) present in their classrooms during the survey period between October and December 1989. 680 students (486 male; 194 female) were present to answer the questionnaire. This represents 57.5 per cent of the total of 1182 students (725 male; 457 female) that should have been present

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¹ Cf. Trade School Research Project Questionnaire, henceforth referred to as TSRPQ.
according to official lists of population in trade schools for 1989/1990. Students not present were generally habitual absentees, with the exception of six male students who were involved in an extra-curricular project and were absent from the school for long periods of time, and one male who preferred not to fill the questionnaire. The questionnaire was first tried out with a small group of students, but it was soon realised that it had to be edited so that responses were reduced to as little writing as possible. This meant that very few open-ended questions were in fact asked. The pilot project showed that it was necessary to read the questionnaire to all the classes and guide them from one question to the next in order to ensure comprehension. Literacy levels of these fifteen year-olds were so low that any attempt to engage them in any extensive reading and/or writing exercises would have jeopardized the end result.

The questionnaire addressed four distinct areas of inquiry, namely

- the students’ experience of school (which included questions regarding their socio-economic background, their immediate family’s educational and occupational paths and their educational aspirations and experiences);

- the students’ attitudes towards work (which included occupational aspirations and attitudes, as well as their expectations, financial or otherwise, regarding the world of work);

- the students’ experience of part-time and full-time work in the twilight economy; and

- the students’ experience of everyday life outside school and work, and hence of leisure, youth culture, and family life in general.

Only some of the data collected by means of this questionnaire will be reported in this book.

The same questionnaire, with a few minor modifications, was distributed to fifth year students in six élite private schools, three of which were for boys, and three for girls. In all, 190 boys out of a possible 322 males attending school and 204 girls out of a possible 224 females answered the questionnaire. The data allow the comparison between vocational school students and other young persons of the same age attending different educational establishments.

Further quantitative data was obtained through three tracer studies carried out with two groups of students. The first group consisted of students who left their trade school before the completion of their third year in 1987/88, while the second group was made up of those

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2 Department of Education Statistics, July 1990 (mimeo).


4 Studies carried out by VELLA, F., Trade School Tracer Study: Early Leavers, Diploma in Guidance and Counselling, dissertation, University of Malta 1992; and by BIANCHI, A., Trade School Tracer Study: Early Leavers, Diploma in Educational Administration and Management dissertation,
who had left after the completion of their third year in 1987/88. All tracer studies had good response rates. The data from the questionnaire and tracer studies are furthermore supplemented in some areas by surveys, carried out by the Guidance and Counselling Unit, the School Industry Unit and Gallup between 1987 and 1990.

**Qualitative Data**

Members of the Trade School Research Project also carried out in-depth interviewing with large numbers of students as well as teaching and administrative staff to establish data regarding their experiences of vocational schooling. Over 400 hours were spent in trade schools, classrooms, workshops, recreation areas, staffrooms, homes and workplaces by the present author and members of the research team in order to observe the curriculum in action, the nature of the transmission and reception of knowledge, and the over-all experience of students in vocational schools.

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University of Malta 1992.


Vella's study had a response rate of 77.3 per cent (in other words seventy-five students returned the questionnaires out of ninety-seven). Bianchi received seventy-two out of 120 questionnaires, a response rate of sixty per cent, while Chetcuti received 114 out of 183 questionnaires, a response rate of 62.7 per cent.

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This qualitative data not only supplemented the quantitative material collected by the TRSP Questionnaire, but gave meaning and life to it.

Systematic inquiry was carried out to establish an understanding of why students choose to go to vocational schools, what opinion industrialists and teachers in 'mainstream' schools have of vocational schooling in Malta, and why students who 'chose' to go to such schools absented themselves or played truant. Eighteen teachers who were involved in the setting up of trade schools were

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also interviewed. Most of the qualitative data was collected utilizing grounded theory methodology,\textsuperscript{12} and all members of the research team followed courses in this and had regular debriefing sessions with the project co-ordinator. Data cited are all kept in the TSRP ethnographic data bank, some of which have since been submitted in reports as part fulfillment of degree and diploma courses. Readers are therefore asked to keep in mind that quotations do not refer to anecdotal information, but are representative and illustrative of more general trends and patterns.

The final phase of the project fell within an action-research framework. It entailed the organization of developmental meetings held on a weekly basis with Heads of trade schools, as well as developmental work with staff and students in trade schools. This phase of the project focused on giving feedback of the data which had been collected and analyzed to various interest groups on the islands, such as the education bureaucracy, industrialists, and parents. The action-research phase of the project was led by the author, although responsibility for the critical self-reflective exercise was increasingly devolved on the participants themselves, with the author acting as a consultant and doing ‘sociological intervention’ in the


### Code:

1. Trade School Research Project Questionnaire;
2. Trade School Research Project-related business carried out by the author;
3. Trade School Tracer Studies;
4. Ethnographic Data bank related to research on school-to-work ideology in trade schools;
5. on absenteeism;
6. on resistance to trade schooling;
7. on why students ‘choose’ to go to trade schools;
8. on teachers’ attitudes towards trade schooling;
9. Interviews with industrialists;
10. Interviews with pioneering staff;
11. Action research with Heads of trade schools.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE ECONOMIC GOAL

Introduction

The setting up of trade schools represented the most fundamental effort on the part of the Labour Government to link education to the needs of the economy. This effort must not be divorced from other similar attempts by different governments and sustained throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century as the economy suffered the vagaries of time, or from attempts which were to be made at a later date and addressed at tertiary education.1

All these efforts, past and present, were based on a number of assumptions regarding the link between education and the economy - assumptions which were

1 The technification of tertiary education was attempted four years after the introduction of trade schools. As a white paper announced, 'Having given the necessary impetus to education in the trades and in technology by setting up a number of trade and technical schools, the Maltese Socialist Government turned its attention to higher education and carried out a careful examination of the reforms that were indicated to ensure that the country's new requirements and faster tempo of development were adequately served at the level of tertiary education'. (Tertiary Education: Proposed Reforms, Department of Information, Government Printing Press; Malta, June 1978, p.5).

articulated in a theoretically sophisticated manner by a series of economists from the 1950s onwards through the formulation of what has come to be known as 'human capital theory'. It is the purpose of this chapter to first give a brief overview of the main propositions of this theory, to outline its main assumptions, and finally to critically examine these in the light of empirical evidence on local trade schools.

Human Capital Theory

The roots of the human capital investment revolution go back to Adam Smith who argued in his Wealth of Nations that an increase in wealth was directly linked to an increase in the capital stock.2 Events in the post-World War II era led to the development of this fundamental insight in an attempt to facilitate development of third world countries, to maximize rates of development through economic planning, and to address the rate-of-economic-growth contest between the United States, other Western economies, and the USSR.3 The Sputnik success of the Russians embarrassed the Americans who looked to a reform in education and an intensification of investment in a science curriculum in order to ensure a future leading role in the space race.

Authors such as Peter Drucker, B.A. Weisbrod and T.W. Schultz provided the research and theoretical models to legitimize the view that the educational system must be


3 Ibid., p.279.
treated as an industry which generates the desired amounts of functional manpower, that knowledge was the only real capital in modern times, that the development of educated people - in vocational and general terms - was the most important capital formulation, and that their number, quality and utilization was the most meaningful index of the wealth-production capacity of a country. This view greatly affected first world scholars when trying to redress the economies of developing countries, especially when the physical capital donated to developing countries did not bring about the expected material benefits. It was increasingly considered useless to have technological progress unless it was also accompanied by educational progress. This partly explains the worldwide rise in educational investment during the 1950s.

The implications of such views are clear. Education will produce an increase in general and in job-specific knowledge which individuals subsequently can apply in an expanding economy both to better utilize new technical developments and to generate innovations. The result will be a marked pay-off in terms of increased production, yielding greater national wealth, corporate profits, and individual wages. Other related assumptions underlying human capital theory are that individuals choose to invest in education and are rewarded accordingly in the labour market, that skills, attitudes and competencies acquired in education are transferable to the workplace, and that the increasing complexity of the workplace and technology requires a higher level of skilling of all workers.

The attractiveness of the investment-in-people concept can be explained by the fact that it provided an umbrella which could cover both the conservative elements of the society, who were interested primarily in economic growth, and the more radical elements, who saw in educational expansion equalization of opportunity, income, and ultimately power as well.

In addition to this, governments with weak and underdeveloped economies generally believed that it was easier to change educational structures rather than economic ones, and thus it was easier to legitimate themselves by showing that they were in fact addressing the nation’s problems.

In Malta, governments have been tempted to assume that economic development cannot come about unless there is a highly and appropriately-skilled workforce, and that one of the ways of achieving this goal is to have diversified educational systems which provide technical education. Governments have been thus constant in this belief so much

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SOBEL, I., op.cit., p.283.

so that this assumption has practically remained uncontested. For the post-war period in particular, and synchronous with developments in other parts of the world, vocational schooling in Malta was considered to be a solution to the needs for the diversification of the economy. British consultants promoting the human capital tradition; such as Thomas Balogh and Paul Streeten, engaged critically with the American school of thought, but ultimately advised the Government of Malta as well as other governments to invest in technical education, and to embark on five or seven-year plans drawn to calculate and provide the future manpower and skills required.

The irresistible logic that underlies the argument that the school system in developing countries should be vocationalized in order to increase its relevance to the needs of a modernizing economy was challenged in the late sixties when the high expectations regarding the relationship between investment in human capital and economic growth were not borne out. The work of Foster, 10


10 Foster notes that 'the educational history of the Gold Coast is strown with the wreckage of schemes corresponding to Balogh's proposals' FOSTER, P.J., op.cit., p.400

and of Blaug, 11 Berg, 12 Jencks 13 and Collins, 14 and later of Psacharopoulos, 15 shattered the confidence in human capital theory which had hitherto been unchallenged. But as the latter scholar pointed out,

because of its inherently logical and simplistic appeal, vocationalism will be with us for years to come, and more countries will attempt, in vain, to tune their formal educational systems to the world of work. 16

Not only has almost every evaluation of the performance of vocational education, both in developing and in industrialized countries, been negative, 17 but the attractiveness of general schooling has grown, reflecting as it did a social desire for upward social mobility, greater


16 Ibid., p.203.

17 Ibid.
equality, and improvements in standards of living.\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, the economic recessions starting from 1973 onwards meant that in a number of countries, even those students who had invested in vocational education at the tertiary level had either to face unemployment, or accept to work in fields unrelated to their training, or at levels at which they could not utilize that same training.

Ironically however, though there had never been such high levels of widespread investment in education, the economies of many industrialized and developing countries were, by the 1970s, in jeopardy. Still, while the recession provided even more striking evidence that the economic performance of a country was not necessarily tied up with educational progress, major international organizations and governments simply ignored the evidence and pushed for closer linkages between education and the economy. The UNESCO and the World Bank, for instance, developed policies of educational aid which furthered the cause of vocational or diversified secondary education.

Quoting from a number of reports and reviews, Tilak shows how, in 1974, UNESCO adopted an important detailed recommendation concerning technical and vocational education, and argued that these should be an integral part of general education, as a means of helping students prepare for an occupation, and as an instrument for abolishing barriers between levels and areas of education, between education and employment and between school and society.\textsuperscript{18} In a paper on education, the World Bank criticized school curricula for being excessively theoretical and abstract, insufficiently oriented to local conditions, and insufficiently concerned with attitudes or with promoting manual, social and leadership skills. Accordingly the Bank also suggested an intensification of the vocational elements in the curricula of academic schools.\textsuperscript{20}

As a result of this policy, the World Bank invested – over a period of twenty five years – around twenty per cent of its total education lending in diversified secondary levels of education.\textsuperscript{21} By the late 1970s loan allocations for technical/vocational programmes received 53 per cent of all total funding, while general education programmes received only 33 per cent.\textsuperscript{22} During the post-war period and the forty years that followed, the ILO advocated vocational education programmes within a differentiated system of secondary education, and offered developing countries unusually high levels of funding for this purpose.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{16} SOEBEL, L., op.cit., p.294.


\textsuperscript{21} PSACHAROPOULOS, G. & LOXLEY, W., Diversified Secondary Education and Development, (Johns Hopkins, Baltimore 1985).


Flaws in Human Capital Theory

The main economic assumptions implicit in human capital theory – with particular reference to vocational schooling in Malta – can be presented in the following schematic manner.

- Schools are well-placed to provide vocational education.
- Schools can provide skills which industry will require in the future.
- Students attending Vocational schools eventually choose the occupation they have been trained for.
- There will be positive rates-of-return for vocational students.

Each of these assumptions will be examined in turn.

Schools are well-placed to provide vocational education.

Most of the literature suggests rather strongly that Grubb's hypothesis that 'schools can effectively teach only general skills, and firms can effectively teach only specific skills' is correct, and that therefore the historical ineffectiveness of vocational education can be at least partly explained by the fact that 'it has attempted to do what schools do worst.'

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The Economic Goal

One of the shortcomings of within-school vocational training is that vocational schools are generally more expensive than general schools, often twice as expensive at least. In addition to this, the costs of constructing, finishing and equipping a technical class are often up to seven times more than that of an ordinary classroom. These higher costs seem to hold constant across most subjects and schools, although most vocational schools also cater for subjects which are relatively cheap, such as handicrafts, services, business, commerce and domestic science. Often class size has to be kept low for pedagogical and safety reasons, while books and audio-visual aids for technical education are more expensive because they are not produced on a large scale.

In some countries, specialized technical teachers need to be offered higher salaries than other teachers because

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25. LAUGLO, J., 'Practical Subjects in Kenyan Academic Secondary Schools', in LAUGLO, J. & LILLIS, K. (eds) Vocationalizing Education, (Pergamon Press, Oxford 1987). It has been calculated that the cost varies between two to twenty times, depending on the number of enrolments, becoming more cost effective once enrolment is between 1,000 - 3,000 students (cf. MOURA CASTRO, C. de, 'Is Vocational Education Really that Bad', International Labour Review, Vol.126, no.5, 1987).

26. PSACHAROPOULOS, G., 'To Vocationalize or Not to Vocationalize... ', op.cit., p.194.

27. BENAVENT, A., op.cit., p.70.

otherwise private industry will absorb them. Given the general expense, the education budget is often not up to allocating sufficient funds to maintain vocational schools. This is especially true of many developing countries. Most of these started off this form of schooling after receiving funds from international agencies. However, once these funds dried up, they were then unable to keep on providing new and up-to-date machinery, tools and equipment.

Another problem...with the assumption that schools are well-placed to provide vocational education is that educational institutions have generally found it difficult to respond to new needs when these are signalled by the labour market:

A regular school system with its sequences of fixed education and its bureaucratic lags is poorly situated either to identify the new demands or to provide the facilities for such training. Indeed, where rates of skill obsolescence are high, so will be the obsolescence of instructors on the teaching staff of schools, in contrast to trainers in producing enterprises.29

Schools also find it difficult and costly to create the direct experience of production. Grubb in fact suggests that the only schools with effective programmes of specific skill training are those that work closely with a firm or group of firms. In a sense, they become extensions of these firms by having access to machinery, know-how, personnel and so on. Any other solution imposes a role which is impossible for vocational schools to fulfill, since they find themselves having to 'prepare students for labor markets without having any control over labor markets themselves or knowledge how these markets will develop'.30 Employers are the best placed to provide skills-specific instruction because they are closer than teachers to the requirements of production. They also have a better knowledge of the technological developments in the field.

The training provided by industry is less costly because the workplace has machinery and personnel already used for production and hence incurs less overheads. Students need not forego earnings because they tend to be already employed - or involved in apprenticeship schemes - with the firm which provides the training.

Finally, students who are trained on the job and initiated into a particular work environment are likely to choose and remain in the job they have been trained for, or opt to be retrained by their employer who has already invested in them. Commitment by the student and the employer is likely to be high, because both would have invested in one way or other in the training. Both would therefore wish to recoup the investment made.31

On the other hand, teachers are more likely to have outdated knowledge, unless they have frequent upgrading courses together with industrial experience.32 Employers in

32 TILAK, J.B.G., 'Vocational Education in South Asia...' op.cit,
most parts of the world have generally recognized that schools are not well equipped for providing vocational education, and expect schools to give a good basic education and social skills rather than credentials—academic or vocational. Employers are often more interested in attitudinal rather than cognitive skills, and their request for ‘skilled workers’ does not refer to specific task abilities but to a general set of attitudes. These include the ability to follow instructions, adapt easily and quickly to the work environment, and apply oneself diligently to tasks without understanding their general import. Employers are keen to have successful students because these are more ‘trainable’, and business and industry leaders increasingly cite literacy, flexibility, good work habits, self-discipline, problem-solving skills, and general knowledge as the best preparation for the complex and changing demands of the workplace.

The Maltese Context

Local data indicate that the same situation prevails with regards to Malta’s trade schools. Even though per capita expenditure is higher per trade school student (Lm15,45) than for other secondary school students (Lm10,29) the former have had to face the same challenges as similar schools in other countries. A number of position papers issued by the Federation of Industry have criticized the quantity and quality of technically-trained tradespersons, and while noting that

the country’s educational system is not expected to provide personnel at all levels tailor made for a particular industry...it is certainly expected to provide personnel suitably trained in the basics that form the platform for the various industrial sectors.

The Federation has also insisted that one of the main obstacles to the development of the economy is the serious skills shortage in the light engineering sector. This shortage is an obstacle to Malta’s aspirations to develop its investment in high-tech industries.

Schools have, in fact, been unable to respond to the needs for training in these new skills. The Federation thus favours a dual training system of vocational education. In this way, private manufacturing companies can offer

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35. Information given by the Department of Education, 1992, on request.
modern machinery, up-to-date instruction and direct experience of production.38

A Skills and Training Needs Survey carried out in July 1987 by the Education and Industry Unit among 396 firms concluded that there is a widespread demand by employers — be they large, medium or small firms — for more 'trainable' people.39 In other words, local employers are looking for personal qualities such as motivation, adaptability, standards of work and a sense of responsibility, as well as general education, meaning literacy and numeracy, the ability to read and follow simple instructions, convey messages accurately, understand simple diagrams, perform basic calculations, and have knowledge of such matters as wages, social security, work books and trade unions. While the demand for technification implies the need for an increase of thirty per cent in the population at the trade school level, an emphasis was placed by several employers on the upgrading of the general level of education of unskilled labour rather than on specialized training. Basic rather than advanced technical knowledge was seen to be more useful because of changing machinery

38 "Revising the Curricula of the Fellenberg course on Industrial Electronics", Speech delivered by Mrs H. Elliott, chairperson, Human Resources Committee of the Malta Federation of Industry, at a seminar organized by the Department of Education on 6 September 1990, and reported in Industry Today, no.24, December 1990.

39 HARPER, J.D., Review of Skills Surveys To-Date, 1990, mimeo. The Skills and Training Needs Survey had 298 responses, representing a rate of response of 73.2 per cent. The Education and Industry Unit was set up in March 1986.

which is increasingly becoming more highly technological.40 In-depth interviews with sixty employers also revealed that, in the case of trade school students, it is character traits rather than educational or even skills qualifications that are given priority.41

Malta's employers generally expressed dissatisfaction with the nature of training offered in trade schools, wanting more up-to-date instruction to be given by more adequately-trained instructors, with students utilizing more appropriate equipment. Some employers noted that trade school curricula were restricted, dealing mainly with basic processes, tools and machinery, and many suggestions were made urging the introduction of various skills-training courses reflecting new directions in production. A report commissioned by one trade school and prepared by an expert from the Centro Analisi Sociale of Turin noted that machinery and other training equipment available are obsolete and, in some cases, not even operational in view of the lack of parts and maintenance.42 Funds to redress this situation are becoming less and less available as financial priority is increasingly being given to the post-secondary educational level. Financial estimates on capital investment in education between 1989 and 1992 in fact reveal a declining pattern in the funding of trade schools.

40 ibid., p.24.


### The Economic Goal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>% of total Expenditure</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Lm86,792</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Lm130,307</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Lm60,000</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Lm82,000</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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While, according to the Skills and Training Needs Survey, some firms were ready to provide machinery and instructors to trade schools, most were unwilling to incur the costs of training, even when, in the long term, they would have been the direct beneficiaries by recouping the investment made in human resource development. A Unido report on technical training in Malta confirms the tendency for industry to rely on the vocational training provided by schools, even when they claim to be unhappy with the result. 43

The report argues that employers must be induced to play their part in industrial training programs, with personnel being released to train teachers and students, and equipment being made available for use in their firms. They could also help by providing in-service courses to staff teaching in trade schools and technical institutes.

The criticisms which employers have levelled at trade schools must not be accepted at face value. Some of the issues that have been raised show a lack of understanding of the role of vocational schools at the secondary level on the part of industrialists. Trade school curricula aim to provide local firms with workers at the operative and basic crafts level, and not with technicians. 44 In addition to this, the Maltese industrial set-up is characterized by a large percentage of small firms employing less than twenty workers. 45 Such firms are not likely to offer the training facilities that the Unido report recommends. Most firms are also unlikely to require an advanced degree of technical skills.

