Report of the Consultative Committee on Education, set up by the Honourable Michael Falzon, Minister of Education and Human Resources.

Chairperson of the Committee: Professor Kenneth Wain.

Members of the Committee: Mr Paul Attard, Mr Christopher Bezzina, Dr Mary Darmanin, Professor Charles Farrugia, Ms Antoinette Psaila, Mr Joseph Sammut, Dr Ronald Sultana, Mr Lawrence Zammit.

Secretary of the Committee: Mr Raymond Camilleri.
Chairperson's Foreword

Dear Minister,

Please find enclosed a document I am forwarding to you on behalf of the Consultative Committee set up by yourself on 19th August 1994 for the purpose, entitled *Tomorrow's Schools: Developing Effective Learning Cultures*.

The Committee worked hard on the document since it was set up, meeting on a very regular basis, and I hope that it meets with your wishes and expectations as they were communicated to us in the 'brief' that emerged from our first meeting with you at the beginning.

As you will observe, it is quite an extensive document in which we have done our best to cover with some adequacy the two sectors of primary and secondary schooling which you wished us to address in our deliberations. Naturally, we do not presume that the outcome is in any way exhaustive or conclusive, but we decided to focus from the start on what we regard as the key concerns of any schooling system, namely: the schools themselves as learning communities, the educational leaders and their role in the schools and in the system, and the curriculum as the instrument and programme of learning in the schools.

We realise that, even with this focusing and with our concurrent concern to be as comprehensive as possible in covering the three areas, there is still much that could and should be added on and developed. In particular, we are concerned that the document be read within the parameters we set ourselves when compiling it. For one thing, it must be stressed that it is not intended as a blueprint for the schooling system but rather as an instrument for consideration and discussion, a starting point for a possible re-examination and revision of our current policies and practices in the light of the demands made on the individual and on society by a fast changing world.

As such, our wish and intention is that it should be passed on for the widest possible consideration and debate, that it should be put in the public sphere where it can be taken up critically by educational leaders (teachers, parents and officials) and by other interested members of the community. At the same time, we cannot disguise our hope that the discussion will be part of a serious reassessment and re-evaluation of the two sectors with more than an eye on their reform which may, in certain cases, even need to be very radical.

In this sense, it is important to specify that, as the manner in which the document is written demonstrates, we ourselves have not played, or pretended to play, the part of neutral or passive observers in compiling it. Quite the contrary, our own beliefs and values, and vision of things, come out very clearly both in our critique of the existent system, which is always, we hope, a constructive one, and in the alternatives we propose to it. Indeed, ample parts of the document may read as a kind of manifesto. We make no apologies for this, however, because what we have written truly conveys our firm convictions and we want that to be evident both to yourself
Minister’s Brief

“Conscious of the need for reform, and considering also the declared policy objective of decentralising the school system in line with ongoing developments in the field of local Government, and bearing in mind the already identified need for the strengthening of the Organisational Structures within the Ministry and Division of Education, the broad terms of reference for the Advisory Group are as follows:

- To review and evaluate the educational policies currently being followed in primary and secondary levels of education in Malta.

- To identify and prioritise those educational issues which most need to be addressed.

- To recommend what remedial action should be taken in those areas identified as deserving priority attention.

- To point the direction which further developments and reform of the Education system should aim at during the next decade.

- To recommend what type of structures would be needed to oversee and monitor agreed planned programmes of development and reform.”

Michael Falzon,
Minister of Education and Human Resources,
Main Recommendations

The following are the main recommendations of the Consultative Committee, organised around key categories from which flow the more detailed proposals that appear throughout the document. The recommendations therefore provide a broad sense of the guiding ideas that have informed our thinking about, and evaluation of today's education system, in the search for more effective learning futures.

General Principles:

- Reconceptualise education in terms of outcomes, i.e. the successful and effective learning by all students of that which they are entitled to.
- Adopt the four principles of Entitlement, Effectiveness, Equity and Economy to regulate the educational service at all levels.
- Establish clear lines of responsibility among all educational providers, including parents, with accountability measures that ensure a quality education for all.
- Provide adequate human and material resources for all, and if these are in short or limited supply, then the best should be mobilised in favour of those considered to be most in need, at risk students and schools.
- Set into place organised and structured evaluation measures and feedback processes, with research as one of an ensemble of tools that help providers, leaders and decision-makers remain responsive to needs.
- Develop the concept of a community school, with a more productive interaction between the school, the home, and the wider local and national community.

Learning Issues:

- Vote the necessary resources to provide schools that are safe, attractive, well-resourced and congenial learning environments.
- Recognise, acknowledge and provide for difference in learning styles and cultures.
- Provide a multiple delivery system which ensures the catering for differences, but within a comprehensive school environment that, as far as possible, brings together students with different learning needs, abilities, orientations, and interests.
- Mainstream students with disabilities and special needs, and provide multidisciplinary support for their full integration.
- Phase out forms of state schooling that are divisive through practices of selection and channeling.
- Re-consider the role of the private and independent school sector in the light of the spirit guiding the present reforms.
- Move away from an emphasis - in National Minimum Curricula and in learning generally - on coverage to mastery: basic numeracy and literacy to be achieved by all mid-way through primary schooling.
- Reconsider current examination and assessment policies, and adopt practices which put less of a stress on competitive achievement and more on co-operative and supportive learning through strategies such as profiling, in order to ensure entitlement.
- Provide effective remediation programmes as 'safety nets' at all levels to ensure that students receive their entitlement at specific stages throughout their school career.
- Lengthen the school day in order to provide more opportunities for learning, and for a cultural and sport animation of the school.
- Develop a policy regarding the language of instruction.
- Devolve control over the curriculum (including the selection of text-books and learning programmes) to the schools, with the support, evaluation and monitoring of the Education Division within the precepts and conditions of (revised) National Curricula.
- Develop measures to ensure the training of all unqualified teachers in schools, and make the best and most effective use of the human resources already available to the Division.

Educational Governance:

- All levels of the school system to be regulated by the principle of developmental accountability, and educational leaders provided with the professional development opportunities and the support and resources necessary so that the quality of provision is constantly improved.
- Expand and reconceptualise the purposeful leadership roles of Education Officers, Heads of schools, teachers and parents. These are now to be seen as partners in the project of providing a quality education service.
- Trust Education Officers with a much more direct role in animating schools in terms of guiding heads, staff and parents in establishing goals for learning, and in constantly evaluating teaching programmes and learning outcomes. Provide the required opportunities for professional development to enable Education Officers to adopt this role.
- Respect the professional autonomy of the different providers, within an agreed framework that adopt the regulative principles of Entitlement, Effectiveness, Equity and Economy.
- Develop stronger links between the Faculty of Education and the Education Division in order to ensure the best use of the professional resources available in both sections in the interests of the learning child.
- Adopt the principle of incentives - which could include promotion opportunities, salary allowances, professional development overseas, etc. - in order to encourage teaching staff to undertake increased responsibilities during and after school time, to teach in educational priority areas, and so on.

The Reform Process:

- Provide multiple fora to discuss the reform with as many educational partners as possible, so that changes are not imposed but rather adopted.
- Conceive reform as a total and integrated package, and not as a piecemeal exercise: the emphasis should be on the development of structures that facilitate action.
- Set up a group that represents as many different educational partners as possible in order to oversee, monitor, evaluate and support the reform process.
Chapter 1: Preamble.

1.1. Introduction.

There is ample local research to suggest that the Maltese state education system functions as a bureaucracy. Indeed, the current commitment to ‘decentralisation’ can be seen to be, at least in part, a recognition by the system’s managers themselves that bureaucratic forms of leadership are incompatible with any vision for tomorrow’s schooling. Bureaucracy, which is often taken to stand for ‘centralisation’, is wrong because, it is argued, it is inefficient, impersonal, unresponsive to the needs of the people at the point of delivery as well as to changing circumstances. It is wasteful, it presents functionaries with ready-made ‘scripts’ so that individuals end up performing roles, rather than creatively responding to the complexity that surrounds the educational enterprise. It stultifies personal initiative, and is ‘top-heavy’, with decision-making processes becoming encrusted in codified ways of behaviour, so that, often, the institution within the grip of a bureaucratic rationality assumes a life of its own, independent of changing demands, attitudes, circumstances. Bureaucracies, it is moreover argued, tend to invest authority in people who have experience and seniority in the institution, rather than in those who have skill, insight, vision and qualities of leadership.