The insistence by the present government that Malta will be transforming its market orientation towards high technological fields, that more sophisticated skills will therefore be required, and that vocational schools should change their curricula in order to aim for such sunrise industries, is problematic. Various studies have suggested rather strongly that the widespread and long-standing belief that an increasingly technological society requires a skilled populace is questionable. 46

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44 cf. Report of the Round Table Conference held at Umberto Calooso Trade School, St. Venera, between Industrialists and Educators, May 3, 1989 (nimco), pp.2-3. Also, most of the trade schools teaching staff that were interviewed made the same comments.
45 In 1987, 88.5 per cent of workers in manufacturing, quarrying and construction and non-manufacturing industries were to be found in establishments employing less than twenty people (CENTRAL OFFICE OF STATISTICS, Annual Abstract of Statistics, Malta 1988).
claims or register complaints about the educational system. Nevertheless, industry's dissatisfaction with trade schools does alert us to the fact that schools are notoriously inadequate institutions for vocational training. The most obvious case which demonstrates the extent to which schools find it difficult to respond to changes in the labour market is the vocational training offered in girls' trade schools. Girls are channelled to work in textile firms or are otherwise taught craft-type skills which prepare students for domestic work or the tourist industry. While the focus on industrial sewing might have been functional in the early seventies, when the textile industry was the dominant and most important sector of Maltese manufacturing establishments and the largest provider of jobs in the private sector, the labour market situation has now changed, without a concomitant reform in trade schools.

Indeed, due to the availability of cheaper labour in the Maghreb and in Central and Eastern European countries, general world recession, and changes in government economic policies and regulation of exports, the textile industry in Malta has shrunk drastically. Twenty-nine factories have closed down over the past five years, whilst others have trimmed down their work-force. In all, 2250 workers have been shed between mid-September 1987 and end-September 1991. But trade schools continue preparing girls not only for some of the lowest paid, semi-skilled occupations available, but for jobs which might no longer be there.

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53 ibid., p.III.
54 The Times, 2/5/92, Editorial.
55 The Minister of Education and Human Resources, reported in The Times, 2/5/92, Editorial.
Rather, what has been shown is that the increasing technocratization of society has resulted in increased skill requirements for some and a decrease in skill for others. Increased application of technology has in many cases reduced complex mental or physical skills to routine task requirements capable of being performed by most individuals without extensive technical training. This seems to be as true in the so-called white-collar professions as it is in more typically blue-collar occupations. Where technology has increased the skill requirements for jobs, this has merely been true only for a small group, namely those who are involved in planning the techniques of production.

Additionally, while demand for some 'high-tech' jobs, such as those of systems analysts, computer programmers, data-processing machine technicians and others, is projected to grow between seventy per cent and 148 per cent in the nineties, their absolute number is small. On the other hand, increases in unskilled categories such as janitors, nurse-aids, fast-food workers and so on will grow at unprecedented rates. Various economists have in fact concluded that more and more workers will in future be required, by the nature of the economy, to take jobs which do not make use of their education or their skills, and that formal education certification will be more useful in getting rather than in doing a job.

There is some evidence to show that the same trend will be true for Malta also. The Skills and Training Needs Survey notes, for instance, that several companies were losing good and qualified workers because the present occupations under-utilized their skills and levels of training. Furthermore, some specialized companies in non-ferrous metals were employing people with limited experience and poor levels of education so that these employees 'would not be able to understand pertinent technological details that would enable them to set up on their own and become a competitive threat' The TSTS show that up to sixty-one per cent of early-leavers and forty-seven per cent of course-completers were doing the same work as colleagues who had not been to vocational schools but had followed the general stream instead. Indeed, it could be argued that the present skills shortage is a socially-constructed problem, since skilled labour is poorly paid and cannot therefore attract workers. Furthermore, occupational segregation along gender lines automatically excludes women from vacancies which employers claim they cannot fill.

These caveats serve as an important reminder that employers generally have vested interests when they make


51 DARMANIN, M., "The Labour Market of Schooling..." op.cit., p.115.
claims or register complaints about the educational system. Nevertheless, industry's dissatisfaction with trade schools does alert us to the fact that schools are notoriously inadequate institutions for vocational training. The most obvious case which demonstrates the extent to which schools find it difficult to respond to changes in the labour market is the vocational training offered in girls' trade schools. Girls are channelled to work in textile firms or are otherwise taught craft-type skills which prepare students for domestic work or the tourist industry. While the focus on industrial sewing might have been functional in the early seventies, when the textile industry was 'the dominant and most important sector of Maltese manufacturing establishments and the largest provider of jobs in the private sector,' the labour market situation has now changed, without a concomitant reform in trade schools.

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53 ibid., p.III.

The Economic Goal

Schools can provide skills which industry will require in the future.

This claim is based on the assumption that one can tell which skills will be needed in the future. Such manpower planning has had an appeal for many governments in the postwar era as they tried to project the types and number of skills that the economy would need in the future so that the educational system would then produce the right number of persons with the appropriate skills. Malta is no exception. Starting in the fifties, under Balogh's influence, successive administrations embarked on a number of manpower planning and forecasting exercises, the latest version being one announced recently by the Employment and Training Corporation. The ETC's intention is to conduct a comprehensive survey, on a national basis, to identify labour and skills requirement in order to give the government as clear a picture as possible of present and future needs, enabling it to draw up its education and training policies.

Despite the rhetoric accompanying the launching of an exercise which would place Malta 'in the forefront of future discussion' on the subject in international fora such as the ILO, evidence from a number of countries over the past quarter of a century has generally discredited attempts at manpower planning and forecasting. Among the reasons that are usually given for the difficulties facing such an exercise are the following:

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54 The Times, 2/5/92, Editorial.
55 The Minister of Education and Human Resources, reported in The Times, 2/5/92, Editorial.
The greater frequency and speed of change in the technology/employment area than in the education/training area;

The assumption that persons trained in a given occupation will seek that particular employment;

The unreasonable assumption of zero labour substitution;

The narrow focus on wage employment in the formal sector to the exclusion of all other forms of economic activity;

The focus on growth to the exclusion of equity and social demand;

The discrepancies between the actual rates of economic growth and the assumed ones upon which the manpower forecasts are based;

The neglect of occupational mobility;

The assumption that particular levels of economic development are reached through specific patterns of educational/occupational structures.  

To these we can add Malta's vulnerability to changes in the international market which play havoc with plans of vocational training initiated in response to projected personpower needs. The mobility of capital makes investment by multinational companies highly unreliable and in small states find it particularly difficult to plan ahead.  

In addition to this, Malta's recent decision to liberalize its economy has had further repercussions on manpower forecasting. In actual fact the only countries where the latter exercise has tended to be successful was in centrally-planned economies. Here, state bureaucracies establish investment policy, set production schedules, organize the distribution of the labor force and determine the content and enrollment level of educational frameworks. Given their strong commitment and actual power to control economic production, it is not surprising that the educational systems of Eastern Europe have been organized to keep in step with, and to be an instrument of, economic development.

In other countries these attempts have failed, often miserably, and have in fact generated unemployment because the skills assessed as of today that would be needed twenty years from now, will be very different from those


58 BENAVENT, A., op.cit., p.69.

that the economy will be actually demanding in the future.\textsuperscript{66}

**Students attending Vocational schools eventually choose the occupation they have been trained for.**

Most research carried out in developing and developed countries shows that the assumption that students will find or even look for work in the area related to their training is unfounded. Lewis and Lewis, in reviewing research regarding work trends in the Caribbean for instance, as well as tracer studies carried out in a number of islands in the late seventies and early eighties, confirm that large percentages - between twenty-five to thirty-three per cent - of vocational students were not employed in course-related jobs.\textsuperscript{61} Similar results have been obtained from tracer studies with students following vocational tracks in American high-schools. In this case, only 27.4 per cent of the employed graduates had a training-related job one to ten years after leaving high-school.\textsuperscript{62}


Another study showed that only twenty-one per cent of employed vocational graduates had a training-related job two years after finishing high-school. The countries which have reported higher percentages of students who have taken up training-related jobs have been those where, as in Germany, employers are heavily involved in the training offered to students.

**The Maltese Context**

A number of studies carried out locally show similar patterns in both job orientation and job placement. The 1989 data from the TSRPQ suggest that, in intention at least, 59.7 per cent of male students and 53.6 per cent of female students think that their main job will be in the trade area they have studied at school. Only 9.3 per cent of male students said they would be working in an unrelated area. The percentage for females in this case was significantly higher, with 24.2 per cent saying they would be working in a different field altogether. It is also significant to point out that 20.1 per cent of female students and 29.4 per cent of male students did not answer this question, suggesting a degree of uncertainty about their occupational futures, and that young adults entering the skilled and semi-skilled labour market segments are more likely to take up whatever is available rather than to choose jobs. In other words, it

\textsuperscript{63} Campbell, P.B., Basinger, K.S., Dauner, M.B., & Parkes, M.A., Outcomes of Vocational Education for Women, Minorities, the Handicapped and the Poor, (The National Center for Research in Education, Ohio State University, Columbus 1986).
would seem that jobs are looking for people, rather than people looking for jobs.\textsuperscript{64}

This readiness to enter the labour market when an opening presents itself can be partly understood when one considers the lack of knowledge regarding the availability, or otherwise, of employment opportunities among students. According to the TSRPQ 45.4 per cent of female students and 45.5 per cent of male students said they were not quite sure whether it would be easy or difficult to find employment on leaving school, while 21.1 per cent of the girls and 10.9 per cent of the boys declared it would be difficult to find a job.

The best way to find out which occupations vocational students have in fact taken up is through tracer studies. One such study was carried out by the Guidance and Counselling Services of the Department of Education in October and November 1990 with all June 1990 school-leavers.\textsuperscript{65} 82.5 per cent (or 561) of all male students who received the questionnaire filled in the required details.

\textsuperscript{64} ROBERTS, K., 'The Social Conditions, Consequences and Limitations of Careers Guidance', \textit{British Journal of Guidance and Counselling}, Vol.5, no.1, 1977. Data similar to that reported in the TSRPQ can be found in a Gallup study which found that twenty-seven per cent of trade school students were as yet uncertain about their future careers. \textit{GALLUP}, 'Trade/Technical School children: Attitudes Towards Work Motivation and Perception of Industry: Summary Report', 1990, p.17.

\textsuperscript{65} GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES, 'Results of a Tracer Study held in October/November 1990', (Education Department, mimeo 1990). The overall response rate to this tracer study was 80.6 per cent.

\textbf{The Economic Goal}

Of these, 20.9 per cent were employed in the manufacturing sector. 7.3 per cent reported that they were working in the tourist industry, while another 13.2 per cent said they were working in the service sector. The last two figures show that 20.5 per cent of all vocational school-leavers were in an occupation which trade schools had not prepared them for.

Furthermore, although 20.9 per cent had reported that they were employed in the manufacturing sector, one cannot assume that they were doing training-related tasks. This is borne out not only by other tracer studies reported below, but also by data obtained from interviews with trade school heads who noted that students applied to fill dockyard vacancies, for instance, irrespective of the trade they were taking at school.

Data for girls are less convincing since there was a significantly lower response rate. Thus of the 457 female school-leavers, only 205 (or 45 per cent) filled in the questionnaire. In this case 72.1 per cent of those who replied were working in the manufacturing sector and, given employment opportunities for women in Malta, were almost certainly in textile factories. 4.8 per cent were in tourism, 2.9 per cent in services, while a full 15.1 per cent remained 'at home'. In any case, eighty-nine per cent of the girls said they would not remain in full-time employment once they had children.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{66} A GWU study on textile industry workers reports that, on average, women spend a maximum of four years in textile factories before giving up the job. (Report quoted during a public forum organized by the Foundation for Human Resources, 29/5/91).
Two other tracer studies were carried out by members of the TSRP team. These tracer studies set out to contact two groups of male students—namely early school-leavers and course-completers—who had entered employment in 1987/88. In the case of early school-leavers, 71.6 per cent were working in jobs totally unrelated to the trade they had studied at school. The course-completers were more likely to have benefited from their trade training, since ‘only’ 38.7 per cent had found employment in occupations that were not related to their course-work. This could mean that students take some time until they actually find a job related to their training.

There Will be Positive Rates-of-Return for Vocational Students.

Given that the focus of this book is on the benefit of education and schooling for its clients, it is important to explore at some length whether vocational schooling gives students any advantages in the labour market when compared to ‘non-vocational’ students. In other words, it is not sufficient to evaluate the rates-of-return of trade schooling for the nation, but also for the students themselves. Most studies which have attempted to address this issue have set out to answer one or more of the following questions:

- Do vocational students find employment quickly?
- Are they more likely to be unemployed?
- How do their wages compare with those of non-vocational students?
- What conditions of work do they enjoy?

The evidence reported by a number of countries is mixed and therefore inconclusive. Some claim that students trained in a vocation do better in getting jobs than students opting for a general education. A study carried out among 12,000 young people by the US National Center for Research and Vocational Education, for instance, found that the more vocational courses the student takes, the more likely s/he is to find a job. Depending on the condition and performance of the labour market, Norwegian vocational students do in fact do better in terms of earnings, feeling of autonomy on the job, participation in trade unions, and other such measures. These advantages are especially significant when we consider that vocational track students have often stayed for a shorter period in schools. However, a review of income returns by graduates

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67 For the purpose of these tracer studies, a questionnaire was specially designed by the present author.
68 Henceforth referred to as Trade School Tracer Studies, or TSTS.
69 The data do not reflect the frequent occupational shifting these young workers were involved in since they left school, or the changes they intended to make in the future.

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from academic and vocational secondary education in several Asian and African countries suggests that in many countries, students following a vocational education do better financially in the short-term, but in the long-term, the pattern changes to the benefit of those who had followed an academic track. In France, students in the general education schools come off better in the short-term as well.73

Research has also indicated that for those who do not pursue their studies at college/post-secondary level, the high-school curriculum has little effect on labour market outcomes, irrespective of whether their curriculum is general or vocational.74 A major study by the Bureau of Labour Statistics concluded that of the fifty-three million Americans employed in jobs which required training, only five per cent received it in high school vocational classes. The same study also indicates that business/office studies, often followed by female students, represent one of the few vocational areas that do give an advantage in the labour market.75 Perhaps the most significant study of all with reference to the issue in question is that carried out by Psacharopoulos who has been instrumental in the co-ordination of path-breaking analyses in the economics of vocational education. Psacharopoulos concludes that there is really no hard evidence that returns for individuals, or for society in general, are any better with vocational streams, even when one looks at their effect in developing countries. Indeed, students with a vocational education are more likely to spend longer spells of unemployment.76 Tilak arrives at much the same conclusions after reviewing fourteen studies carried out in developing countries.77

Given the nature of the conflicting evidence available, some have argued that it would be safe to conclude that training in certain occupational areas gives more benefits to students than others,78 and that vocational education can make a small positive difference for some of the people some of the time.79

There are a number of problems which must be highlighted before the Maltese empirical data are compared with that obtained from international studies. An important issue which is not often raised is that a key variable in the rates of return for students might not be whether s/he

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76 Psacharopoulos, G., 'To Vocationalize or Not to Vocationalize...?' op.cit.

77 Tilak, J.B.G., "Vocational Education in South Asia..." op.cit., and Economics of Vocationalization: A Review of Evidence, (National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi 1987).


followed a vocational or general track, but the nature of the reward structure of the labour market which absorbs school-leavers. A second problem is that when comparison is made between the rates of return for vocational and for general students, it is often forgotten that these two types of tracks attract different "types" of students, with the vocational catering for what are often socio-economically depressed groups of students. Even if these achieve less, in financial terms, than general education students, one would have to see what their rates of return would have been like had they too joined the general stream.

A related issue is that vocational students are a 'self-selected group' likely to possess not only similar backgrounds, but also skills and aspirations which are different from those of the groups with which they are compared. Thus, differences which appear between vocational and non-vocational groups at the completion of a program may reflect not program impact, but prior differences which escaped detection of the survey measures. Alternatively, such differences may reflect differential interactions between certain kinds of students and certain program features.

Furthermore, differences between the results obtained by male and female students reflect the different opportunities and rewards that a segmented labour market presents to the different genders.

In addition, most rates-of-return studies do not explain why vocational education school-leavers tend to do less well. The reason for this may be in the different value that specific, as against general, skills have for employers. The former are those that are useful to one kind of employer, while the latter are those which every employer finds productive. The employer may choose not to pay narrowly skilled workers higher wages than those prevailing for unskilled labourers, since the specific skills may turn out to be useless to any other firm and there may therefore be no incentive for other employers to bid these workers away. In the case of workers with general skills however, employers may try to poach workers from other firms by offering them higher wages. Thus, while it behoves employers to train people in specific skills, persons with general skills may end up with a better pay-packet. People with specific skills may prove to be more beneficial to firms rather than to their own selves.

The Maltese Context

The Trade School Tracer Studies referred to earlier indicate that vocational students in Malta do not generally encounter many difficulties in finding a niche in the labour market, though obviously one needs to examine the status of that niche, preferably in comparison with the sorts of opportunities available to students who complete other types of schooling. Over eighty per cent of early-leavers and

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60 LEWIS, T. & LEWIS, S., op.cit., p.165.
61 MOURA CASTRO, C. de., op.cit., p.608.
62 CLAUS, J., op.cit., p.10.
63 GRUBB, NORTON W., 'The Phoenix of Vocationalism...', op.cit.
94.6 per cent of course-completers who responded to the TSTS questionnaires were in employment, with most sixty per cent of the former and eighty-eight per cent of the latter - finding a job within six months of leaving school. In a country enjoying almost full employment, this is not surprising and the relative advantage or disadvantage of vocational school students is not clear. However, an analysis of the 16-18 year-old young adults registering for unemployment showed that the most at risk were, first, those who had only primary schooling, and then those who had attended trade schools. 30.9 per cent (n=157) of the young unemployed were male students who had completed the trade school course, while 28.7 per cent (n=146) had left vocational schools early. Females were not highly represented in the list of registered unemployed.84

According to the TSTS most male students took up unskilled and semi-skilled work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TSTS</th>
<th>UNSKILLED</th>
<th>SEMI-SKILLED</th>
<th>SKILLED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Leavers</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Completers</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Skills and Training Needs Survey confirms the pattern identified above, noting that twelve per cent of the workers


from a technical education level were found to be employed in unskilled occupations, and considers this to be a disturbing result which called for further investigation.85 In the TSTS, almost seventy per cent of early-leavers and forty-seven per cent of course-completers felt that somebody who had never attended a trade school could have performed the same type of work they were presently doing.

The computation of the financial rates-of-return for vocational track students compared with general track students is complex in itself because, as noted earlier, there are a number of variables involved, so that any final conclusion might be referring to elements other than programme effects. A major factor to be considered is the reward structure in Malta, where sixteen years of Labour administration reduced wage differentials between manual and non-manual labour as well as between different working grades.86 As Carnoy has pointed out with reference to societies which embarked on a socialist programme,

The individual material cost of not doing well in school is greatly reduced, and so is the material payoff of reaching higher levels of schooling. The motivation for high

85 HAPRER, J., op.cit., p.11.
achievement in school comes in part from the continued (but smaller) differences in income, but more from non-material rewards (such as easier, more prestigious jobs and political power) and from pressures of social responsibility (a more productive life and a greater contribution to the people-nation).87

The particularity of the reward structure of the Maltese labour market is perceived by students, and is reflected in their beliefs about the effectiveness of schooling in increasing earning power. These perceptions were once more influenced by the gender of respondents.

Data from the TSRPQ show that 27.8 per cent of boys in Trade Schools said they were sure that vocational schooling led to jobs which were as well paid as jobs which required academic schooling. A further 37.1 per cent said they were not sure about what was most remunerative, while 30.7 per cent said that academic schooling gave better rates of return. Girls seemed to think that vocational schooling was generally less remunerative, with 46.4 per cent expecting their counterparts in general schools to earn more money than themselves. 37.1 per cent were not quite sure, while only 8.3 per cent thought that vocational schooling put them ahead, in terms of earning power, than others.

The high levels of uncertainty are significant in the case of both males and females in trade schools, as well as in the elite private schools, where students were asked to answer the same question.

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While trade school students were generally uncertain as to whether vocational schooling gave them more earning power than general schooling, the TRSPT data show that they expected their training to contribute to higher earnings in the future, when this was compared to the earnings of untrained workers in similar work environments. This was true of 82.1 per cent of male students and 72.7 per cent of females. Indeed fifty-one per cent of the former, (though only 15.5 per cent of the latter) thought it would pay to invest in further vocational education. The tracer studies suggest that this faith in schooling increases, but is still significantly high, when male trade school-leavers look back from the vantage point of employment to comment on whether further study in a trade would have given them better job possibilities. Thus, the TSTS with early-leavers shows that sixty-five per cent thought that had they stayed longer in a vocational school, they would have had better job possibilities, while 47.8 per cent of the course-completers were of the same opinion. However, a significantly high percentage from both groups, 32.8 per cent and 38.7 per cent respectively, felt that further study would not have made much of a difference in job opportunities and rewards.

If one compares the above expectations with actual wages earned by 1987/88 vocational school-leavers represented in the TSTS, it then becomes clear that a full forty-five per cent of early school-leavers were not earning the minimum wage.\(^9\)

\(^9\) One has to keep in mind that these results represent a biased sample, i.e. those who answered were those present in trade schools, and therefore represent those who had opted to attend school.

\(^60\) This percentage is worked out of the total of those who answered the relevant question, in the tracer studies carried out by Vella and Bianchi i.e. forty-two (or 60.9 per cent of Vella's sample) and seventy-one (or all of Bianchi's sample). BIANCHI

The Economic Goal

As for course-completers,\(^91\) these were, in general, earning slightly above the minimum wage according to their age group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monthly Minimum</th>
<th>Monthly Maximum</th>
<th>Weekly Average</th>
<th>Minimum Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Year</td>
<td>Lm108</td>
<td>Lm190</td>
<td>Lm31.5</td>
<td>Lm26.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Year</td>
<td>Lm130</td>
<td>Lm208</td>
<td>Lm36.4</td>
<td>Lm27.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Year</td>
<td>Lm139</td>
<td>Lm238</td>
<td>Lm42.4</td>
<td>Lm33.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is significant that 44.1 per cent of early school-leavers and 43.2 per cent of course-completers remarked that low pay was a major drawback at their place of work.

This does not represent the whole picture, however. If one is to seriously calculate the value of vocational training for trade school students, one has to keep in mind the phenomenon of Malta's underground economy, which

\(^91\) Seventy-eight out of 111, or 70.2 per cent of Chetcuti's sample answered the relevant question. CHETCUTI, I., Trade School Tracer Study: Course Completers, unpublished dissertation for the Diploma in Guidance and Counselling, University of Malta, 1992.
accounts for ten to twenty per cent of the GNP. From the TSRPQ data and interviews with trade school students, it became clear that the latter were very likely utilizing their vocational skills in a second, unofficial job. Thus, thirty-seven per cent of the male and 7.22 per cent of the female students who answered the TSRPQ expressed their intention to have a second job. By far the vast majority of male trade school students aspired to work with governmental or parastatal bodies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TSRPQ</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Own Account Worker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TS Males</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS Females</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPS Males</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPS Females</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Skills and Training Needs Survey reported similar data, with forty-one per cent making the Government sector their first choice. The TSTS show that on average, twenty-five per cent of trade-school students are employed by the state whilst forty-five per cent are engaged by the private industry. Although a very small number - six students in all - had in fact set up their own business, it is likely that many of the other students were earning over and above their wage by doing other jobs. The Skills and Training Needs Survey notes that many trade school students aspired for government jobs because of job security which that sector offered, and also because it left them enough time to work part-time elsewhere. Informal, unstructured interviews with male trade school students revealed that some preferred to first work with the government until they had learned their trade well. Once they had obtained experience and expertise however, they fully intended to leave state employment and start their own enterprise, perhaps turning their part-time job into a full-time one. No information is available as to whether these secondary jobs correspond to skills learnt at school. If this were found out to be so, then vocational schooling might be contributing towards the development of the underground rather than the formal economy.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has shown that the economic goal established for trade schools is not being reached, since these schools are not responding - and cannot respond - adequately enough to the economic needs of the nation. Schools are ill-equipped and slow to respond to the changing requirements of industry. Trade schools are most probably not bringing enough returns to the students who follow courses there. Large numbers of vocational students take up jobs unrelated to their training while most female
trade school students are more likely to quit their job as soon as they have had children. As a result the nation cannot then recoup investment made in its attempts to develop a skilled work-force. All these reasons militate against vocational schools performing the direct economic function that was intended for them. The most that one can claim is that these schools fulfill an indirect economic function.

a) by building up a technological culture in the labour force (though it seems that high rates of absenteeism, as well as out-dated technology in schools, jeopardize this function), and

b) by directing a percentage of students away from academic education and into blue collar occupational paths.26

The second goal could never be a declared intention for schools in a nation which overtly claims that justice and democracy are its guiding values.

Trade schooling does not seem to bring much in the way of advantages to students who are channelled, or choose to go to that particular educational structure. Vocational students are more likely to be unemployed than students from other types of schools, and generally find work as unskilled and semi-skilled workers, so that they are ultimately engaged in doing work which others, who have not gone to trade schools, can do. In addition, they are exposed to a restricted general curriculum which is considered a disadvantage, not only from the civic but also from the industrial point of view.

Finally, an evaluation of the returns of vocational schooling for the nation and for the individual student must be placed within a macro socio-economic context. Whether this kind of schooling will bring more or less advantages or disadvantages will depend on such factors as the rate of growth of the overall economy, and particularly of the sector which will make use of the vocational skills that are taught; the structure of incentives and disincentives that influence the allocation of available specialized labour; the quality and relevance of the education that vocational students bring with them to the labour market, and so on. Government policies - such as increasing or decreasing wage differentials between blue and white-collar jobs - will also have a direct impact on the attractiveness of, and/or rates-of-return for, vocational schooling. In other words, the reasons for the economic success or failure of trade schools need to be viewed not only from within the educational institution, but also from the outside. Other variables, that have nothing to do with education as such, must be examined.

26 As one industrialist, interviewed by the author, claimed: 'Thank God for trade schools! The students we employ from these schools do not come to us with expectations and aspirations which are higher than we can fulfill.'
CHAPTER SIX

THE EDUCATIONAL GOAL

Introduction

One of the strands running through the nineteenth and twentieth century discourse on technical and vocational instruction emphasized the moral and educational benefits that this kind of education would give to particular groups of students. Practical instruction, it was claimed, would delinquents into a love for work and virtuous living; it would encourage reluctant parents to send their children to school; it would motivate students who were not keen; or unable to study the more abstract, literary curriculum; it would serve as a re-invigorating break between more intellectually demanding lessons; and it represented a pedagogically sound way of departing from the concrete to the more abstract, from things known to things unknown, from the hand to the mind. The modern promise that vocational education would deliver a ‘relevant’ curriculum therefore echoes the concern with ‘useful knowledge’ prevalent in the early nineteenth century, and re-affirms the belief in the provision of a special form of instruction aimed at students who have always been, in one way or another, constructed as ‘different’ from the mainstream student and as morally, culturally and/or educationally ‘deficient’. Most, if not all, of these educational, pastoral and civilizing motives behind ‘vocationalism’ were brought to bear on the formulation of the new trade schools in 1972.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the assumptions regarding the alleged educational aims of vocational schooling. It is necessary first to identify the philosophical, psychological, and sociological theories embedded in the claims made, and then to problematize these in the light of empirical evidence and argumentation. More specifically, this chapter will ask whether ‘relevant’ vocational schooling, in Malta and elsewhere, does in fact succeed in attracting, motivating and retaining students who would otherwise not invest in their education, and whether or not it is true that the educational experience offered in vocational tracks, while being different, is not inferior to that available in other learning environments.

The Foundation Disciplines And The ‘Relevant’ Curriculum

An account of what the foundation disciplines have to say about a relevant and practical type of schooling is useful in order to be in a better position to understand the claims that are often made about the educational benefits of vocational instruction. It is not being argued, of course, that those who made such claims – be they education policy-makers, practitioners in schools or parents – had the foundation disciplines in mind when proposing reforms or putting forth their convictions. Rather, the contention is that such claims have a foundation in sets of ideas which have been articulated in a sophisticated and systematic manner by philosophers, psychologists and sociologists of education, and that one stands a better chance of understanding the issues at stake if one engages in such an articulation. The assumption is that such ideas are present, through processes of what can be referred to as ‘cultural osmosis’, in the more informal educational discourse of different groups of people.
Philosophy of Education

A key philosopher who has argued for a relevant schooling is John Dewey, whose central thesis in his *Experience and Nature* states that

the traditional separation of experience and nature, and concomitant view that nature (science) is the embodiment of knowledge and that experience is of little epistemological consequence is fallacious.\(^1\)

Ever the pragmatist philosopher, Dewey took on the task of demonstrating how the 'useful arts', namely technology, gave rise to science. In contrast with the Greeks, Dewey showed that 'applied sciences' such as engineering, medicine, and the social arts carry knowledge more adequately than 'pure sciences' such as mathematics and physics because the former are

more directly concerned with not just the instrumentalities, but instrumentalities at work in effecting modifications of existence on behalf of conclusions that are reflectively preferred.\(^2\)

It is this respect for the epistemological and normative benefits of technology that underlined Dewey's approach to the science of teaching and education as a process of 'learning by doing'. Dewey was in fact part of a general reform movement in early twentieth century America which took traditional schooling to task for being too bookish, unrelated to the real-life concerns of children, and out of touch with the technological developments that were taking place but which were not reflected in the curriculum. However, Dewey differed fundamentally from contemporaries like David Snedden, Commissioner of Education, and Charles Prosser, Executive Secretary of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education. These believed uncritically in the emergence of scientific-corporate capitalism as the cosmic instrument of progress, and considered their task as 'educators' to be one of lubricating the wheels of that giant machine. Within their social Darwinist point of view, schooling was to be differentiated, so that practical trade schooling was to be made available for the offsprings of the masses. Here, ethos, curriculum and teacher-student relationships were to imitate the industrial shop-floor as closely as possible so that habits of 'correct' thinking and doing would be established.\(^3\) Those attending these new schools were to be taught aspects of the liberal curriculum in a practical manner, or not at all.

This was inadmissible to Dewey, who argued that

a separation of trade education and general education of youth has the inevitable tendency to make both kinds of training narrower and less significant than the schooling in which the traditional education is reorganized to

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\(^3\) DEWEY, J., op.cit., p.161.

utilize the subject matter - active, scientific, and social - of the present day environment. 5

Thus, Dewey distanced himself from the idea of differentiated schooling - namely vocationalism for future labourers - and argued that the intellectual qualities necessary for sustaining democratic values were to be made available to all. Among the most important qualities was the ability to understand the new culture of technology and science, which held much promise but also posed many threats to democratic forms of life.

It was for this reason that although Dewey placed the acquisition of vocational tasks at the heart of the programme of his Laboratory School, he insisted that tasks, such as weaving wool into clothing, cooking, constructing and gardening, were not intended to be, as in the Snedden-Prosser plan, a schooling for work but rather an education about work. The 'learning by doing' was not only an alternative to the traditional teacher/lesson-centred education, but it also helped children understand how science and technology had affected the process of production, and it led them from doing to reflecting upon the doing. Children would thus practice the scientific mode of inquiry - hypothesizing, reporting and testing - in a rational and open community of learners. In addition, they would consider, from a normative point of view, the way science and technology were being used to further or to dismantle democracy.


Educational Psychology

Throughout the years there have been various theories regarding cognitive development. Late in the nineteenth century, Thorndike had criticized the idea of 'transfer of learning' thus discrediting the view that education ought to be general and common to all. His argument was that for transfer of learning to take place, the learning setting needed to be as identical as possible to the context of its future application. This theory implied that schools should mirror the work setting as closely as possible. Such an approach provided 'scientific' justification for developing vocational tracks for students whose occupational futures were likely to be lived on the shop floor. This partly explains the proliferation of intelligence tests aimed at 'objectively' gauging a student's probable destiny, and the subsequent provision of a schooling experience which approximated that destiny.

Piaget's views on cognitive development synchronized to some extent with those of Thorndike, for through his research he had shown that structurally and biologically engrained universal laws govern cognitive development.

In contrast to these perspectives, there arose a psychological tradition, spearheaded by Soviet intellectuals such as Vygotsky, Luria and Leontiev, arguing that rather than structure and biology it was culture and experience
which influenced cognitive development. This Soviet school argued that the development of thought
should not be conceived of as merely individual, independent or inner. There must be recognition of what
the child achieves in cooperative activity, by imitation, pointing to the direction of development. 7

Vygotsky thus highlighted the way culture, social interaction and the historical dimension influenced the
development of mind. A key difference between the Vygotskian school and other approaches to cognitive
development is that while many of the latter, often behaviourist orientations, hold the conviction that a child’s
intellectual potential can be assessed and tested by considering that child’s independent activity, the former
approach stresses that ‘what is important is the level a child can attain in collective activity, with adult assistance, and
the aid of imitation, which is a great deal more than can be achieved with full understanding independently.’ 8 Moreover,
what the child can do in cooperation today he [sic] can do alone tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of
instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it, which is aimed not at the level the child has
attained, as usually advised, but at ‘ripening functions.’ 9

Development therefore will take place through the interaction with more knowledgeable others and, according
to Vygotsky, all knowledge is embodied in the action, work, play, technology, literature, art and talk of members of a
given society. 10 Such collective learning activity can be represented to children in various ways, namely:

a. through an active presentation which is tied to practical work,
b. through an iconic presentation which is tied to visual messages in the form of drawings or figures, and
c. through a symbolic presentation which is tied to the realm of formal symbols, predominantly language. 11

The problem with schools however, is that they generally emphasize symbolic and iconic modes of representation,
and this reflects the cultural background of students from the middle classes, thus placing students from a working-
class background at a disadvantage. This cultural difference between one social class and another is not due to
divergences in innate abilities. Rather, patterns and levels of thinking are products of the activities practiced in the social
institutions of the culture in which the individual grows

no.2, February 1986, p.113.
9 ibid., p.114, paraphrasing and synthesizing Vygotsky and Luria.
11 This explanation is offered by BRUNER, J., who popularised Vygotskian perspectives in the West. See his On Knowing:
Essays for the Left Hand, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA 1979). Bruner caught the optimism of this perspective
perfectly when he argued that all educators should ‘begin with the hypothesis that any subject can be taught effectively in
some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development.’ (BRUNER, J., The Process of Education, Vintage
up. Simply put, a working-class child is likely, by definition, to grow up in an environment where practical thinking will predominate, since his cultural milieu is characterized by practical manipulation of objects. A middle-class child's cultural environment is marked by an emphasis on more abstract forms of theoretical activity, which in turn induces more abstract thinking. Both children can go through complex reasoning processes, but according to the Vygotskian school, they do it differently.

The average middle class child begins his/her schooling with the attitude that problems are something you solve by first talking about them and then doing it, while the average working class child has learned that you solve the problem by acting and then talking about it.

Proponents of vocational schooling make direct or indirect reference to these kinds of psychological theories in order to justify the value of a practical education. Mjelde, for instance, claims that the vocational school offers a different pedagogical model where one learns from practice in the workshop. This practical learning is greatly appreciated by students who are not successful in a theoretical and abstract comprehensive, general school system. The workshop sessions offer as much theory as the more traditional type of schooling, but they do this in a different manner.

It is important to keep in mind that these kinds of claims rest on an impressive record of empirical, often highly original research. Leontiev's experiments with peasants in the Mongol plains demonstrated, for instance, how illiterate adults who apparently failed to conceptualize abstract geometrical forms, succeeded in doing so when the psychologist used cultural tools they handled in everyday life, such as cart wheels and buckets.

Closer to us in time is another illustration offered by the Norwegian psychologist Hilde Jangard, who tells of a vocational school teacher who first asked his class to draw a diagram of a circuit and then asked them to build the said circuit. Most of the class failed the first exercise, but succeeded in completing it when the activity was tackled in reverse order, that is by first doing the practical task and then drawing a diagram of what they had done. These students therefore showed that they were capable of meeting the intellectual challenge set to them, but they could do so only by starting from a practical and concrete level and then moving on to a more abstract theoretical dimension and representation.

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14 Ibid., p.28.
17 Jangard's experiment is reported by MJELDE, L., 'From Hand to Mind...', op. cit., p.218.
Sociology of Education

The search for a 'relevant curriculum' was revived in the early seventies by neo-Marxist writers who, inspired by the sociology of knowledge as expounded by Mannheim, Schutz, and Berger and Luckmann, marshalled a number of arguments in order to problematize the absolute status of the legitimate curriculum. In the first instance, the 'new' sociologists considered school subjects not as 'objective bodies' of knowledge but rather selective practices from particular ways of seeing, showing and saying. The way knowledge was selected, organized and transmitted was considered to be consonant with specific class, race, gender and cultural interests and agendas. It helped to include some groups in the educational process, whilst covertly excluding others. The process of exclusion in fact took place by virtue of the fact that the school treated all groups in the same way.

Previous explanations as to why many working-class students failed to do well at school were based on deficit theories. These implied that children from disadvantaged socio-economic groups were coming from homes where parents did not give much attention to education, or did not appreciate or value 'culture'. In contrast the 'new' sociological approach considered that all groups had a culture, but that schools arbitrarily recognized and legitimated one particular culture - that of the middle class. 'Culture' here refers to that 'ensemble of tools of discourse that a group employs towards exchanging information, expressing states of consciousness, forming bonds of solidarity, and forging common strategies of action'. But there is another definition of 'culture' namely that it is 'a forum for negotiating and renegotiating meaning and explicating action', rather than 'a set of rules and specifications for action'. If this is indeed the case then one cannot consider one cultural domain to be 'superior' or 'inferior' to another.

The 'new' sociologists argued that the idea of forum and dialogue is missing in schools. Worse still, specific information and knowledge are exchanged through one specific set of discourse. It is the children of the dominant classes who have the 'cultural capital' to converse with these tools, namely master-patterns, linguistic codes, relations to language and culture, and familiarity with symbolic and iconic representation. Other groups possess their own discursive tools and their own knowledge, but these are neither recognized nor given legitimacy by the

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school. For some groups, school represents a familiar continuation of the home culture; for others schooling represents a sharp break, creating dissonance. In assuming that this 'cultural arbitrariness' of the ensemble of legitimate knowledge and ways of its transmission are universal, some groups are recognized as being 'intelligent' and others less so. This leads to a process of 'learned ignorance' and a 'symbolic violence' whereby style matters more than content, and where, in Gramsci's words, the children of the working class have to pay with tears and blood to achieve that which comes 'naturally' to the children of the privileged.

The problematization of the hitherto sacrosanct curriculum led to the valuing of students' experiences and interests, and the attempt on the part of some educators to see the curriculum not as a finished product, which must be handed down by teachers to pupils, but rather as the result of a negotiating process between mutually respecting partners in education. Drawing mainly on Freire's synthesis of a Marxist, Maoist, Christian pedagogy, teachers were invited to move away from a 'banking' form of education where bits of information are deposited in empty receptacles (students), to a 'problem-posing' education which starts in a dialogic encounter between 'teachers-students' and 'students-teachers'. This involves departing from the pupils' experiences and moving towards a critical reflection on those same lived realities in order to master them, understand them and transcend them.


approaches to education and teaching the world over. Thus, while the recent tendency has been to develop a common curriculum for all students and maintain it for as long as possible, there has also been a drive to make such a curriculum 'do-able' and 'practical', in the attempt to find a 'touchstone discourse' - a common communicative ground - in schools.29

Trade Schools And Education

The discourse surrounding the foundation of trade schools did not refer clearly or directly to any of the above theories. It did, however, articulate with them, drawing from the same 'grammatical structure', as it were, in much the same way that the U.K. Crowther Report of 1959 did when it expressed the difference between the 'academic' mind and the 'practical' one in recommending technical education as an 'alternative road'.30 While claiming that learning should be based on experience and on 'doing', that the practical was as noble as the abstract and that one could not and should not be divorced from the other, and that the non-achieving and unmotivated could be persuaded to invest in schooling if their communicative and learning styles were legitimated and developed, the most salient fact about trade schools in Malta was that they were constructed as separate schools. This construction of difference is crucial in the analysis of

the educational and ideological claims made for these schools and will be the focus of the rest of this chapter and the next one.

In terms of educational goals, then, three major inter-related claims will be explored, namely that:

• Vocational schools will attract large numbers of students;

• Rates of retention and of course completion will be high;

• The educational experience offered in vocational schools will be different, but not inferior, to that available in academic and general schools.

Vocational Schools will Attract Large Numbers of Students.

The historical account given earlier in this book has shown that, ever since the beginning of formal technical education in the middle of the nineteenth century, 'practical instruction' failed to attract the numbers of students that its promoters had expected. Indeed, the Commissions which reported on educational affairs in Malta, as well as the Directors of Education, all expressed their surprise that so few attended vocational education, despite the services and resources that were made available. Only Trade Schools for


boys at the secondary education level (see chapter 4) could be said to have enjoyed some popularity among students. And even in this case, one is still doubtful as to whether the relatively high numbers of students attending these schools chose to go there of their own accord, or whether they were channelled to go there by an educational system whose principle characteristic is the practice of selection and exclusion.31

The lack of popularity of technical education is not peculiar to Malta, even though the surprise expressed by Savona, Caruana, Lefteria, and Raimondo, among others, gives the impression that the Maltese people had, for some mysterious reason, maliciously and capriciously conspired to boycott educational innovation to the detriment of their own children and their country. Indeed, most comparative literature on the topic indicates a strong aversion to any education which is not ‘academic’.

This aversion has been particularly strong in previously colonized countries, to the extent that Foster’s comments about Ghana, for instance, are strikingly appropriate for Malta, especially when the author notes the paradox in the emphasis placed on vocational...training in all documentary sources and the relative absence of it within the actual system of education.32


Most authors explain the unattractiveness of vocational tracks and schools by referring to important cultural and economic factors prevailing in a colonized society. It is important to give a brief account of these explanations in order to appraise the Maltese situation.

A common feature of colonial policy was to produce a group of ‘comprador élites’ usually drawn from among locals holding administrative and supervisory positions. These would act as intermediaries between the colonial powers and the colonized, and it was vital that those holding these positions had a sense of loyalty to the dominant group. One way of ensuring loyalty was to make the comprador élites aware of their vested interest in the foreign government. This was done by providing comparatively high rewards for the white-collar jobs in that sector of the economy dominated by expatriates, as for example, the public service. These rewards included not only higher income levels than generally available outside that economic sector, but also a higher social status, better conditions of work, and job security. As Bacchus argues,

this helped to fuel the demand for the type of education which would qualify individuals to enter into the supervisory positions that gradually became open to them.