Despite our agreement with such critiques of bureaucratic, centralised management of the education system, we would wish to make a claim that a degree of centralised control is still necessary if we are adequately to respond to issues such as the equitable and efficient distribution of human and material resources. We would moreover want to propose that centralisation and decentralisation need not be seen in opposition to each other, but rather more as modes of management on a continuum of strategies that are available to us in the desire to breathe new life into an ‘old’ institution. It is this re-conceptualisation of schooling for tomorrow’s world that ought to guide us in the choice from a range of strategies available to us, and the operative word here is ‘re-conceptualisation’. Hitherto, much emphasis has been placed on a reform of the institution as a delivery system. National minimum curricula, a teachers’ code of ethics, even detailed syllabi have been promulgated from the ‘centre’, with the hope that these have an effect on real classroom life. We associate ourselves rather more with the need to re-conceptualise schooling from the point of view of the student as learner. This means that we necessarily have to question the form in which the state educational system is conceived, and to make a fundamental shift from focusing on what is delivered to a focus on what is actually learnt. In other words, the key question that must henceforth be asked if we are to have a meaningful reform of the education system is: “What conditions - social, financial, physical, psychological, organisational - must prevail if all tomorrow’s children are to have a quality education?” What we understand by the term ‘quality education’, and the multi-dimensional elements of schooling we are here referencing, will be made clear in the sections that follow. At this stage, we insist that the question which is at the heart of this document must today be confronted honestly, and systemic arrangements must flow from the answers - for in an open society there is always more than one answer - that are given to that question. And that question must be asked by all the partners in
The educational enterprise: system managers, teachers and school administrators, parents, students, the general public, one and all must respond to the challenge keeping in mind that despite what might ultimately be conflicting interests and world-views, the possibility of partnership and the justification of collaboration exists by virtue of the fact that their goal is the same: the educational development of the child.

That educational development does not take place in a social vacuum, and hence the need to suggest a context for the subsequent arguments proposed in later sections in this document. That context, and the re-conceptualisation of education as a learning enterprise, is marked by four inter-related keywords, here referred to as the four E’s, namely **Entitlement**, **Effectiveness**, **Equity**, and **Economy**. It is necessary to develop these keywords further, since their justification provides the backbone for the programme that follows.

1.2. Four Regulative Principles.

The principle of **Entitlement** establishes the right for a quality education for all students. Once this principle is accepted, a number of others follow. First, there is a shift from a stress on opportunities to one on outcomes. We are less concerned with considering what the system claims to be providing, and rather more with considering what the effect of the system is on the learner. What has the student learnt after six years at the primary school level? What has s/he learnt after five years at the secondary school level? What ought to have been learnt? What are the needs of the learner at the different stages of growth, and how effectively is the school community responding to those needs? To what extent are the special needs of children with disabilities - e.g. students with restricted physical mobility, blind and/or deaf persons - being catered for? What environment is most conducive to learning, and to what extent is the school adequately resourced to provide that environment? What are considered to be the basic requirements for a quality education - one that is meaningful, worthwhile, responsive to individual and social needs - and does each and every student, without fail, get those requirements, regulated as these are by the principle of entitlement? What range of strategies are available to ensure a high degree of accountability, and what forms of evaluation can one put into practice in order to ensure that the principle of entitlement has been respected?

This same principle is inextricably linked to a second one, that of **Effectiveness**. In a bureaucracy sanctioned by tradition and fixed modes of responding, decisions and actions will tend to be justified in terms of the internal logic of the system itself. Rather than questioning its own effectiveness in delivering a quality education to all, the system, faced as it is by so many signs of malfunction - absenteeism, the diploma disease, school-related stress in teachers and students, lack of identification with the process of education - blames students for being unmotivated and unintelligent, blames parents for being uncaring and uninterested, and blames teachers for being unprofessional and unenthusiastic. Within the current framework of thought and practice, the Department leaders blame teachers, the latter blame the former, and parents blame both. The shift in the educational system that we are proposing will mean that those that have collective responsibility for providing what the children are entitled to - a meaningful quality education - will assume this responsibility. They will have to assume collective ownership of the challenge and ask: What can and should
be done so that all students get, effectively, what they are entitled to? Failures in this regard and within this framework will be attributed to providers, and because teaching is a moral enterprise exercised in a relationship of power between adults on the one hand, and children on the other, accountability must necessarily play a part to safeguard the rights of all minors.