The kind of education that was most helpful for creating comprador élites was of an academic rather than a technical or ‘practical’ nature. This marked the beginning of the differential rate of return in favour of academic education. It also indicates why an academic education was primarily ‘vocational’ in these countries.33

33 BACCHUS, K., ‘The Political Context of Vocationalization of
In Malta, the economic sectors undergoing significant expansion under the British were the public, state-related bureaucracies and the civil service - positions requiring general education credentials, not certificates of technical proficiency. This must, at least partly, explain the excessive number of 'clerks' in the twentieth century, and who were referred to as the islands' 'scourge' by more than one social commentator. In most developing countries where the vagaries of the economy are so pronounced, and where investment in industrial development is slow to come and to grow, there is always a high risk element for those who choose to follow a vocational track. As Foster has argued in his classic condemnation of vocational schooling in developing countries,

in the initial stages technical and vocational instruction is the cart rather than the horse in economic growth and its development depends upon real and perceived opportunities in the economy. The provision of vocational education must be directly related to those points at which some development is already apparent and where demand for skills is beginning to manifest itself.\(^{34}\)

Up to the sixties the only flourishing industry in Malta was the British naval dockyard, where relatively high wages and secure employment could be found. This explains why the supply of candidates for the Dockyard School always outstripped demand, and why preparatory schools sprang up in the Three Cities in response to the intense competition for a place in the technical education programme offered by the British, while initiatives taken by the Maltese were generally unsuccessful.


\(^{34}\)  FOSTER, PJ., op.cit., p.411.

The Educational Goal

since the structure of opportunities and incentives there was practically non-existent.

In addition to this, it has also been argued that even when a developing, often newly-independent country invests large sums of money into the building of technical schools and institutes, various economic factors militate against the success of such an enterprise. The main problem lies in the fact that colonial economic activity leads, in many cases, to the development of a dual sector for employment opportunities. There emerges a modern sector, led by the dominant powers, which requires a higher academic education than the traditional sector. This dualistic structure tends to be sustained even after the developing country has obtained its independence, so that those working in traditional sectors continue to earn less. Furthermore the traditional sectors are generally unable to afford the services of the skilled craftsmen trained in the new technical schools and institutes, and turn instead to artisans taught in the traditional manner, that is on the shop floor where skills are passed on from father to son. In other words, those without certified and formal training are more in demand.\(^{35}\)

Finally, most of the industries set up in previously colonized countries are of the import-substitutive type, involved in the assembling, packing or processing of imported material. Such 'screwdriver technology industries' can often operate with individuals having no formal technical and vocational skills beyond those which can be acquired on the job,\(^{36}\) and this explains the under-
employment of skilled people in many such industries in Malta.  

Comparative education literature, notably the studies carried out by Benavot, have also shown that there are cultural/ideological reasons which have, since the early seventies, led to a worldwide decline in the proportion of full-time secondary students following vocational programmes. With the exception of Eastern European countries, the proportion of vocational enrollees was cut by half. This pattern held true for developing as well as developed countries, largely because educational systems are not simply isolated units responding to the needs of the nation to which they belong. Rather, they respond to the needs of the whole world system – a system which is itself characterised by a common belief in such ideologies as investment in education for all, equality of opportunity, and the celebration of individualism. A country wishing to win 'membership' and acceptance in the modern world system will attempt to adopt these practices. Benavot argues that vocationalism at the secondary school level ran counter to ascendant ideologies because it differentiated between students, led some to make important choices too early on in their lives, and provided a 'narrower' educational experience when compared to the liberal curriculum offered in the general track.

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37 This under-employment phenomenon is noted in the Skills and Training Needs Survey, 1987, parag.2.2.7 in Harper, J., 69-69.


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39 Education Statistics provided by the Department of Education.

cf. Chapter 4.
### Table: Student Numbers in Trade Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Students in Secondary Schools</th>
<th>Percentage of Students in Trade Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>25784</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>25949</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>25042</td>
<td>6.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
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<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>25785</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Educational Goal

Schools, as well as interviews with teaching staff in trade schools, suggest that students tend to opt to go to trade schools in order to get away from an academic schooling which they find too formal, strict, irrelevant and unrewarding. Once in the trade schools however, they realise that despite the practical courses, similar institutional and educational difficulties still have to be encountered, and by the end of the second year or the beginning of the third, they embark on a career of absenteeism and truancy. Thus the educational statistics presented above actually show official numbers of students registered in, rather than attending, trade schools. In real terms, therefore, trade schools are attractive to students for the 'wrong' educational reasons and, as will be seen in the next section, most of these students drop out before the vocational courses are completed.

Rates of Retention and Rates of Course Completion will be High.

Comparative education literature suggests that vocational streams and/or schools have often been considered by educational reformers as spaces which provide 'ecological niches' in a secondary school or in a diversified education system, to attract and retain children from the working class. Indeed, emergent democratic countries which broadened their compulsory education laws to include all students of secondary school age had to find ways of training and integrating working-class youths and offsprings of immigrants into the economy. They had to do this within an ideological climate which upheld basic moral and policy

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commitments to equal educational opportunity. In this situation, vocational education appeared as a solution which addressed both demands, promising to deliver practical curricular topics that would motivate 'problematic' students, and hence retain them at school.42

Most of the research evidence that is available points out that motivating children to be enthusiastic about the new schools and the supposedly more relevant curriculum turned out to be just as hard as motivating them to learn traditional subjects. Claus, reviewing a large number of studies on this question, concludes that at best, there is very limited evidence that secondary school vocational education reduces dropouts.43

The main reason for this seems to be the fact that vocational tracks and schools have tended to be used

not simply for the transmission of educational knowledge, but for the purposes of social control of forms of deviancy, and that usually occurs with 'less able' children whom the school has given up educating.44

42 BENAIVOT, A., op.cit., p.66.


Such pupils are first of all constructed as 'different', and then channelled into separate streams and/or schools, often with the express intention of providing remedial and more 'relevant' educational programmes. Sociological research in the interactionist tradition has shown, however, that the process of intra- and inter-school streaming transmits messages to students which contradict and jeopardize the official, occasionally sincere intentions of educational reformers. The creation of separate educational spaces is often appropriated by mainstream teachers, who use them as convenient 'dumping' sites for students they find difficult to control.

Thus, while the official discourse around vocational schools highlights their utility to the economy, their real value to the educational system is their function as holding pens for the unmotivated and resistant students.45 Students are, of course aware of this process, and while generally unable to fully articulate a critique of the system that has abandoned them – often by providing them with the worst resources and the most tired teachers46 – they do in fact develop a counter-school culture which leads them to earn the school's label of 'deficient', and hence to stop investing in schooling.47 Truancy and absenteeism are only two of the more overt forms of resistant strategies in the repertoire of


47 HARGREAVES, D., Social Relations in the Secondary School,
behaviour that characterise counter-school cultures in schools the world over.

The Maltese Context

Concern over absenteeism, truancy and early school-leaving have been intimately associated with trade schools in Malta, for a number of years. In 1988 the Guidance and Counselling Services of the Department of Education organised a quantitative research project to have a statistical indication of the extent of the problem. The report showed that trade school girls had an absence rate of thirty-three per cent, or 50.5 days out of a total of 146 school-attending days. The absence rate for boys was lower, and stood at twenty-four per cent, or 35 days out of the same total. The older the student the greater was the number of absences recorded, even though the research did not take into account those students who had received official exemption from finishing their courses in order to seek work before school-leaving age was reached.

Thirteen per cent of the girls and seven per cent of the boys never showed up at school, while seven per cent of the girls and six per cent of the boys attended an average of 135 days a year. As many as fifty per cent of the girls and sixty per cent of the boys stayed away for three days a month, the maximum allowed by law before a fine is meted out to the parents of the students concerned. Only two per cent of students attended all year through.


Form teachers and vocational guidance teachers were appointed in trade schools in 1989 in order to follow up cases of truanting students. Twelve additional welfare officers were also employed for the same reason. However, the percentage rate of absence for trade schools was, officially, still 11.6 per cent in March 1989, compared to 0.31 per cent in primary schools and 2.34 per cent in area secondary schools and junior lycées, though an independent study showed that trade school absenteeism was in fact even higher. Moreover, a full forty-six per cent of all fifteen-year old students were absent from school between November and early December 1989 when the TSOPP was distributed in third year classes. Of the 680 present, 29.4 per cent of male students and 78.9 per cent of female students said they would leave school as soon as it was legally possible to do so, while 6.6 per cent of the males and 18.6 per cent of the females were considering leaving before the age of sixteen. Only three girls expressed their intention of going into further vocational education, as compared to 27.2 per cent of male students. In fact, hardly any of the female students, and only about thirty per cent

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48 Answer to Parliamentary Question 14801, given on 16/5/89, sitting 234. No absenteeism was reported in private schools.


50 A new educational policy was introduced in 1989 whereby students were obliged to remain at school till the end of the academic year in which they had their sixteenth birthday. The intention was to ensure completion of courses. (Report of the Department of Education, 1989).
of the male students go on to their fourth year to qualify for a school-leaving certificate.\textsuperscript{52}

Besides absenting themselves from school, students express their disenchantment with trade schooling in other ways, such as leaving classrooms on impulse, not going in for lessons, going in to the wrong class on purpose, or staying in class but doing other things instead. Teaching staff did recount success stories, where previously unmotivated students began investing and achieving in trade schools. Most of the interview and ethnographic data, however, suggest that the most frequent student strategies in both boys' and girls' schools were oppositional to teachers' intentions.\textsuperscript{53} Students generally cared little for the material and symbolic properties of schooling, keeping tattered copybooks in their pockets, hardly ever carrying textbooks or pens to school, and often flaunting the rituals that are normally associated with 'proper' classroom behaviour. Students organised informal and impromptu parties in class, resisted attempts by the most dedicated of teachers to engage in formal learning, to the extent that many of the staff observed were reduced to issuing ultimatums, scolding, name calling and threatening students. But students explained that

\textsuperscript{52} These figures are also corroborated by the Tracer Study carried out by the Guidance and Counselling Services in 1990. Absence from trade schools became a major issue in 1989 and 1990, when a phone-in television programme dedicated one of its numbers to the problem (Ništrarririh, 31/10/90), and a number of articles appeared in the press (It-Torċa, 50/4/1989, for instance).

\textsuperscript{53} The idea of 'strategies' is taken from WOODS, P., \textit{Pupil Strategies}, (Croom Helm, London 1980).

The Educational Goal

we gang up and get the better of them, and they keep trying to split us up. But they won't manage because we stick together. They want to see how they can get rid of us.\textsuperscript{54}

Teachers' control strategies were therefore not very successful, given the organised opposition they had to face:

Teacher: O.K.I'm fed up with you now! Anybody who shouts will have to copy 'I must behave in class' for two hundred times!

Student: Miss, can I do that for seven hundred times?

(Class laughs).\textsuperscript{55}

Threats to send students out of the class were not effective, since the common retort was 'Good! 'cause I'm fed-up'.\textsuperscript{56} There were generally few supportive strategies demonstrated by students in the schools and classrooms observed, and hence little evidence of high levels of commitment and interest. Students generally did not answer teachers' questions, failed to ask any questions themselves, and were not particularly concerned about the appearance of their work or to get work assignments done in time, if at all. It is no wonder that even some of the more dedicated among the teaching staff gave up on students. Staffroom talk on pupils exhibited all the signs of raw humour and

\textsuperscript{54} AZZOPARDI, N. & BONDIN, A., \textit{Resistance to Schooling}. Unpublished B.Ed.(Hons) dissertation, University of Malta, 1979, p.100. (The original ethnographic data are in Maltese. They are here transliterated into English, keeping as close as possible to the idiosyncratic nature of the spoken word.)

\textsuperscript{55} ibid., p.80.

\textsuperscript{56} ibid., p.80.
disillusionment which helped teachers survive from day to day: 'Today I'll find something else to pick on her...I'll send her out, one way or the other...I'll send her to the Head to get rid of her. If she doesn't have nail polish, I'll find some other excuse to get mad at her.'

Most of the students' resistance seemed to be aimed at the 'general' or 'academic' subjects. Students responding to the TSRPQ identified 'trade classes' and 'workshop practice' as their most enjoyable and worthwhile aspects of their educational experience, together with 'friendship' and talks about life in general. The most unpopular elements of trade school life were discipline, uniforms, and subjects such as Mathematics and Maltese. The TSTS data again showed that the most significant complaint about schooling on the part of students who had left school in 1988 regarded 'academic subjects'. This was true for forty-four per cent of early school-leavers and twenty-five per cent of the course-completers.

Ethnographic studies carried out by members of the TSRP also showed that the depiction of trade school students within a pathological model which constructs them as deficient in 'ability', 'appropriate home background', or 'motivation' does not really hold, since these same students behaved differently in different types of lessons. Students who were uncontrollable during Mathematics lessons, for instance, became co-operative during practical/workshop sessions, showing high levels of motivation, arriving early for their practical exercises, expressing a reluctance to leave the workshops, and even giving up recreation time in order to finish what they had started doing during lesson time.

Teacher: Come on, time up! Pick up your things!
Student: Oh! Wait Miss! I want to finish my dress!

While homework was hardly ever set by teachers because there was practically no hope it would ever be done by their students, the latter asked for extra work when this was related to the trade which interested them:

Teacher: Today I'll show you how to make this souvenir...in the shape of a butterfly. If we have time, I'll show you how to make a duck as well.
Student: Oh good, Miss! Show us how to do both so that I can finish them at home.

The observation that students were more likely to be interested and motivated by their practical trade practice needs to be modified by at least three caveats. The first is that the student-teacher relationship was crucial for the success of any educational encounter, whether this took place in the traditional classroom or in the workshop. The second is that student cooperation was not always won by the school since not all students succeeded in getting the trade of their choice after the first basic year. In the boys' trade

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57 Ibid., p.120.
58 cf. FENECH, D., Phantoms of the Classroom: Why Students


60 Ibid., p.109.
61 The TSTS data show that between twenty and forty per cent of students fail to get the trade of their choice.
schools, each trade caters for a number of students, and if
the demand is greater than supply, only students with the
highest grades can enter the courses of their choice.
According to one study, up to twenty-four per cent of those
still attending school after the trade selection exercise have
to follow vocational courses they have no interest in.62
Interviews with teachers and heads of Trade Schools
confirmed the fact that absenteeism increases dramatically
after the results of the options exercise are announced.
Finally, the TSTS data show that on average, fifty-five per
cent of all early school-leavers do not regret their decision
to abandon schooling.

The high rates of absenteeism and the general opposition
and rejection of schooling cannot be explained simply by
referring to factors within the school and by saying that
students reject the alternative education on offer and vote
with their feet. There are also factors extraneous to the
school such as the socio-economic background that
vocational students tend to come from. The TSRPQ data
show clearly that out of the 680 third-year students present
at school between November and December 1989, a full
seventy per cent of the boys and twenty-five per cent of the
girls held jobs before and/or after school hours, during
weekends and/or holidays.63 Participation in the 'twilight'
economy' is thus very high among these students. Indeed,
11.8 per cent of the students declared that the main reason
for absenteeism is to do with work commitments. A full 38.4 per cent of those who had a job
gave some of the money they earned to their parents.
Contributions to the family economy were made in other
ways. Thus, 31.8 per cent said they stayed away from
school in order to help in the home, 8.13 per cent to do the
shopping, and 17.2 per cent to give a helping hand in the
family enterprise or shop. Ethnographic data also suggest
that parents do not believe that an investment in vocational
schooling will be of much benefit to their children, and this
is especially true where the education of girls is
concerned.64 Students are encouraged to take the first
employment opportunity that presents itself, with the belief
that training on the job rather than schooling will bring
about material benefits.

The Educational Experience offered in Vocational
Schools will be Different, but not Inferior to
that available in Academic Schools.

One way of evaluating the quality of the educational
programme offered to vocational students is to consider the
following criteria:

a. The effect of the structure of the school within the whole
educational system, especially when it functions as a
'separate school';

b. The curriculum and the forms of knowledge it promotes
and legitimates;

c. The classroom processes that are encouraged in the
transmission of knowledge;

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62 ZAMMIT, A.L., Trade Satisfaction in Trade Schools,
Unpublished dissertation, Diploma in Guidance and Counselling,
University of Malta 1987. Zammit notes a clustering of choices
in favour of auto mechanical trades, where demand always
exceeds number of places available. Spray painting and
Decorating are the least popular trades.

63 For full details see SULTANA, R.G., 'Practices and Policies in
Child Labour: Lessons from Malta', British Journal of Education

64 FENECH, D., op.cit.
d. The level of expertise of teaching staff as compared with that of teachers in other schools on the islands;
e. The quality of the teaching resources used, especially equipment.

With the exception of 'e', which has already been addressed in the previous chapter, these criteria will be considered in turn.

a. Separate Schools and the Construction of Inferiority

There is overwhelming evidence to prove that vocational schooling attracts, in the main, working-class children. This holds true whether this type of schooling takes place in an educational set-up other than the area secondary school or is merely a track within a comprehensive education system. The literature available also convincingly shows that the provision of a separate space for a homogeneous clientele characterised by negative school experiences which reinforce a counter-school, working-class self-image, constructs vocational education as having lower status. This is detrimental to the educational goals expressed for the programme. In other words, the context which frames 'separate schooling' creates 'a sense of second class citizenship among both teachers and taught which militates against effective learning'. Indeed, vocational education seems to pick out a certain type of student and to stamp the student with a certain status and identity. In this sense, the concept of 'vocational education' is more like that of 'advanced placement'. It communicates a certain status and projects a certain future. And it does this not only to the school authorities and to future employers, but to the students themselves.66

By creating this different space and relegating students to it, schools send a message that some children are gifted, bright and academic and that others are average, slow, or vocational. Few students and teachers can defy those expectations.67 Students receive the message that they are somehow 'different' and academically 'inferior', and thus, in the case of vocational schools and tracks, this self-fulfilling prophecy reaches an institutional level.

The most profound and thorough study which illustrates how these processes take place in vocational schools was carried out by Claude Grignon. Working within the context of French trade schools, Grignon shows how these are constructed as a subordinate sector of education. The 'strong discourse' of traditional academic schooling and of elite classes emphasises the abstract and the theoretical, allows ambiguity and encourages questioning. In contrast to this is the 'weak discourse' of certainty, of the manual and practical of the Lycée d'Enseignement Professionnel.68

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67 Secondary schooling in France starts at 11+, when children attend a college or middle school. They then proceed to a Lycée
technical culture of the LEPs stands midway between the two, valuing the former through the inclusion of some elements of the strong discourse (academic subjects, teachers, and theoretical aspects of trades) but at the same time separated because of its rejection of ambiguity and uncertainty. In addition, the interplay between these three elements is symbolised by the different status of teachers and instructors, who utilise different pedagogic approaches with their students. Thus, instructors tend to be 'chummy', and adopt an informal, matey yet authoritarian style. Teachers of the general subjects are distant and formal. Those who teach the theoretical aspects of technical instruction embody the technical culture, and hence are abstract, theoretical, but precise.

The interiorisation of the differential status with which the three different discourses of pedagogy - strong, weak and technical - are endowed is reflected in the way the more motivated students respect but do not adopt the first, reject the second, and adopt the third. It is seen in the differential status attributed to the vocational subjects, with an informal hierarchy where the wholly manual are at the bottom, and where the more 'technological' trades, such as mechanics and electrical engineering, have greater prestige than joinery, for instance. Indeed, Grignon argues that the hidden

function of 'general education' is to point out to students their inability to handle élite culture.

**The Maltese Context**

There is no doubt at all that trade schools in Malta are considered to be inferior educational spaces, and that this low status rubs off not only on students but on teaching and administrative staff. Teachers and Heads interviewed in connection with the TSRP were of the opinion that trade schools were the 'Cinderella' of the educational system and felt abandoned by the Department of Education for whom they were the 'after talk'. There was no a set-up to cater specifically for their needs. They hardly had any visits from education officers, especially in the case of boys' schools, and lost staff through transfers to mainstream schools when vacancies were permitted. That meant that they often had to go without teachers and when, following the implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum, new subjects were introduced, staff were obliged to teach subjects which they had never studied.

When comparing the school premises with those of junior lyceums, for instance, trade school staff felt that their schools were in a terrible state, claiming that some classrooms and toilets reminded them of 'Beirut'. Indeed, the situation would have been worse had not many of the staff carried out maintenance work of their own accord, without getting remuneration for it. There was a general feeling of disillusionment at the fact that trade schools were used as a 'dumping ground' for unmotivated, unachieving students, and then blamed for having high rates of illiteracy and absenteeism: 'Trade schools have a bad name, a label, call it what you wish...and the children who come here are already labelled as delinquent, when in fact they come from

at the age of 14, choosing between a traditional, technical or vocational secondary school (the LEP). The first leads to a Baccalauréat, the second to the Baccalauréat de Technicien at the age of 18+. LEP students follow a three-year vocational course, which leads to a Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle. At 16+ there is another intake of students into LEP, and these follow a two-year course leading to the Brevet d'Études Professionnelles, which is more generic in its skills training. There are passarellis to enable transfer to the long cycle.
the secondary school like that. Teachers wanted the trade school uniform for boys to be changed, since its colour indicated the present and future blue-collar status of students; they wanted a better quality student and were angry at the way the problematic children were channelled out of mainstream secondary schools into their classrooms. Interviews with teachers in secondary schools and junior lyceums indicated that that was the basic view they held regarding the function of trade schools:

'It's a blessing that there are those trade schools! God forbid that they are removed, because that's the only way, the weeding process can take place...We all had a shock, when we heard that soon, transfer to trade schools will start after form three instead of form two.'

Most teachers were not willing to teach in trade schools, and those who had been there spoke of the 'years of martyrdom' they had to endure before succeeding in getting out.

The lower status of manual and practical study was hammered in, in a multitude of ways. Subjects, as the Grignon study shows, enjoyed a different status according to their content of 'academic' study, so that upholstery and tile-laying, for instance, were considered to be suitable for the lowest ability students, while auto-mechanical and electrical engineering, and radio and television servicing 'gathered together the best brains in trade schools'. Prestigious lab coats rather than blue overalls were used to signal the higher status of pure over applied sciences. Teachers of general subjects tended to sit in separate staffrooms from trade instructors. The latter were criticised for coming to school carrying their lunch and books in a shoulder bag, 'as if they were dockyard workers', instead of using a proper school bag or attaché case. A letter to the press complained that instructors looked 'scruffy', and that children ought not to be left 'under the guidance of these hooligan-looking individuals, even for a moment'.

Teaching staff in trade and mainstream schools reinforced the separate status of trade school students in a number of ways. Students were told what was appropriate and realistic to achieve and aspire for. The TSPE ethnographic data bank reports several instances where students are warned not to 'fanatise' or 'dream' but to be aware of limitations. Trade school students were constantly reminded that they were not eligible for the élite culture, and for jobs within that range: 'We have not come to this school to become teachers, or a manager's secretary, or a clerk. This school prepares us for other kinds of jobs...manual work.' A trade school student who reached out for an information pamphlet on banking careers was reprimanded by the person in charge of the stand at a national careers convention, saying 'You're from a trade school...It does not apply to you! Just imagine!' In contrast, students in junior

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59 Mifsud, M.J. & Mallia, M., op. cit., p.221.
61 Mifsud, M.J. & Mallia, M., op.cit., p.86.
62 Letter to The Times, 4/2/92; cf. reply by trade school instructor on 22/2/92, p.16.
64 ibid., p.41.
lyceums were taken to task by guidance and subject teachers for aiming too low, and were encouraged to be ambitious and self-confident for these were qualities that would lead to success.

The more dedicated among the teaching staff saw themselves as welfare and social work officers rather than as teachers, for these students were considered to be not only difficult and problematic, but also as coming from 'broken families', or from parents who cared little for their educational progress:

These kids have problems which I never even imagined existed before I came to teach here. You remain astonished and amazed at the burdens they have to carry. You end up saying to yourself: 'Is it possible that there are people who live this kind of life?'

Teachers thus often constructed students within a deficit and pathological discourse, and either struggled to build a communicative relationship with them or, more commonly, became frustrated and ended up hitting out in anger: 'With these kids, you spit in the air and it falls back in your face. These are the worse of the worse of the worst lot.' Teachers believed that trade school students had a very brief concentration span, that 'in a lesson of forty-five minutes you'd be lucky to hold their attention for a full six minutes, which would be the maximum... they can't give more than they have, can they?' Scientific labels were used liberally by teachers to justify the low expectations they had for their students:

I think that many of the children are dyslexic...they're not stupid necessarily. But there's something wrong with them...even with their temperament, for one minute they're quiet, and then suddenly...there must be something wrong with them, or perhaps they're emotionally unstable.'

Trade school students were very much aware of the position they occupied in the educational hierarchy. This status followed them in their out-of-school life as well, since certain leisure facilities on the islands, such as disco halls, closed their doors to students known to have attended trade schools. These students greeted the interest shown in them by researchers on the TSRP with incredulity, saying 'If you're an inspector, don't come to see us because we're stupid!', or 'You can't possibly be interested in us...you'll be saying how ignorant and rude we are...The Junior Lyceum students won't even come on the bus with us, 'cause we're trade school kids!'. They were acutely aware of their position in the school system in Malta, and of the implications that this fact bore on their future: 'We're all heading for the factories...That's where we'll all end up...We're no good with our heads'.

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75 COSTA, D. & BUHAGIAR, M., op.cit.
76 MIHSUD, M.J. & MALLIA, M., op. cit., p.44.
77 FENECH, D., op.cit., p.50.
78 ibid., p.50.
79 AZZOPARDI, T., & BONDIN, N., op.cit., p.45.
80 ibid., p.66.
81 ibid., p.155.
The message regarding their inferior status was first transmitted to them in the primary school and was sustained in trade schools, occasionally covertly, but often directly: 'Teachers think we're savages, prostitutes, stupid... because we're in a trade school. They think we're ignorant, that we're no good for school, since we're here.' They generally upheld the belief that there was a dichotomy between 'manual' and 'mental' work, and that they were good at the former but not at the latter. In the words of one student,

I was not good at school, so I chose trades... Since I'm not good at school, I don't know much else.

Another explained that she preferred 'to work with her hands', since she felt she was not good at English and

those sorts of subjects'. 'I used to lose heart... I put it into my head that I was good for nothing. Even when teachers asked me to speak in class, I'd start stammering... I'm not good at school. If you had to send me to clean up shit from under animals, I'd do it, but don't ask me to write a single letter.'

Given these conditions, the surprising fact is not that students gave up on learning, and left school as early as possible, but that some, albeit a minority, survived the labelling and 'weeding out' process and made it to the fourth year and into further education.

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53 Ibid., p.207.
54 MIFSUD, M. J. & MALLIA, M., op.cit., p.43.
55 Ibid.
The dualistic educational goal is reflected in the dualistic teaching of the past and the present. Man is perceived as an object rather than as a subject.\(^7\)

On the other hand, the emphasis in the academic schools is directed towards the mastery of the fundamentals of institutionally constituted scientific knowledge, and tends to neglect the question of their application and remains rooted in legitimate culture.\(^8\) But above all, the academic schools, through their emphasis on a knowledge of man, transmit those qualities which are a key to the culture of intellectuals, namely the ability to perceive oneself as a whole and the world as a whole, the ability to relate the specific to the general... to dissociate themselves from what is tangible, concrete and particular in order to approach theory, formalization, and general principles [which allows them] to detach themselves from reality and strive towards an abstract thought embracing both the past and the future.\(^9\)

These curricular differences tend to construct two dominant modes of thought, idealism and mechanistic materialism, where

the former allows the individual to evolve in the realm of ideas, representations, and values but leaves him [sic] totally helpless in the realm of material objects and techniques; the latter gives him [sic] an awareness of the

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\(^7\) Ibid., p.27.
\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^9\) Ibid., p.28.
material world but tends to depoliticise the social sphere, treating it in purely technical terms.\textsuperscript{50}

Thus, the technical student, unaware of the why and the wherefore of techniques, does not learn to master them but only to use them. The focus is on facts – such as operating instructions – on findings and formulae, and on processes detached from their principles. This transmission of different categories of knowledge is one of the mechanisms by which the relations of dominance are achieved, because the emphasis on technique leads to

the presence on the market of a labour force dispossessed of general social skills but equipped with the particular qualities necessary for production: familiarity with machines, familiarity with technical jargon, acceptance of the idea that techniques are natural phenomena, and, thereby, acceptance of the necessity of the established productive order.\textsuperscript{51}

In addition to this, Grignon has argued that the constant appeal to material reality which can be touched with the hands leads to a specific construction of the world and of social processes in terms of a technical problem or challenge for which, given that the correct methods are employed, there is always a solution. Moreover problems are portrayed as having one possible solution to be found by the monadic individual thus requiring no interaction with others. Hence, problems of differential access to power, or of the possibility of different points of views held by different participants in a social situation, are excluded in this technocratic problem-solving approach encouraged by the prevalent instructional discourse in technical schools.

The idea that there is always 'one best way' of solving a problem leads students to generalise this mechanistic disposition of mind to the sphere of social relations where the morality of the technical processes, the certainty of things, applies as well. Irony, scepticism, calling everything and everyone into question, including oneself, is the domain of the 'strong' discourse of the abstract, theoretical and questioning culture of the academic schools and the dominant social classes. For the weak discourse of the trade schools, it is certainty, perseverance, patience, single-minded application, neatness and precision that are encouraged and fostered.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{The Maltese Context}

There is a Maltese version of the distinction between 'training' and 'education' – first drawn by Aristotle – where the former leads a person to have the skills to carry out a task, without having an understanding of the nature and significance of the task itself, while education develops the ability to address the social and moral implications of an otherwise technical activity.\textsuperscript{93} The difference between strong

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p.32.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p.32.


and weak educational discourse, the former as present in academic schools, the latter in technical schools, does exist in Malta, although certain important caveats must be made.

For example, the strict adherence to examination-led curricula in mainstream schools often leads to a weakening of the strong discourse of critical evaluation and discussion, and the emphasis is therefore placed on directed learning, which in many instances is closer to 'training' than 'education'. In the case of the curriculum, spaces which teach students about the world of work such as the division of labour, the hierarchical status and wage structures, the emphasis on extrinsic rewards, all generally have a hegemonic tenor, whether presented in junior lyceums or in trade schools.94

However, an analysis of the curriculum packages in both types of schools reveals certain crucial differences. Social studies, for instance, cannot be taken as an option in trade schools, while junior lyceum students can choose to spend up to four hours a week studying various aspects of their social environment. One may even say that the trade school curriculum is a watered-down version of the junior lyceum social studies syllabus, and there are, furthermore, differences between what is offered to boys and to girls in trade schools. The emphasis in the trade school social studies syllabus is on the topic 'work', which takes up to half the academic year in the case of boys in their second year of trade schooling, and one fourth in the case of girls. The same topic takes up to one sixth of the year in the junior lyceums. In addition, the trade school syllabi are more akin to information geared at moulding a 'good citizen', while the junior lyceum syllabus is more amenable to the raising of questions and to critical debate. Junior lyceums tackle subjects like democracy, different political systems, and unemployment, while trade schools focus on such topics as fanaticism and sports, choice of career, and so on. Even the mode of assessment differs. In the case of social studies, twenty-five per cent of the marks are supposed to be given for the carrying out of a project. Trade school students are encouraged to satisfy this requirement by involving themselves in mass culture, such as taking part in carnival activities, sports, band clubs and drama. Junior lyceum students, on the other hand, are invited to take part in community service, to train in leadership and organization skills, to develop artistic abilities, and to participate in competitions, civic campaigns, and so on.95

The portrayal of trade school students as different, as a special group which cannot have access to the prestigious culture available in mainstream schools, has existed from the very foundation of vocational schools. It has persisted even though it was contested and modified over the years. Thus for example, trade school students were first offered a curriculum where seventy-five per cent of the school-time was allotted to 'practical' and twenty-five per cent went to general 'academic' subjects; this was then modified to fifty per cent for each, then to sixty per cent and forty per cent, and most recently to a reversal, so that forty per cent of the curriculum is now dedicated to 'practical' and sixty per cent to 'theory'. The changes are important and significant in so far as they reveal the different political attitudes that helped sustain the construction of a 'different class of student'. In

94 Mifsud, M. J. & Mallia, M., op. cit.

95 Ibid., pp.69-70.
each case, the differentiated curriculum served to 'warm up' some to invest in further education and to 'cool out' others from a similar effort.\(^96\)

It is not being suggested that there is a conspiracy against students in trade schools, but rather that seemingly innocent processes, some of which are well-intentioned on the part of teachers, end up having deleterious educational effects on students. Homework, for instance, was hardly ever given in trade schools; but this was not necessarily out of a lack of commitment on the part of teachers, but because the latter knew that there was no chance that students would do the work set:

Teacher 1 Why give it? They won't do it!

Teacher 2 No, I don't give them much work. It's bad enough as it is. They drive me round the bend just to write a few notes. Imagine them doing homework!

Teacher 3 I gave them some pictures to cut and paste at home. They didn't even do that!\(^97\)

Classroom observations revealed that in an attempt to make the curriculum relevant and attractive, teachers often resorted to diluting syllabuses. There was a tendency to justify the relevance of a subject by referring to its applicability to the roles which students would eventually play in life and in the work-force. A home economics teacher, for instance,


\(^97\) AZZOPARDI, N. & BONDIN, A., op.cit., p.126.

\(^98\) ibid., p.163.

\(^99\) ibid., pp.89-90. Peter and Jane are characters in a textbook used in Primary Schools.

the mode of control that they use, and thus inculcate in their students those personality traits which are functional for their future class and occupational destinies. The higher the social class of the students, the more likely is the teacher to encourage creative production of knowledge, autonomy in task setting and completion, self-imposed rules and the challenging of the curriculum in order to develop a propensity for creative knowledge production rather than mere consumption. Such qualities are clearly functional to the demands made by management, executive and professional careers which these students are likely to follow. On the contrary, working-class students are often involved in rote-learning exercises, copying from blackboard and/or mass-produced notes, and are encouraged to be docile and acquiescent - qualities which production-line workers need in order to function at an optimum level in factories.

Similar evidence emerges from qualitative studies which observe classroom processes in vocational tracks and schools. Claus for instance reports that the vocational teachers he studied reproduced the work relations and expectations of the shop floor, and made frequent reference to the realities of work in order to encourage students to attend regularly, be punctual, neat and tidy. Aware of vocational students' dislike of bookwork, teachers negotiated with students, asking for good behaviour in return for a slackening of academic content, with as little reading, writing, testing and challenging intellectual work as possible. The students had taken the vocational route seeking a more relaxed and entertaining classroom than that offered in mainstream schooling, and since teachers

allowed socialising in return for order and co-operation, educational objectives were frequently compromised for students were allowed to divert the flow of the class.

While teachers often responded to students' needs out of kindness and a sense of humane commitment, the lowering of standards did not help students expand their views of themselves and their potential, and ultimately reinforced their resistance to academic instruction and their 'destinies' to working-class labour.

Most of the important decisions regarding the students' life were taken by teachers who handled most of the difficult problem-solving situations. They did things for students with the intention of minimising the latter's frustration and resistance and of protecting them from a sense of failure. While at face value this could be considered a positive student-teacher relationship, in actual fact it helped to foster a dependence on superiors and an avoidance of analytical thinking and decision-making.

**The Maltese Context**

Most of the ethnographic data available on classroom processes in vocational schools in Malta suggest very strongly that teachers often diluted the curriculum in order to win students' cooperation. Students were allowed to read love stories during lessons as long as they remained quiet. They daydreamed, slept, or just stared passively. Students were not scolded when they arrived fifteen minutes late for a lesson between periods or after recreation time. They could get away with pretending to get lost and not being able to find where their class was. In return for a trouble-free lesson, teachers promised students shorter

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107 CLAUS, J., op.cit.
lessons, story-telling sessions, discussions regarding life concerns, word games and so on. All sorts of repetitive exercises were given to students as a means of pacing and controlling behaviour. These exercises ranged from scraping graffiti off desk tops, to copying from notes, textbooks and blackboards. Students often pointed out the uselessness of this:

But this is useless, Sir...copying down all this! What do I care if this will crop up in exams? As if I'm going to turn up for the exams!

In addition to this, writing the same phrase over and over again was a typical punishment used by teachers in trade schools. Thus, out of forty hours of classroom observation, two of the researchers on the TSP reported that eight were spent by students 'doing copies'. On one occasion, a whole lesson was spent in writing out 'I must wait in silence' for two hundred times. In many ways, therefore, the nature of the interaction between students and teachers in a social context marked by a counter-school culture led to a weakening, and often complete deterioration, of the educational endeavour.

d. The Expertise of Teaching Staff

There is considerable evidence to suggest that teacher quality varies among tracks, with high-track students getting

105. OAKES, J., op.cit.
107. SILBERMAN, J.B., 'Improving Secondary Vocational Education', in COPA, P. et al., op.cit.
108. MUNBODH, S., 'The technical education needs of the small states of the Commonwealth', in BACCHUS, K. & BROCK, C. (eds), *The Challenge of Scale*, (Commonwealth Secretariat,
In addition to this, the best qualified technical people tend to be attracted by employment in private sector industries where skills and expertise are more highly rewarded and developed. Thus, some countries have resorted to recruiting teachers with lower qualifications than for general subjects, giving them a lower pay and different conditions of work.

The Maltese Context

The deployment of teachers in state schools in Malta reflects the importance given to an academic type of education and to those students who do well within that system. This deployment is therefore carried out on the officially unstated principle that the most able students will receive what are considered to be the 'best' human and often material and educational resources. Various ethnographic studies of streaming in primary schools have shown how the most tired teachers, as well as the worn-out textbooks, are channelled towards low stream classes.109

London 1987), pp.74-75.

109 GRIGNON, C., op.cit. This is especially true of the French education system up to the early 1970s when the majority of trade teachers were skilled workers in the production sphere. Since then, they have been recruited from those who have a higher technician diploma even though they might lack experience in production. (cf. TANGUY, L., op.cit., p.31 f.n.12).


The Educational Goal

The TSRP discovered that similar processes are at work at the secondary school level, where since their inception in 1972, trade schools were staffed by teachers who were not trained in pedagogy. While the initial plan was to have highly qualified technical people with industrial experience teaching in the new schools, the policy of opening many trade schools in a short span of time meant that ideals had to be put aside. In addition to the fact that staff was less qualified and experienced than intended, there was the added problem that teachers of general subjects were not attracted to teach in trade schools. This situation still prevails nowadays, for very few teacher graduates opt to teach in vocational schools.

Finally, many of the pioneering instructors that were interviewed expressed the feeling that the Department could have done much more to prepare them for the new responsibilities. Indeed many complained that they had to cope with the overnight change 'from the dockyard to a classroom' unaided. While the Italian and an ILO team as well as occasional upgrading courses were useful, there has, until very recently, never been a systematic attempt to provide vocational schools with qualified and pedagogically-trained personnel.111 Hardly any of the teaching staff interviewed seemed to have a positive word for the Instructors' Training Unit which was established in 1987 in order to help in the development of trade school curricula and the in-service training of instructors.

111 After an agreement between the Government and the Malta Union of Teachers, instructors followed an upgrading course organised by the Department of Education in 1992. In addition, on 6 June 1992, the Minister of Education and Human Resources formally requested the ILO to provide training courses to trade school instructors.
Other factors contributing to the lack of a good teaching team in trade schools can be identified. To begin with, the Department is quick to fill vacancies in junior lyceums, but seems to be ready to leave trade schools without the full complement of staff. Indeed, teachers are transferred from trade schools in order to ensure that junior lyceum students do not go without lessons. One of the reasons for such preference is that parents of students in junior lyceums are less likely to tolerate teacher shortages or so-called ‘free’ lessons than would parents of students attending trade schools.

It seems that trade schools are generally the losers in this ‘teacher-poaching exercise’, which further reinforces the general impression that the Department accords low priority to its vocational schools and students. This means that, as witnessed in many instances during interviews with teaching staff, the personnel left in trade schools are often obliged to teach subjects which they have not been trained in. Girls in one trade school were supposed to have lessons in science, but they neither had a qualified teacher to lead the lessons, nor a laboratory to do their practical sessions in. Their Mathematics and English teachers went on pregnancy leave, and no replacements had been sent in three months later. In a boys’ trade school, a teacher was allowed to absent himself for three months in order to help in the preparation for the Pope’s visit to Malta. One desperate head of school considered asking students to send a Christmas card to the Department, auguring everybody there the season’s greetings, while asking for teaching staff to be sent to their school in order to cater for the eighty hours of lessons per week which they were missing.

The low priority given by successive governments to trade schools led to patterns of allocation of teaching personnel which worked against the educational interests of vocational students. If we had to examine the distribution of pedagogically-qualified teachers in academic and vocational secondary schools in Malta for February 1992,\textsuperscript{112} that pattern emerges very clearly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Staff</th>
<th>Trade Schools</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Junior Lyceums</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Male</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>306</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Female</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>284</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Qualified Teachers</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>938</td>
<td>91.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors/Casuals etc.</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This means that while in the junior lyceums there is a qualified teacher for every 14 students, in the trade school the ratio is 1:40! It is not being argued, of course, that the odds are always against trade school students. Classes in trade schools tend to be smaller, both because of the need for safety in workshops and because of high rates of absenteeism. Teachers thus have more opportunity to give individual attention to their students. Indeed, while the average number of pupils per class in a junior lyceum ranges between twenty-five and twenty-nine, the average in trade school classrooms is between fifteen and twenty.\textsuperscript{113} Neither is it being argued that the teaching staff in trade schools are not, on the whole, dedicated or able. As in most schools, there tends to be different kinds of teachers, some

\textsuperscript{112} Statistics made available by the Department of Education.
\textsuperscript{113} Statistics made available by the Department of Education.
bringing with them more expertise and putting in a lot more effort than others. Rather, the point is that there are a number of factors which, when taken together, suggest rather strongly that trade school students are not receiving an education which is on a par with that offered in other secondary schools.

The fact that a large percentage of the teaching staff in vocational schools is untrained in pedagogy does not necessarily mean that they are less able to manage or positively relate to students, whom trained teachers are often unwilling to teach. It does mean, however, that the lack of theoretical insights and understanding of the whole context of teaching can have serious implications. The most obvious one is that the act of teaching is reduced to the level of 'skills', and this renders instructors unable to transcend the immediate and particular exigencies of the classroom in order to consider the repercussions which actions may have. They thus are more likely to develop methods of transmission and control which, while being effective - in the sense that they facilitate the achievement of predetermined goals - are not truly of educational benefit to students. When teachers are humane and enter into negotiation with students so that some teaching can in fact take place, it may appear to some that they are being responsive to the particular and immediate pedagogical situation. It is only a theoretical understanding of classroom processes which will reveal that a 'humane' teacher may in fact be an obstacle to learning. It is also more likely that the totality of the problems facing trade schools can be articulated in a political manner, and appropriate action taken, when such difficulties are seen in relationship to the structure of selection and exclusion which characterises the Maltese educational system.

Conclusion

- In many ways, therefore, the educational experiences and resources offered to trade school students tend to reinforce their lower status in the overall educational system, and the ideals set out for a relevant curriculum by the foundation disciplines are translated into a separate schooling which neither attracts nor retains students, and which ultimately serves to control groups of resistant students, channelling them away from mainstream schools. Such processes clearly militate against the ideological goals expressed in favour of trade schools in the early seventies. How such ideological visions have been tarnished will be evaluated in the next chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE IDEOLOGICAL GOAL

Introduction

At this stage it is opportune to examine the extent to which vocational schools have in fact lived up to the ideological claims made on their behalf when they were first established. According to the Labour government, schooling as a whole was ‘to provide everybody with the same opportunities in education [and] to improve the status of manual workers’;\(^1\) it would promote ‘social mixing’ and the ‘valuing of subjects above and beyond the traditional basic academic ones’.\(^2\) The first flaw in this ideological ‘manifesto’ was that it never made provisions to directly address the issue of gender inequalities. The implications of this silence on an issue of such crucial importance has already been explored in the previous two chapters, when reference was made to the economic and educational repercussions brought about by differential curricula and educational experiences for female and male students in trade schools. At this point, therefore, the focus is more directly on class dimensions.

Once again, an attempt is made to contextualize the issue within a comparative education framework. In this way one can better understand the nature of the declared goals for vocational schools in Malta, and evaluate their successes and failures in relation to similar schools in other countries. However, before the relevant issues are addressed in detail, it is important to first delineate the semantic field of the keyword ‘ideology’ since so much theoretical purchase is made of this term in this chapter.

Ideology and Education

There are two major approaches in the way the term ‘ideology’ is viewed within Left-wing scholarship, namely the structural view as represented by Althusser and the cultural view associated with the Frankfurt School and with Pierre Bourdieu. Both refer to what Apple calls an ‘interest theory’ approach, one which perceives ideology’s primary role as the justification of vested interests of existing or contending political, economic or other groups.\(^3\)

However, while according to some,\(^4\) the culturalist approach emphasizes the imposition of false consciousness through the manipulation of the psychology of the

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\(^1\) Ms Barbara, as reported in the *Times of Malta*, 12/12/72, p.2.

\(^2\) Ms Barbara’s education budget speech, delivered on 23/5/72, and reported in full in the *L’Orizzont*, 29/5/72, p.7.


dominated subject – primarily through the form and content of cultural mass deception in the culture industry and in education – Althusser considered ideology rather more as a material practice.

Apple\(^5\) draws on Gramsci’s notion of hegemony to further develop an understanding of the scope and function of ideology in the promotion of false consciousness. This notion helps to explain how consent to structural injustice is engineered. Individuals and groups come to hold in an unreflective manner a system of beliefs, possibly accommodating contradictory ideas, as if they were the only naturally occurring ones. Schools and other ideological apparatuses – such as the media for instance – promote hegemonic consciousness, a set of common-sense perspectives which ultimately favour ruling class interests. These perspectives are so powerfully and persistently promulgated that individuals and groups find it very difficult – indeed are alienated from the need – to transcend them. In other words, when one operates within this hegemonic consciousness, one is ultimately convinced that the maintenance of the status quo works in one’s own interest.

Apple points out how crucial it is for our understanding of how schools work to grasp the way ‘hegemony acts to saturate our very consciousness, so that the educational, economic and social world we see and interact with, and the common-sense interpretations we put on it, becomes the world tout court, the only world.’\(^6\) Apple goes on to argue that hegemony ‘refers not to congeries of meanings that reside at an abstract level somewhere at the ‘roof of our brain’. Rather, it refers to ‘an organized assemblage of meanings and practices, the central effective and dominant system of meanings, values and actions which are lived‘. Thus, the concept of hegemony emphasizes the maintenance of social control without there being the need to resort to more direct – and hence more easily perceived, understood and resisted – mechanisms of domination.

Within the Althusserian approach to ideology, messages are not constituted by imposition, but are rather specific interpretations which interpellate and have linkages to specific aspects of social formations. ‘Ideology interpellates, positions or produces the subject... it is a set of] discursive practices which prevent anything but an imaginary relation to the real’\(^7\). In other words, if ideologies are considered as social processes rather than as simply ideas that are possessed, then not only do we realize that ‘ideologies speak to us in a complicated manner, [but that] we also do part of the talking’\(^8\). Apple argues that ‘ideologies never address (interpellate) a naked subject.’ Real individuals like ourselves are ‘always already constructed as culturally classed and sexed agents and already have a complexly formed subjectivity. Thus, there is always a ground upon which ideologies work, the ground of culture‘. This is the distinction drawn by Althusser between ‘theoretical ideologies’ and ‘practical ideologies’. There is a dialectical interplay between both, for many everyday practices are framed within particular ideological beliefs yet these practices can, in turn, provide cornerstones for the holding of beliefs.

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\(^5\) Apple, M.W., op.cit.

\(^6\) Ibid., p.50.

\(^7\) Wexler, P., op.cit., pp.40-1.

\(^8\) Apple, M.W., op.cit., p.lx.
The question of ideological reproduction is obviously of great importance in the study of educational institutions for schools play a significant role in the promotion of hegemonic or counter-hegemonic consciousness. Thus, we need to uncover the mechanisms of domination that are used in schools and throw light on how they work in the day-to-day activity of school life. As Apple puts it, we need to understand the complex ways social, economic and political tensions and contradictions are 'mediated' in the concrete practices of educators as they go about their business in schools. An attempt will therefore be made to address the ideological work that trade schools perform, with particular reference to the declared goals of the Labour government in its vision for an education which would:

- conscientize, and hence serve the interests of the working-class,
- privilege the manual and link it with the mind, and
- promote social mixing and educational equity.

Given the linkage, explored earlier in this book, between education and work, particular emphasis is placed on the 'theoretical ideology' of work represented by teachers to trade school students, and on the 'practical', 'lived' ideology of work within these schools. The former explores the relatively superficial, but nonetheless important overt curriculum, the latter deals with the more influential though less easily perceived implicit curriculum. In all cases, relevant insights and data presented in earlier chapters are referred to.

Does Vocational Education Conscientize, and hence Serve the Interests of the Working Class?

One definition of education stresses the role of schools and teachers in providing information and skills in order to help students decode the world they live in so that they are thus enabled and empowered to assume a greater autonomy and control over their own lives. This process of conscientization leads students to understand — and work towards — their best interests in a framework which promotes personal development whilst preserving the ideals of social equality and justice. Of the many aspects of the formal and informal curriculum which have been examined in a number of school systems, the most relevant in this context are the large number of studies which have analyzed the ideological representations that are made to students which purport to explain and define one's relationship to the sphere of production. For these messages are about that site where power relations in their economic form — commonly referred to as class relations — are played out, and where other power relationships based on gender and

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8 APPLE, M.W., op.cit., p.2.


race as well as age come together to heavily influence a person's experience of life.

The research data available on school-to-work programmes point to the overwhelming conclusion that the principles, ideas and categories legitimated and distributed by and within schools reflect particular visions of economic, racial and sexual realities and particular principles of social justice. In other words, the 'school-to-work' curriculum portrays the world of work in a particular way, and advises students about the way they should act in that world, to the extent that teachers are involved in teaching for work rather than about work.\textsuperscript{112} Schools therefore generally function to reproduce the social order by responding to the industrial imperative,\textsuperscript{113} rather than attempt to transform it by responding to the democratic imperative where 'person rights' rather than 'property rights'\textsuperscript{114} prevail.

Teachers, both because of their class extraction and because of cultural processes specific to the labour setting

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understand and express themselves in their work. This often results in an ethos of competition between students and in passivity in front of authority. Schools thus produce an ideology in that they provide an effective guide to social practice within capitalist society.

Research from a variety of countries has shown that most of the ideas communicated by teachers about work are idealized. Work is presented either as a self-fulfilling activity (in this case examples are drawn from the professional careers) or as drudgery (reference here is made to factory work). Teachers tend to avoid controversial issues such as the role of trade unions or work-related problems arising from a worker's age, class, gender and/or race. Overt messages given by teachers are overwhelmingly of the type that urge students to fit into and perform in the world of work as it is, rather than to explore its nature. Generally speaking, the organization of the forces of production is presented in an ahistorical, reified manner, with employers being promoted uncritically as rightfully placed in positions of power deserving not only the 'surplus value of workers' labour, but also the latter's respect, obedience and co-operation. Both covertly - through the inculcation of a competitive ethos and values of abdication and self-denial - and overtly students are taught to put employers' needs above their own, or to see them as complementary rather than conflicting. Workers are generally presented as involving themselves in competition for better places in the social order rather than voicing a unified concern for their own rights and dignity.

The hierarchical arrangement of labour is presented as a common-sensical reality which is hardly ever subject to critical analysis, as are the differential status and rewards given to different workers. Students are therefore often invited by teachers to take their place in this occupational ladder, but little or no light is shed on the influence of class, race and gender in determining specific locations on the ladder, and the results of that location for their future lives. Rather, teachers have often been observed participating in defining the 'realistic' and the 'appropriate' for particular students. The only explanations offered to individuals for their reduced life chances and lower positions in the wider social structure are that they had not studied hard enough to deserve better. In this way, students participate in confirming their 'destiny' by accepting personal responsibility for system-caused injustices. This is especially true for those institutions and programmes which, like trade schools, are directed mainly towards low-achieving, demotivated students who have an overwhelmingly working-class extraction.17

Ethnographic research has shown that, despite the overpowering hegemonic tenor of their messages, teachers and schools are also occasionally involved in individual and collective attempts to promote 'person rights'. Schools, and individual teachers within them, still enjoy a certain degree of autonomy. Thus although the educational system may not be an instrument of the capitalist class, it nonetheless is the product of conflict between the dominant and the dominated. It is an area of conflict over the production of knowledge, ideology, and employment, a place where

social movements try to meet their needs and business attempts to reproduce its hegemony.18

That autonomy is occasionally used in helping students to critically engage in the world of work, not merely to describe it and fit into it as it is, but rather to imagine and strive for a world as it could and should be.19

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Given the fact that educational reform was launched by a Labour government holding an ideology which highlighted the value and emancipation of the working class, it would be reasonable to assume that evidence of the explicit and hidden curricula in Maltese trade schools would run counter to that found in other countries, where the emphasis was on the reproduction of class division and the maintenance of the status quo. However if one looks at the early years of vocational schools and at their development since then, the overwhelming conclusion is that not much in the way of 'conscientization' actually took place. There was one occasion — mentioned in chapter four — when a member of the Vocational Schools Committee attempted to introduce the notion of co-operatives in the syllabus, and to have students involved in productive work on a co-operative basis. But this was a solitary instance, and the suggestion does not seem to have been followed up. No departmental files, or oral evidence collected from pioneering teaching


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Staff have at any stage hinted that trade schools were ever utilized to encourage critical consciousness among students, or to arm them with an alternative vision of industrial labour where they would be leaders rather than followers.

In other words, the explicit ideology heralding the educational reforms was not followed up by innovatory curricular and pedagogical practices in trade schools. On the contrary, what took place here was the dilution of the 'strong discourse' of the academic school, rather than a creative challenge to it. It would seem that the Labour government was faced with two contradictory demands. One was to be true to its left-wing ideology — that of promoting workers. The other was to encourage foreign industrial investment by cooling out students from an investment in academic schooling and thus ensuring the availability of a pool of semi-skilled labourers willing to work for relatively cheap wages.

Recent ethnographic evidence collected by members of the TSRP team20 has confirmed that both the hidden and the explicit curricula in trade schools are overwhelmingly hegemonic. Both boys' and girls' schools encourage a belief in meritocracy, and in a liberal notion of choice which does not explain how systemic processes channel groups of students, identifiable by their class and gender background, to unrewarding segments of the labour market. The transmission of knowledge was marked by a bifurcation between work — which was generally tedious, repetitive and gave little opportunity for self-expression — and leisure, where one could literally 're-create' oneself. Teaching staff,

even when these had become conscientized about industrial relations since they had themselves come up from the shop floor and experienced productive labour, generally justified – implicitly and explicitly – the hierarchical division of labour:

   Teacher: There are two truths about work... workers must receive their due in wages because everybody must eat... But God forbid that everybody would be paid equally.

They also generally presented the employers' needs as sacrosanct, and often urged a sense of discipline on students because

In the factories where they're going to work, they're not going to let them eat all the time. So we train them not to eat; they eat only during breaks, and they gradually realize we're right. This is especially true of those girls who come to visit us after finding a job in a factory, and she tells her classmates how she's not even allowed to go to the toilets, or that they even time how long she spends in the loo. They start realizing that what we're telling them is for their own good, so that they won't find it too difficult to adapt. We're training them right now for that.

When asked which qualities were promoted by schools and teachers in view of the workplace, students unhesitatingly replied that these were 'What you do as you are told, that you obey and that you behave and not answer

_21_ ibid., p.52.

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_The Ideological Goal_  
back, and things like that. In one religion lesson, for instance, the teacher admonished her students:

   Teacher: Look, I'm treating you as friends. Do not answer back when a teacher confronts you. One day, that self-discipline will come in handy. Perhaps he's in the wrong, and he isn't right. But one day, your employer might vex you, and you aren't always in a position to stand up to him and leave.

   Student: I'd shove my fist in his face!

   Teacher: You'll have to put up with it, because you'll have a family.

   Student: How long do you put up with it? One month?

   Teacher: No.

   Student: Six months?

   Teacher: Christ put up with it till he died.

Indeed, the few counter-hegemonic messages recorded were present almost exclusively in the 'academic' schools, where historical perspectives on work, capitalism as one of many political ideologies, the profit motive, the idea of waged labour, and gender inequalities in the Maltese labour market were addressed in a critical manner. The relaxation of the hierarchical status of teachers and students was more in evidence in trade schools. But this, though unintended, had hegemonic consequences in that it ultimately led to a dilution of curricula and the further exclusion of students from knowledge.

_24_ ibid., p.95.
Does Vocational Education Privilege the Hand and Link it with the Mind?

In the previous chapter, a brief account of Dewey's educational and ideological goals for having trades taught in his experimental schools was given. Dewey's agenda to combine mental and manual activity was, in part, a reaction to the socially divisive forms of schooling that were being encouraged by the pro-industrial camp. However, it also set out to encourage students to engage critically with an alienating capitalist world of work. This caught the attention of Russian educators who were attempting to develop a schooling system and pedagogy which was ideologically in tune with the economic and political vision of the Revolution. It is little wonder, therefore, that N.K. Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, should invite Dewey to the USSR to help in that endeavour, and that Dewey should be attracted by the Russian experiments in 'polytechnic education'.

The latter approach to education was founded on the critique Marx had made of the division between intellectual and manual labour, and of the concomitant division between the two major classes in society whereby the exercise of the brain was the key preserve of the bourgeoisie, and the use of the brawn that of the proletariat. This was considered to be the main characteristic of the capitalist division of labour, where the separation between conception and execution of a production process was the major cause of human alienation, and was reflected in a schooling system which reinforced these same characteristics. Modern industry, with its advanced division of labour, reduced persons to a mere fragment, stunting the development of qualities that are intrinsic to their species. According to Marx, the education of the future should be integrated with the transformed productive process in a socialist economy, and such an education would produce fully-rounded personalities who would be able to theorise as well as work. In his formulation of education, Marx was influenced by the craft schools which developed in France after the revolution of 1848, and especially by the writing of such radical writers as C.A. Corbon.

Marx held that a true education addressed the person in his and her totality, and therefore engaged the mind and the body, hence his emphasis on gymnastics, military exercise and technology. Through the latter the child would learn the general principles of all processes of production and at the same time learn how to handle the elementary instruments of all trades. Such a 'polytechnical education' would meet

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27 Ibid., Chapter 15, Section 9, pp.528-550.


the specific needs of the working class and further its interests in relation to other classes, not particularly because it offered a better form of vocational training or because it inculcated a work ethic, but because it led to the development of a 'whole human being', a 'many-dimensional person' through the reconciliation of the historical gap between mental and manual, conception and execution. The conception of 'polytechnical education' is therefore radically different from vocational school systems where the main intention is to provide skilled 'hands'. The capitalists are in favour of the latter, but they are not in the least interested in having the workers either develop understanding of the need of their industry or acquire the skills necessary to manage production themselves - the management of production was the affairs of the factory owners, while the task of workers was to ensure that they did the work for the plant well.

These ideas were used as guiding principles in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, with many school systems building a direct link between school and work through the polytechnical principle. Schools thus had links with factories or farm collectives, and students took part in production. Income from the sales of students' products would go part of the costs of the technological schools. Krupskaya's polytechnical schools which set out 'not only to give knowledge but to teach how to apply it to...'

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Life was one attempt to apply Marx's insights in a non-capitalist context. Another attempt was that made by Mao who reformed schools in line with the principles of the Cultural Revolution. In these schools students experienced both intellectual and manual labour so as to help bridge and appreciate the value and importance of both. The educational systems feeding the producer cooperatives of Mondragon in Spain are probably the only successful experiment of this type in the West.

Various countries 'in transition' to one form of socialism or another have been inspired by Marx and his notion of polytechnic education, and set about placing a considerable emphasis on bridging the gap between mental and manual work. Some, such as Cuba, Mozambique and Tanzania, introduced a manual component at both the primary and the secondary school level. The purpose of this was largely ideological:

Since the traditional separation between the working class and the bourgeoisie in conditioned capitalist societies is between manual and mental work, the incorporation of the collectivized individual into the new people-nation requires breaking down these previous classifications.

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1 Quoted in PRICE, R., Marx and Education in Russia and China, (Croom Helm, London 1977), p.185.

2 Mao was critical of Confucian education which looked down upon manual labour. (TSZE TUNG, M. 'On Practice: On the Relation between Knowledge and Practice, between Knowing and Doing', in Selected Works, Volume 1 (Foreign Language Press, Peking 1964), pp.295-309.

3 ORNELAS, C., op.cit., especially pp.50ff.

4 CARNOY, M., 'Education in the Transition State', in CARNOY,
The move to abolish traditional barriers and practices within the school reflected economic policies towards an equalization of incomes and life-chances through wage policy agreements where the minimum wage was generally set at a ratio of 1 to 4 or 1 to 5 to the salary of a manager or professional, and by extending social services in areas such as health and housing. In capitalist societies, academic education is distinct from vocational education as if it served a different purpose rather than simply supplying different kinds of knowledge and access to social/material status to different youths from different social class backgrounds. Transition societies however define all education as vocational, 'and the state attempts to minimize material and status differences among vocations'.

Transition societies attempted to bring about this change not only through legislation, but also through promoting a practical and lived ideology in various social sites. In schools, for instance, the formal curriculum as represented by lessons and textbooks, was used to transmit overt messages about the value of manual labour. In addition to this and perhaps more importantly, the hidden curriculum - as represented by the rituals, pedagogy and practices in schools, the social class clientele catered for, the activities and games played, and so on - socialized students into a different form of life, one embracing such values as co-operation and equity, identified by the state as being more functional to the overall national ideal encapsulated by the word 'socialism'.

A review of the literature on experiments that set out to introduce vocational subjects in the curriculum in the hope that this would change students' attitudes towards manual labour shows, however, that many of these attempts failed. Some of the economic and cultural reasons accounting for this failure have already been discussed in Chapter 5 above. Suffice it to say that class differences have proved to be much harder to eradicate than imagined, and that consequently, despite the reduction of ideological and material differences among occupations and types of schooling, most people realize that the best opportunities are still available for those who do well in the academic, formal and traditional school system. Thus, the best vocational education in transition societies continues to be academic education, even though those students who are interested in more manual occupations do not pay nearly as high a material and status price for such tastes or talent as in conditioned capitalist societies.

**The Maltese Context**

The Malta Labour Party's goals for vocational schools fell within the ideological terrain charted by Marxism and

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ibid., p.73.

ibid., p.90.

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37 PSACHAROPOULOS, G., 'To Vocationalize or not to Vocationalize... op.cit.

38 CARNOY, M., 'Education in the Transition State', op.cit., p.90.
socialism as understood in transition societies. They represented first and foremost an attempt to privilege manual labour, and to a lesser degree an endeavour to bridge the gap between hand and mind, and between the different social classes. Mintoff visited China several times from 1972 onwards, and the cultural revolution and educational thoughts of Mao, and later of Nyerere in Tanzania, may have corresponded with the Prime Minister's ideological persuasions and given these organizational substance. Reforms at the primary, secondary and tertiary education level in the 1970s included not only progressive policies adopted by most left-wing Western democracies since the late 1950s, such as the removal of streaming, and the introduction of comprehensive education, but also more radical Marxist/Maoist experiments such as the carrying-out of productive work in trade schools, the involvement of university students in manual work during the summer months and the introduction of a student-worker scheme.

It is quite clear that under Mintoff's leadership the MLP promoted important aspects of a socialist ideology. This ideology was quite explicitly articulated in the educational camp. A key goal expressed by the Labour government in its 1973-1980 Development Plan was the promotion and greater awareness of the dignity, status and potential contribution to society of manual labour. Furthermore work, not property ownership, was to be the foundation of the republic, as expressed in the new Constitution of 1974. Indeed, as Zammit has pointed out, Mintoff frequently attempted to promote new social bases of authority relations by simultaneously attacking the existing power centres and exposing them to public scrutiny or even ridicule.41

However, these changes in attitude could only come about when there no longer was 'a wide disparity between a carpenter and a lawyer.42 Wage differentials were reduced from fifteen times to only five times as much as the lowest income,43 and a systematic attempt was made to 'raise the social standing of manual workers and to publicly deride the status-conscious rich'.44 All workers, whatever their skills and abilities, were to contribute with dignity to the development of the nation, so that

Nobody [would] shy away from using a broom...A fitter must also do the work of a labourer when he has no other work to do. Even I, a Prime Minister, have come here to do your Union's work...and if need be I'll come to sweep with you as well.45

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40 Constitution of the Republic of Malta, (Department of

41 Information, Malta 1974).


43 Parliamentary Debates reported in Il-Hajja, 24/7/74 and quoted in ZAMMIT, E.L., op.cit., p.64.


46 Cospicua meeting between Mintoff and Drydock Workers, as reported in Il-Hajja, 16/3/73 and quoted in ZAMMIT, E.
The emphasis on work in the overriding goal to achieve economic independence for the Maltese islands was sustained in the sphere of education. Learning and education were to have 'a utilitarian and cultural aim', for 'educational instruction is primarily given so that man could contribute, by means of his work, towards the well-being of the state, of his family, and of himself. Through the introduction of the student-worker scheme, where tertiary education students were to study for half of the year and work throughout the other half, the University of Malta would become the University for Malta. The hallowed institution would no longer be seen as an end in itself but also as an essential means towards the realization of defined national objectives... The academic achievements at the University have to be measured not only in terms of excellence but also in terms of relevance to the country's needs.

Priority would be given to establishing courses which were functional to the needs of the economy. Individual ambitions and interests 'matter little when it comes to make an important decision: one must first look at the country's needs.'


In addition, this reformed tertiary education was to be 'open to all sections of the community, independently of their financial or social standing,' and would help students appreciate the culture of work and of manual labour by bringing 'the professional classes closer to the working community.' The student-worker scheme would encourage a sense of equality, respect and appreciation between intellectuals and manual workers. Through the experience gained when mixing among manual workers, student workers would in future be better able to lead manual workers. The work phase would help students 'acquire a sense of wisdom and diligence, perception, ability and responsibility, and a recognition of their duties.'

The tertiary education reforms were in fact presented as the logical next step to the setting up of trade schools. As the White Paper on the proposed changes notes, 'Having given the necessary impetus to education in the trades and in technology by setting up a number of trade and technical schools, the Maltese Socialist Government turned its

Prime Minister D. Mintoff, in answer to questions about proposed tertiary reforms by the Association of University Teachers, as reported in The Sunday Times of Malta, 3/4/77.

Times of Malta, 12/11/82.

MLP and GWU joint electoral programme, 1976.


op. cit., p.64.
attention to higher education'. This represented another attempt to increase the efforts 'to break down attitudes of discrimination between manual and mental work'. An important caveat must however be made with reference to the ideological underpinning of the Labour Government's educational policies, be these at the level of trade schools or of university. As Zammit has pointed out, and as has already been intimated above, while Mintoff and his Cabinet justified many of their policies by appealing to socialism,

in practice... [Mintoff] does not allow ideology to impede economic progress. In fact, he regards the achievement of economic independence as a first priority which supersedes all others. Indeed, when the proposed tertiary education reforms were attacked by the Nationalist Party for being unduly concerned with functionality, the Minister of Education replied that such a criteria transcended ideology, and was 'an objective that most responsible education systems in a wide range of countries are trying to resolve - from the US to the USSR to India'. Indeed, the close linkage between employers and schools which the Labour party advocated have also been advocated by right wing governments, who in turn have been criticized by left-wing educational scholars.

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55 Tertiary Education: Proposed Reforms, op.cit., p.3.
58 Dr Philip Muscat, in answer to question on Tertiary Education Reforms, July 1980.

The Ideological Goal

for undermining the true value of education and making it subservient to the needs of a capitalist economy. Given Malta's ambitions to develop a self-sustaining economy, and its attempts to attract foreign industrialists to invest in Malta, the same pressure existed to provide a similar pool of workers. The dire need to develop the economy led to a number of compromises with ideology. This seems to have been particularly true of trade schools. The diluted curricula, untrained teaching staff, the lack of provision of resources, and above all, the setting up of vocational schools as a separate space, all led to the provision not simply of a different, but of an inferior kind of education to an overwhelmingly working class student population. The Maltese Communist Party, working with the orthodox Marxist view that a nation had to first go through a capitalist stage in order to develop its Industrial base before becoming truly socialist/communist, agreed with the reforms of the Labour Party, and saw them as

59 This has been true of Thatcher's government and that of Reagan and Bush. Critics of the so-called 'new vocationalism' have been made by BATES, I., et al., Schooling for the Dole: The New Vocationalism, (Macmillan, Houndmills, UK, 1984), among others.
an attempt to transform the educational apparatus of the country, which has pre-capitalist and pre-industrial roots, into one which meets the needs of Malta's current dependent capitalist development.\(^{62}\)

It however correctly pointed out that trade schools ought to give 'fundamental importance' to 'the study of languages, and social, humanistic and scientific studies'. It would be trade schools which would 'produce the organic intellectuals of the working class who will be both technicians and political militants, directly involved in the production process and at the same time able to organize the cultural hegemony of their class. After all an illiterate worker will not change any society'.\(^{63}\) But this is precisely what trade schools did not do. As trade schools developed, it became clear that their status as separate institutions rendered them a repository for all that which contradicted the strong discourse of the academic schools.

This became especially true when in 1981, selectivity at eleven plus was reintroduced, and high-status, grammar-type state 'junior lyceums' were set up to compete with private schools in the attempt to capture the 'brightest and the best'. This ideological battle not only announced the reaffirmation of selectivity, but also helped to broaden the distinction between those who were good with their 'heads', and those who were good with their 'hands'. With the introduction of 'junior lyceums' the status of trade schools fell even lower as they continued to cater for students from low-income groups. The possibility of privileging manual

\(^{62}\) Electoral Program of the Malta Communist Party, 1979., p.12 (mimeo).

\(^{63}\) Ibid., p.12.
Dahrendorf pointed out to the Maltese Labour government with regards to its educational policies and the student-worker scheme in particular,

...others elsewhere in the world have tried such schemes and failed. It produces either unhappy workers or underqualified students, or both. It adds nothing to education or to social integration. 66

For these reasons, other European left-wing governments postponed specialization to as late a stage as possible in the students' schooling career. The French Minister of Education, Alain Savary, who held the office between 1981-84, deferred the choice of students to the trade schools by one year, so that these would be able to spend a longer time in the middle school and have the opportunity of getting more general education courses. In addition to this, Savary ensured that there were passarelles, or channels, between the French trade schools and other schools, so that it would be possible for vocational students to switch to the more prestigious baccalauréate courses and examinations. 67 Similar changes had already taken place in 1977 in Sweden in order to make it possible for vocational track students to enter university. 68 Similarly, in the late fifties, most Scandinavian countries extended comprehensive education up to the age of sixteen, offering vocational education only after school-leaving age was reached. 69

Most Western social democracies with progressive agendas therefore set out to promote a left-wing ideology, which included a package of educational reforms such as the removal of streaming, the introduction of comprehensive schooling, and various strategies to ensure equality of opportunity if not of achievement. All this was meant to encourage social-class mixing and to enhance the upward social mobility of students from working-class backgrounds. Vocational tracks were either removed or extended to all students, since the traditional dual-stream character of secondary schools worked to reproduce and reinforce occupational stratification through inequalities in educational outcomes.

The Maltese Context

It is clear, in the light of data and critical analysis presented in earlier in this book, that trade schools in Malta had to face much the same difficulties in achieving their stated ideological goals as those encountered by other countries, whether these were Western-style social democracies or nations in transition to socialism. Indeed, the very act of setting up vocational schools as a 'separate educational space' often serves to set into motion processes which act counter to, and undermine, the most ideologically progressive aims and intentions. While this has been elaborated upon in Chapter 6, there are two important

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66 Letter from Professor Ralph Dahrendorf to the Prime Minister, Dom Mintoff, dated 6/6/78 and written in his capacity as the Government's consultant and adviser on educational reform in Malta.


68 MARKLUND, S., op.cit., p.185.

aspects which require further exploration. The first refers to the social class composition of the student population in trade schools, the second to the structures of educational opportunity that are available to vocational students as compared to other students in different types of schools.

In other words, it will be argued that

- since vocational students are overwhelmingly from a manual working class background, and
- since they have little possibility of transferring to another type of school,

then the ideological goals of encouraging social class mixing, and of facilitating equality of opportunity irrespective of social class background, have in fact been undermined.

Indeed the TSRPQ shows that the trade school population is very homogenous. Of the 640 students who gave the required details regarding their father’s occupations,70 as many as 543 (or 84.8 per cent) had the main breadwinner of the family involved in such manual occupations as factory work or in various types of skilled and semi-skilled manual trades such as quarrying, driving, and street-hawking. Only seventy-one (or 11.1 per cent) had fathers who held non-manual occupations such as teaching (n = 3) and accountancy (n = 3). The fathers of 410 students (or 64.1 per cent) worked in the two lowest socio-economic sectors established by the 1985 census. While there were 122 (or 19.1 per cent) fathers in the ‘own account worker’ category, only seventy-one of these were in fact involved in skilled or semi-skilled work.

The overwhelming presence of working-class students in trade schools becomes even more evident when one keeps in mind that the data just presented refers to students at school during the survey period, and that given that absenteeism and early school-leaving are closely correlated to class, the total percentage of working-class students is even higher than intimated above. In addition to this, the TSRPQ also collected information regarding the students’ mothers’ occupation, before and/or after marriage.71 Of the 276 who worked before getting married, 106 (or 38.4 per cent) were factory workers and eighty-nine (or 32.2 per cent) were maids. Similarly, of the fifty-two women who worked following their marriage, twenty (or 38.5 per cent) were maids, and ten (or 19.2 per cent) were factory workers.

Data were also collected regarding the occupations of siblings of students attending the vocational schools. This information is important not only because it confirms the working class extraction of a particular individual, but because it addresses the question of inter-generational mobility. Out of a total of 438 siblings whose occupations were reported in the TSRPQ, 315 (or 71.9 per cent) held manual jobs. Of these, 118 were labourers and factory workers, and eighty-seven were doing the kind of skilled and semi-skilled trades and crafts that their brothers and sisters

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70 Thirty-three students gave no details at all; seven gave insufficient information and therefore could not be classified.
71 Malta has the lowest female participation rate in the labour market in Europe. This stood at twenty-six per cent in 1988, compared to sixty-one per cent in EFTA and forty-nine per cent in the EEC (cf. GALEA, L., Address at a one-day conference on Malta’s Changing Labour Market, CIMIRA 1988).
were learning in trade schools. Only nine siblings were reported as holding occupations in the first two categories in socio-economic sectors established in the 1985 census.\(^{72}\)

The homogeneity of class extraction does not only mean that there is little social class mixing going on in trade schools, but also that students will tend to bring with them the same anti-academic orientation, typical of working-class culture, which militates against the creative resolution of the dichotomy between 'hand' and 'mind'. The lack of legitimacy of schooling was reflected in the fact that as many as 335 out of the 680 students (or 52.2 per cent) did not know the extent of their father's schooling, while 316 (or 46.5 per cent) did not know at what age their mother had quit school. As can be seen in the table below, most of those who did know their parents' educational career replied that their mothers' and fathers' education did not extend beyond 5th Form at the secondary level.\(^{73}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Before 5th Form</th>
<th>5th Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only seven parents of trade school students had gone on to sixth form, while three had gone to Teachers' College.

\(^{72}\) These were one doctor, three engineers, one accountant, two teachers and one manager.

\(^{73}\) The percentage is worked out of the total number of students who answered the questionnaire, i.e. out of 680.

and two to University. In addition to this, vocational students were asked to give information regarding the educational paths followed by their siblings. There were 316 responses which gave information about brothers, and 255 about sisters. 132 (or 41.8 per cent) of the brothers and sixty (or 23.5 per cent) of sisters had in fact attended trade schools before going on to a job, and this means that there is a tendency for the reproduction of both occupational (manual) and educational (vocational) experiences in the same family.\(^{74}\) There is also a low participation rate on the part of male and female siblings in academic-type schools, with twenty male and thirty-one female siblings having attended junior lycées, and nine male and six female siblings having attended private schools. There were also low participation rates in post-secondary educational establishments, be these sixth form (male = 14, female = 15), technical institutes (14 and 1 respectively), or University (10 and 6 respectively).

The lack of social mixing and the inequitable opportunities offered in trade schools are reinforced by the fact that the strong classification between segments of the Maltese educational structure serves to intensify class and gender segregation and differential achievement. While students have, in theory, some possibility of moving from one particular tier of the educational hierarchy to another – such as, for instance, opting for or out of private schools, or for or out of junior lycées – the general tendency is for students to remain in the same type of school where they began their educational career. In the case of trade schools the demarcation lines are even more definite, as, given the

\(^{74}\) Surprisingly, trade school students reported that thirty-one male siblings and forty female siblings had had only primary schooling.
different and diluted curriculum present in trade schools, it becomes extremely difficult and unlikely for a trade school student to transfer to an 'academic' type of school, and practically impossible – unless s/he takes private tuition – to go to University. In other words, there are few effective passarelles out of a trade school.

The most obvious repercussion of the lack of social class mixing is that vocational students tend to bring to school a personal and family history of lack of investment and achievement at school, which in turn tends to limit their horizons by reinforcing many of the views they bring with them to the school. This confirms for the students 'their view of themselves as working to lower class and as uninterested in and resistant to academic instruction' 75. This does not mean that parents of trade school students are not interested in the education of their children, or that they do not have cultural resources which are valuable and useful. Most of the interviews with teaching and administrative staff in trade and mainstream schools revealed that the predominant view constructed students and parents within a 'culture of poverty' and a 'deficit' framework. The fact that only about thirty per cent of the parents turned up on Parents' Day, they argued, was just one example of the lack of commitment towards education. But responses to the TSRPQ accord with empirical research carried out both in

Malta76 and overseas77 and suggest an alternative explanation and help dispel the myth that working-class parents are not interested in their children's schooling. The following is a breakdown of the educational support parents offered to their boys and girls attending the third year of a trade school course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents' Activities</th>
<th>Male Students</th>
<th>Female Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help with homework</td>
<td>111 or 22.8%</td>
<td>58 or 28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urge you to read</td>
<td>329 or 62.3%</td>
<td>127 or 65.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy you tools</td>
<td>329 or 67.7%</td>
<td>126 or 65.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask about school</td>
<td>291 or 59.9%</td>
<td>100 or 51.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss your future</td>
<td>96 or 19.9%</td>
<td>151 or 77.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help in theory of trade</td>
<td>138 or 26.4%</td>
<td>78 or 42.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help in practice of trade</td>
<td>225 or 46.3%</td>
<td>126 or 64.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These parents do believe in the value of education, though they are likely to be sceptical about the actual benefits it will bring to their children. In other words, while, as has been shown earlier


schools may have minimal expectations from low-income pupils...low-income people appear to have minimal expectations for schools.\textsuperscript{78}

They also tend to have restricted knowledge of the way the school system works, and fail to see the implications that schools processes -- such as inter-and intra-school streaming -- have for their children's futures.\textsuperscript{79} They feel they lack the cultural resources which are valuable for acting on schools and for complying with the school's requests.\textsuperscript{80} The distance that exists between all Maltese schools and the community merely reinforces the tendency for working-class parents to be 'frozen out' of schools.\textsuperscript{81} In addition, working-class parents are more likely to believe in advancement through on-the-job training and through opportunities offered within employment, rather than through schools and credentialing.


\textsuperscript{79} GATT, C. & VASSALLO AGIUS, S., A Study of the Knowledge and Attitudes that Primary School Pupils have of Streaming, Unpublished B.Ed.(Hons) dissertation, University of Malta 1988.


\textsuperscript{81} CONNELL, R.W., ASHENDON, D.J., KESSLER, S. DOWSETT, G.W., Making the Difference: Schools, Families and Social Division, (George Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1982).

Conclusion

Clearly, then, trade schools have not been very successful in achieving the ideological goals that were set out for them, for they have generally failed to conscientize and serve the interests of their clientele, if those interests are understood as being the progressive self-determination of that group. Trade schools have also failed to either give a high status to the manual, or to link the hand and mind. Finally, rather than bringing about social mixing, trade schools have gathered together a homogenous group of students who come from similar socio-cultural backgrounds. This has not only jeopardized ideological, but also related educational goals. Efforts have been made throughout this and the previous chapters to show that there are factors external, as well as internal to the school system which combine to form a complex web of interactions leading to such failures. The next chapter sets out to go beyond these critiques to suggest and evaluate alternative educational visions and practice.
Most of these efforts were unsuccessful. Yet despite the fact that these experiments are separated in time by as much as a century and a half, this lack of success was often due to very much the same reasons. Some of the causes of failure were internal to the school system. Among these one can mention the difficulty of finding staff who were both good craftsmen as well as good teachers, the inability to generate enough capital to provide adequate material resources such as equipment and tools, the tendency for vocational schools and streams to attract the least motivated and least achieving students, as well as the least qualified teachers. Students who were not doing well in the academic streams did not necessarily improve in these alternative schools, and high drop-out rates have always been a feature in vocational courses. These and other factors ensured that such schools would always tend to be regarded by those in the mainstream educational system as having lower worth and status, and of offering an educational programme which was less challenging and of a lower calibre. This often led to a refusal on the part of able teachers to teach in vocational schools, and to the channelling of problem and non-achieving students to these same schools.

Other reasons for the failure of vocational education can be located outside the schools. The main cause is the structure of rewards which, for those following vocational courses, has either been non-existent, or else uncertain and unstable. This has been true for the nineteenth century as for the twentieth century. In Malta - as in many other nations with an underdeveloped industrial base - vocational and technical schooling was considered to be one of the factors which could stimulate development. The evidence provided by this book has, however, reaffirmed the criticisms levelled at human capital theory, namely that vocational students will tend to invest in, and complete, courses only when the rewards, and hence the opportunities
for remunerative employment in industry, are already there. When that is lacking, vocational students will tend to prefer to grab the first job that comes their way rather than forego earnings to learn skills for jobs which, in any case, might not be there when they graduate.

The comparative dimension of this study has shown that many of these difficulties, both internal and external to the educational system, are not unique to the Maltese case. Indeed, in most countries, differentiated secondary schooling has been abandoned partly because of these difficulties. The emphasis is placed on a general and common education for all students up to compulsory school-leaving age. This they do for liberal, ideological, educational and even industrial reasons. It seems, however, that Malta chose otherwise, only to meet the same problems and to learn, at the expense of many students, that it is indeed very difficult to have a vocational school system which meets the attractive economic, educational and ideological goals that have so often tempted educators, politicians, industrialists, parents and even students to invest in trade education and training.

It is clear that, given those failures, Malta is now at a crossroads in terms of its vision for technical and vocational education, and that pressures from various quarters are pushing towards a re-evaluation of secondary education generally, and trade schools in particular. There have been complaints from industry about the lack of skilled workers, a view echoed by the Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands which has pointed out

a general lack of skills required at all levels, and a growing realization of the difficulties in being competitive in overseas markets on which economic growth depends. There is a large gap between technological and other skills needed by contemporary society, and those being produced by the existing education system. This will increasingly lead to gaps between demand and supply for these skills and to labour cost inflation.

The State seems to have accepted this view, in the belief that its plans to transform the local labour market into a high technological one imply the need for the further skilling of young adults, so that 'in all fields of work total lack of skill is likely to mean unemployment' and that therefore 'in principle no youngster is to begin his (sic) working life without vocational training'.

At the same time, however, a number of extant surveys have suggested that employers are looking for general skills, flexibility and trainability as the key qualities in the ideal employee for, as the economy is continually being restructured, it keeps making new and unforeseen demands on the workforce. This restructuring poses other problems to current vocational schooling, based as it is on the premise that Malta's best economic bet lay in the development of a sound manufacturing base. This is because, in the light of current indicators, the economy seems to be moving away from manufacturing towards services - a fact which would render the technical
education in trade schools even more out of synchrony with the economic 'needs' of the nation.

In response to concerns such as these, a number of evaluative exercises have been carried out in trade schools. The Trade School Research Project's action research dimension brought together the heads of vocational schools who made proposals about changes that should take place. Early in 1992, the Department of Education's ad hoc committee on the reform of boys' trade schools invited some of the heads involved in the action research project to have joint meetings with them, and by May the two groups produced papers and an action plan for curriculum development and instructor training.\(^4\) One particular trade school had also invited a vocational education expert from the Centro Analisi Sociale of Turin to evaluate the school's educational programme, and a report was subsequently published and circulated.\(^5\) These evaluative exercises are taking place within a context of uncertainty about the future of trade schools.

With the introduction of the National Minimum Curriculum in 1988, the Minister of Education increased the proportion of general education and reduced the time allotted to specific skills training in trade schools so that the curricular gap between trade schools and other types of secondary schools was narrowed. Furthermore students are now transferred to trade schools after their third year in a mainstream secondary school. This way, it is hoped that all students would have more opportunity of getting a solid foundation in general education. Furthermore, key decisions which have important repercussions on educational and occupational futures would be postponed by one year. At the same time, however, the Minister has argued for the continued existence of trade schools as separate institutions saying that 'it is a fact that vocational schools are essential for this country'.\(^6\)

To date an analysis of current evaluative exercises as well as policy changes shows, however, that many of the key criticisms levelled at vocational schools at the secondary level, have not been tackled. Rather, there is an overall assumption that trade schools should remain a feature of the Maltese educational system, and that tinkering with curricula and the pedagogical training of its instructional staff rather than a re-visioning of vocational schooling in a fundamentally different manner should be attempted.

Moreover, the current discourse on trade schools is that there does not seem to be a need for articulating plans for vocationalism within a total vision for education in Malta. Hence, by treating vocational education as a separate entity - rather than as being part and parcel of a total package that constitutes worthwhile knowledge relevant to the initiation of all pupils into a worthwhile form of life - its potential contribution to education as a whole will never be appreciated. Nor is the failure of trade schools seen to be a symptom of a larger malaise, namely the result of the failure of the Maltese educational system as a whole. The

\(^4\) These papers have not been widely circulated.


\(^6\) Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister of Education, as reported in Debates tal-Kamra tad-Deputati, Sitting No.290, 11/10/1989, p.444.
responses emerging thus far therefore reflect rather than challenge the key principle which regulates local educational practice, that is selection and exclusion. Thus, in an effort to upgrade the educational level of trade school students, heads of vocational schools have suggested that craft centres should be re-introduced to cater for the academically weak and that trade schools would have two streams, one catering for those who have the potential to go on to further technical studies, the other for those who are 'destined' to work at the operative level.

Options for the Future

The alternative visions that can be conjured up for education are ultimately dependent on the image a nation has — and would like to project — of itself. A system bent on developing solidarity among the various sections of its population cannot at the same time encourage socially divisive schooling in any form, be it between private and state schools, or vocational and general schools. A social system keen to have democracy permeate all its institutions cannot be content with having schools feed students into work settings which are destructive and meaningless, where repetition, boredom, alienation and oppression are the daily diet, and where the jobs done are too small for human spirits.7 Rhetoric apart, serious limitations do exist in Malta — as in any other small, fragile state — in its ability to choose from among alternative options of industrial investment. But educators, while bound, as citizens, to act responsibly within the framework of these limitations,

cannot reduce their vision to encompass only the 'what is'. Their classic duty obliges them to act in loco parentis, as if they were the wisest and best parents of the students they teach, so that, irrespective of the actual industrial climate that surrounds them, they are bound to

provide all children with the knowledge and preparation for productive and satisfying occupations and lives.8

Faithfulness to this duty is particularly crucial since industry, the world over, has proved to be mainly concerned with production and profits rather than with the intellectual or moral development of its workforce, and that it is most happy

when schools provide it with a loyal and hard-working employee. It does not ask that the school develop reflective, critical workers able to evaluate a job in terms of its social significance or its moral impact. Yet in any reasonable sense of the term, these are necessary features in the development of an educated person.9

It is precisely because many teachers have perceived the discrepancy between their call as educators and the 'needs' of industry that they have generally cared little for vocational training. But the task of education as an initiation into a worthwhile form of life cannot but engage in

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7 I am here quoting one trade school female student — interviewed in a textile factory — where she was working clandestinely — who said 'This job is too small for my spirit'.


the realm of work - one of the key features of human experience. Having, therefore, identified the local historical and empirical vicissitudes of some of the aspects of the relationship between education and work, it is important to look at the future and to critically appraise the alternative scenarios that are available to us if we are to make vocational education responsive to industry while remaining true to itself. The following diagram suggests the possible ways that vocational curricula can feature in a school system:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content:</th>
<th>Multi-Track Vocational</th>
<th>On-the-job Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single-Track</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Track</td>
<td>Diversified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Track</td>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locus:</th>
<th>Shops, Factory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lycees</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymsnaia</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class Time Spent on Vocational Subjects


It would be useful to consider each scenario in turn.

Scenario 1:

Gradual Reform but Maintenance of the Single-Track Vocational System

As noted earlier, this seems to be the preferred scenario of the interested partners, be they heads of trade schools, the Department of Education or the Ministry of Education. The dismantling of trade schools would be too daunting and radical a task to embark on, and would probably evoke resistance and contestation by vocational teaching staff - and possibly students - who could find it difficult to adjust to mainstream schooling. In addition, gradual reform directed towards the trade school sector alone is attractive to the policy maker because it implies that the other types of secondary schools, and those of the private sector, need not be involved in the implementation of changes.

This 'piecemeal' approach to policy-making has its advantages and disadvantages. In the first place and specifically with reference to the Maltese context, the failures and the often unintended consequences of the holistic and generally 'utopian' social engineering of the seventies has affected public opinion to such a degree that any change proposed by any government in the educational arena cannot but be gradualistic and consensual. Any other approach is likely to disturb rather than invigorate. Even the Labour Party has learnt from its past policies of disruptive change strategies and has thus promised in its electoral manifesto for 1992 that any educational reform would be preceded by dialogue with the community and based on consensus among the affected partners. On the other hand, however, such an approach can easily lead to a co-optation of key educational and social issues which fail to be changed or even addressed because that is not in the interest of the more powerful members of the community.

To put it crudely, academic schools, be they private or governmental, would not react against gradual changes in the trade schools as long as these schools remain separate institutions, and as long as mainstream school teachers can continue channelling the unachieving and problematic students into these spaces. On the other hand, if, for educational reasons and guided by principles of social justice and equity, one were to comprehensivize the school
system, then the academic schools would have to revise the rationale behind their curricula and pedagogy, and this would entail a thorough shake-up of the whole educational system.

The implications of such a fundamental reform will be explored below. If, however, the gradualist approach to policy-making is to be adopted, and trade schools are to remain as separate institutions, then a number of minimal criteria must be adopted in order to address some of the key weaknesses and failures currently present in those schools and identified in Part Two of this book. In other words, the suggestion is that trade schools become a priority educational area for the next five years or so, with a heavy investment in the development of the human, material and technical resources of these schools. This investment must be as intensive and thorough as the one currently witnessed at the tertiary education level, where a minority of students, overwhelmingly from the same class extraction, have seen an increase of investment in their education of over 724 per cent between 1987 and 1990.10

The state should be ready to provide trade schools with the adequate means to carry out their educational tasks, and industrialists must help in this endeavour for they are, after all, the main beneficiaries of the vocational training offered by the state. Teaching staff must be trained in both the technical and pedagogical skills that are required, and their continued in-service professional development must be guaranteed. Industry should contribute to this area of staff development as well, by releasing personnel to give courses to teachers, and by accepting the letter on short periods of familiarization with new technology used in the enterprises. There must also be a commitment on the part of the state to provide up-to-date equipment and tools to the vocational schools.

A reformed trade school system will not promote, as it is currently doing, educational, social and gender inequalities, but rather attempt to address them and to practice positive discrimination in favour of the socio-economic groups it tends to attract. Trade school students should, for instance, receive certificates on completion of their course which will give them real advantages in the labour market. They should have a stipend like all other post-compulsory education students, and other efforts must be made to reduce the material constraints on vocational students which push them to participate in the twilight economy of after-school, weekend and holiday jobs, or to drop out of school as soon as the first employment opportunity presents itself.

There should also be real possibilities for students to switch to other types of secondary schooling if they so desire, and to receive enough general education to enable them to proceed to further and higher education if they wish to do so. Given the prevailing administrative difficulties that trade schools have encountered, a departmental structure ought to be set up to cater for their specific needs. Furthermore, the post of Assistant Director of Technical Schools should be created while educational officers should be appointed to help in the development of curricula and of staff. Constant evaluation of courses in trade schools should be built into the system to ensure that students are not being short-changed.

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Finally, the work that students are involved in during their vocational training, as well as the work they will be doing when they complete their trade schooling, should be characterized by meaningfulness and a clear distinction should be made between 'live work' from 'dead labour'. Some vocational educators have in fact argued that teachers who are true to their calling would find themselves in a contradictory situation if they were to teach vocational and technical skills which lack the features of 'craftsmanship'. Thus, in vocational education programmes as much as in craftsmanship:

1. There should be no ulterior motive in work other than the product being made and the process of its creation;
2. Even the details of daily work should be meaningful and not detached in the minds of students-as-craftsmen, women from the product of the work;
3. Students should be free to control their own working action;
4. They should thus be able to learn from their work and to use and develop their capacities and skills in its execution;
5. There should be no split between work and leisure, or work and culture;
6. The work activity should determine and infuse the entire mode of living.\[12\]


In addition to and related to this, the structure of rewards at the end of trade schooling should also be addressed, so that those who choose this form of education will not be faced with lower life-chances on the labour market, or in other areas of the political and civic community.

Scenario 2:

General Education as the best Vocational Education

There is an emergent consensus among scholars of vocational education that, given the changes in the workplace, a good general education may be the most vocational and relevant type of education that schools can offer.\[13\] Indeed, some of these scholars have identified a 'new paradigm in vocational education', alternative to that which predominated in the early twentieth century where the emphasis was placed on the identification of the needs of industry and the planning of corresponding vocational programmes. The new approach stresses not the learning of specialized occupational skills but the development of 'socio-technical literacy'.\[14\] The latter looks both at the technological aspect and the socio-human dimensions of work, and includes a sensitivity to the interaction between them.

\[13\] PSACHAROPOULOS, G., 'To Vocationalize or Not to Vocationalize...?, op.cit., and MARKLUND, S., op. cit.

The emphasis is placed on skills which are indirectly related to industrial processes, but which in fact are applicable and fundamental to a number of working environments. These include the development of basic skills such as interpersonal and group process skills, problem solving and decision-making skills, as well as planning and communication skills. Over and above that, there is a focus on the development of an understanding of the philosophical underpinnings and consequences of the shift from a mechanistic, technological and scientific management perspective of work to a high worker involvement, participative management perspective. The fast pace of change, new work designs and the growth of knowledge calls not for docility, passive obedience, but ability in narrowly defined technical skills but rather for creativity, flexibility, and the ability to learn.

In this scenario, therefore, specific vocational education is left till post-compulsory school age, and schools can focus on doing what they are best at doing, namely teaching general skills. Vocational schooling at the post-compulsory school age would link closely with industry, and because of the maturity of the students it will be catering for, there are bound to be a large proportion of them who are more willing and committed to go to work in jobs they have been trained for. The close co-operation with industry will ensure that the training is closely related to the technological developments in the relevant fields, and part-time work in that particular industry, through apprenticeship schemes, will reduce the opportunity costs for students. 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Paradigm</th>
<th>Emerging, Alternative Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✦ An image of the Subject Matter</td>
<td>✦ Alternative instructional approach to learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Basic training in specific skills required by specialized jobs</td>
<td>✦ Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Emphasis on contents and subject areas</td>
<td>✦ Serves education and development needs of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Serves the interest of employers/jobs/society</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Beliefs in Particular Theories and Models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Course components determined by job to be performed</td>
<td>✦ Cooperative learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Scientific Method</td>
<td>✦ Socratic questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Behaviour modification</td>
<td>✦ Teachers promote learning skills and encourage autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Teachers impart knowledge</td>
<td>✦ Learning as process/emphasis on learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Learning as product/emphasis on content</td>
<td>✦ What is &quot;known&quot; may change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Acquiring &quot;right&quot; information once and for all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Job placement/earnings</td>
<td>✦ Individual performance in terms of potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Employer satisfaction</td>
<td>✦ Promoting an egalitarian and democratic society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Inculcate specialized skills for specific roles</td>
<td>✦ Achievement plus employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Alternative track for academically less-able/less-willing</td>
<td>✦ Inculcate responsibility for own learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Methods and Instruments</td>
<td>✦ Alternative approach to learning for all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Norm-referenced grading and testing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Rigid, prescribed curricula</td>
<td>✦ Criterion-referenced grading and testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✦ Focus on traditional occupation service areas with business/industry involvement</td>
<td>✦ Cooperative group learning; divergent thinking; electives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✦ Focus on transferable skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is clear that the views developed in this scenario do not share the scepticism, expressed in an earlier chapter, with the underlying assumption that a highly technological workplace will lead to more creative, more humane work environments rather than to deskilling. In proposing this scenario, Pratzer here exhibits, in fact, a typically American belief, not absent from Dewey, that morality will somehow, some day, become pragmatic, and that therefore there will no longer be a contradiction in educational terms between the values of a true educator and those of an industrialist. But this scenario, developed in highly industrialized nations such as the United States of America, is likely to meet with much scepticism if applied uncritically to the Maltese situation.\textsuperscript{17}

Malta has a narrow industrial manufacturing base, and many of the enterprises are small, family-based, quite unable to generate enough capital to invest in the kinds of highly-technological work environments referred to in this scenario. Currently, therefore, and for many years to come, only a small percentage of Maltese workers will be involved in industries where the technical relations of production will ask for skills such as creativity, flexibility, and so on.


\textsuperscript{17} A most clear example of this uncritical application can be found in an address made by the Minister of Social Policy to the CIMIRA Conference in April, 1988, op.cit.

\textbf{Scenario 3: Vocational Track Within Secondary Schools}

The integration of vocational schools within the general education system by providing a vocational track is bound to appeal to many policy-makers because it promises to do away with a structure which is patently not working, which is subject to low status and scapegoating, and which apparently satisfies neither providers nor its clients, be these students or industrialists. In addition to this, the transformation of vocational schools into a vocational track within schools gives the educational reformer/policy-maker a high profile and legitimacy in the community: s/he is, after all, addressing a pressing problem which has been left unattended for two decades, and it will probably earn him/her the respect of educators who are not fully aware of the implications of such a change. Furthermore, such a move will not have many implications for other parts of the education system, for the vocational track in mainstream secondary schooling will perform the same function, albeit more covertly, that the trade schools used to do.

For there is ample evidence to support the claim that the attempt to mix vocational programmes with academic courses often fails... the value system of vocational programmes may be crushed by the sheer numeric weight of academic teachers and middle-class students... the vocational areas are diffuse and lack critical mass; the vocational teachers are the underdogs of the system. While their total number may be significant, they are
scattered and unable to generate the requisite atmosphere.\textsuperscript{18}

In other words, the comprehensive school formula which combines academic and vocational tracks, ostensibly providing students with access to all curricula while maintaining - in most cases - internal divisions by curricula\textsuperscript{19} has encountered much the same problems that have been described in the case of single-track vocational institutions, namely the attraction of a homogeneous, working-class student population, the creation of a separate school (within a school) with a lower status which militates against learning, the subsequent reinforcement of prejudice against manual skills, and placement unrelated to training. In vocational tracks, it will be even more difficult to attempt an alternative pedagogical practice, given that, as experiments in other countries adopting this scenario have shown, teachers in the lower status vocational track will ultimately adopt the teaching styles and ethos of the academic tracks in an attempt to share the high status and esteem enjoyed there.\textsuperscript{20}


\textbf{Scenario 4:}

\textit{Vocational Education as Part of a Compulsory Core Curriculum}

The only way of getting around most of the problems mentioned in previous scenarios, and of providing a form of vocational education which does not betray the ultimate calling of teachers as professional educators, is to have vocational education for all secondary school students. This could be either a subject in the core compulsory curriculum, or infused across the curriculum by following the polytechnical principle and approaching all subjects in both a theoretical and a practical way. In this way, an attempt would be made to integrate scientific, mathematical, technical, social and productive aspects of a subject such as electricity or food, and organizing technical studies around themes such as the office, the factory, or the home.\textsuperscript{22}

Whether vocational education is given in or through the core curriculum, the assumption is that it has something central to offer students in the school's overall goal of initiating young citizens into worthwhile forms of life. Indeed, vocational education can play two important roles in the process of education. In the first place, it is particularly well-placed to facilitate the development of reflective skills, where reflection is defined as 'the ability to objectify and

evaluate one’s own ideas, feelings and values.23 Some authors in the vocational education field have pointed out that since

vocational education often results in a visible project, it can help students develop the ability to look upon the products of their own labour with increasing levels of dispassion and objectivity.24

Moreover, vocational education plays a second role in that it develops in students the ability to ‘address the social aspects of vocations themselves and to see vocations as historically and socially constructed’.25

This scenario, therefore, contests the traditional division of knowledge into separate and distinct spheres. As Feldman has argued with reference to the domains of the practical arts, the liberal arts and the fine arts,

We must abandon the illiberal belief that only a liberal arts education liberates the student. The practical arts and the fine arts also liberate students from enslaving limitation. They do it in different, but equally, indispensable ways. The practical arts are the arts of function. Their mastery liberates people from helpless dependence. The liberal arts are the arts of meaning. They give the student a sense of context and certainty. They liberate students from a sense of isolation and futility. The fine arts are the arts of transcendence. They teach man (sic) can create more than he can

comprehend. By developing our sense of mystery, they liberate us from what is merely literal.26

The Maltese educational tradition, as documented in this book, has either tended to see these aims and disciplines as mutually exclusive, or it has badly blurred their right relationship, so that vocational education has had to compete for a place in the curriculum and to struggle for recognition and status. This has partly been due to an understandable, and indeed praiseworthy caution on the part of liberal-minded educators who echoed Dewey’s concern over the promotion of trade schools in America at the turn of the century, and who argued that

The kind of vocational education which I am interested in is not one which will ‘adapt’ workers to the existing industrial regime; I am not sufficiently in love with the regime for that. It seems to me that the business of all who would not be educational time-servers is to strive for a kind of vocational education which will first alter the existing industrial system, and ultimately transform it.27

The Deweyian Vision

But Dewey himself was not opposed to vocational education as such, as long as it was not aimed only at specific groups of students, or divorced from a general education. Dewey in fact thought that the merging of vocational/technological studies with liberal studies would serve to revitalize school learning since the active

24 ibid., p.192.
25 ibid., p.192.
Involvement required by such subjects would offer an alternative to didactic, teacher-centred education. The fusion of vocational with liberal studies also promised to empower students to understand and transform the society they were living in. In adopting this belief, Dewey was following the basic insights offered by the new sociology and economics ascendant at the turn of the century, namely that developments in the mode of production would have an effect on other spheres in the life of the human species, on all social institutions and on qualities of selfhood.

In the twentieth century, the main focus of societies was the development and technical applications of science. Science promised great things, but it also carried problems and threatened human well-being. As a Deweyan scholar notes, 'A distinctive feature of Dewey's philosophy was his conviction that human renewal might be engendered from within the very culture of science, which also posed major threats'.

This vision, therefore, entailed not only a technical understanding of the new technology, but a normative understanding as well so that students would be encouraged to evaluate the consequences of technology. In Dewey's words,

All social institutions have a meaning, a purpose. That purpose is to set free and to develop the capacities of human individuals without respect to race, sex, class or economic status... [The] test of their value is the extent to which they educate every individual into the full stature of his (sic) possibility. Democracy has many meanings, but if it has a moral meaning, it is found in resolving that the supreme test of all political institutions and industrial arrangements shall be the contribution they make to the all-around growth of every member of a society.'

The development of the individual, within educational terms, requires the concomitant development of a critical social intelligence which helps students interpret and decode the world they are living in. This in itself also requires an 'industrial intelligence', which Dewey defines as 'a knowledge of the conditions and processes of present manufacturing, transportation and commerce so that the individual may be able to make his choices and his own adjustments, and be master, so far as in him lies, of his own economic fate.'

Oakes, drawing on Dewey, argues that this kind of knowledge should be available to all students, and should be taught in heterogenous student classroom groups, with a curriculum based on traditional academic disciplines such as philosophy, history, economics, science and mathematics. She makes a case for a comprehensive education for all, ninety per cent of which is common. Of this, fifteen per cent would be allotted to 'technological and economic literacy' for classes at all ages.


Conclusion

That the book has been an argument in favour of the fourth scenario should be clear by now. It is also clear that this alternative is more challenging and demands more commitment from policy-makers, school administrators and teachers than any of the other scenarios described. But the contention is that the Deweyian vision for education, adapted to Malta’s particular situation, is the most honest and most just form of education we can offer to students. The Maltese educational system cannot be allowed to persist in streaming, selecting, and excluding students from worthwhile knowledge with the excuse that some do not have the ability to follow classroom instruction of a certain type.

If educational research has taught us anything this century, it is that the potential of children—including that of children with special needs—is largely untapped. In schools, that individuals flower in different ways, that some find it difficult to flower within school settings, but that ultimately, all children do have it in them to bloom.

Surely it is the professional task of the educator to develop the right approach—pedagogical, conceptual, attitudinal—in order to facilitate the development of all students, within a context which projects, in miniature, the kind of vision we have for the society we live in. This is the mark of the true educator, not the weeding-out and channelling of low-achievers into low-status, dead-end tracks.

This scenario is challenging because it demands a change not in trade schools but an overhaul of the whole educational system—an overhaul which has long been overdue. For ‘vocational education can’t be made better; it needs to be made fundamentally different. Vocational

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31 OAKES, J., op.cit., p.65.
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<td>world recession</td>
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<td>World War I</td>
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<td>&quot;worthwhile&quot; knowledge</td>
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<td>Zammit, E.L.</td>
<td>414</td>
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<td>Zammit, N.</td>
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In this timely book, Situana explores the development of vocational schooling in Malta, with particular emphasis on the under-researched field of vocational education. This insightful work is a comprehensive and challenging knowledge which reveals new and challenging knowledge within the context of the field. The thorough empirical work is grounded in the complexity of the field. This book provides both the history and the sociological description and analysis of the vocational education in Malta, which are important contributions to the field of research on vocational education. The book is a valuable addition to the growing literature on vocational education.

(Professor Cary McElduff, Lancaster University, UK)

This is a fascinating study that raises key issues about the nature of vocational schooling and its development. It deserves careful attention in other countries besides Malta. I am sure it will be well received.

(George Psacharopoulos, Washington DC, USA)

The book, which is well researched and should interest both students and educators of vocational education, provides an interesting perspective on the development of vocational education in Malta. It provides a valuable contribution to the literature on vocational education in Malta and the wider field of study.

(Professor Mary Parham, Senior Lecturer in Sociology of Education, University of Malta)