Which is why a third regulatory principle, that of Equity, must also prevail in any consideration of an education for the future\(^3\). By equity we are not referencing ‘sameness’, or even ‘equal resourcing for all’. Students will bring different intellectual, cultural, social and financial resources to the school, and when we ignore these differences hoping to conjure away distinctions, by treating all students equally, we inadvertently reinforce these same differences, and create new ones along the way. In the current framework we are proposing, the issue of outcomes is central. That is, differently endowed students, whatever their abilities and disabilities, are all entitled to similar outcomes in terms of a quality education, but the process by which they achieve that entitlement can be differentiated. We would wish to maintain the value of an education which encourages social, ability and other forms of mixing during a number of learning programmes, but would also wish to include within this model a flexibility that ensures that the different learning styles and needs of students are catered for. There is much educational value in mainstreaming students with special learning needs, in dismantling inter- and intra-school streaming, channelling and segregation processes that effectively jeopardise notions of solidarity between groups. But this must be accompanied by a recognition and acknowledgment of difference, and resources must be mobilised to cater for difference in such a way that, within a context of co-operative learning, students can follow different paths which ultimately lead to similar goals.

This multiple-delivery system, which remains sensitive to differences while striving to ensure effective educational outcomes that all students are entitled to, is characterised by a limited pool of resources. While a government that really values education will provide whatever is necessary for the successful running of schools, that provision is doubtless constrained, particularly when confronted with raising aspirations and higher standards of living, where parents, students and teachers expect their work and study environments to be as congenial as those they enjoy in their homes. These aspirations are legitimate and certainly the state cannot but respond, engaged as it is to the mandate of its citizens. In the provision of such resources, the principle of Economy becomes linked to that of equity in such a manner that those learners who are most ‘at risk’ receive the larger and best share of what the state can offer, in terms of both human and material resources. This principle of positive discrimination follows logically from the preoccupation with entitlement, since what must be safeguarded is the successful outcome of a quality education at all levels and for all persons.

An educational system structured in such a way as to regulate and monitor the successful implementation of the Four E’s, as outlined above, can afford to decentralise a number of aspects of the educational process to the school site, without divesting itself of the ultimate responsibility it has, as an apparatus of the state, towards the nation’s citizens. The challenge therefore, as currently being conceptualised, is to develop a flexible centralisation which conjugates together, in an
innovative manner, the strengths of bureaucracy with those of delegation of responsibilities. What this means in practice is that an overall sense of direction can be achieved without discouraging schools, teachers and parents from taking initiatives and creating improved environments for learning to take place in. Such decentralisation should stress the role and expertise of educational leaders in schools to develop curricula, choose textbooks, engage staff, prepare school evaluation packages, organise staff and parent development programmes, and so on. Resources should, needless to say, be responsive to the community’s expectations of the school.

Fig.1.1. *The Four E's and their effect on the culture of learning in schools*
1.3. New Challenges in response to New Orientations.

The new focus on outcomes and on effective learning necessarily entails changes in several other areas in the field of educational provision itself. We need to ask questions regarding:

**Schools as Learning Communities:**

- What are the physical, social, environmental, and learning contexts which best facilitate the establishment of effective and democratic communities that enhance the development of quality education programmes?
- How can the different developmental needs and concerns of students be best catered for, in such a way that the learner is seen in his/her totality?
- How can schools create a welcoming environment which respects learners’ needs for safety, stimulation, physical development and general comfort?
- What use is being made of learning resources outside the school premises, through cultural visits, and community-based learning?
- Which teaching resources, styles and technologies are required to ensure effective, appropriate, and appealing communication with students?
- Is the time available for learning, in its formal and informal dimensions, sufficient for the programme at hand?
- How can aspects of informal school life - the general ethos, the time for play and recreation, leisure and other associations and clubs - facilitate the learning process?
- Which school policies and practices encourage students to feel recognised and catered for individually, in such a way that schools effectively respond to personal and social needs of those in their care (e.g. transitions, personal problems, study-related difficulties, work education, lifeskills, etc)? What is the role of the form teacher/study tutor/guidance counsellor/spiritual adviser/teacher/welfare officer in this task?
- Should the principle of entitlement lead to the generation of attainment targets as guidelines to schools, teachers, parents and students?
- How can the individual and group learning differences of students be catered for effectively?

**The Role of Education Leaders:**

- How can Heads of schools, together with teachers, facilitate the development of effective community schools, in terms of academic achievement, client satisfaction, quality of teaching skills, pupil-centred learning, value formation, resource mobilization, school climate, innovative curricular and pedagogical activities, preparation for life, school discipline, and school image?
- What collaborative working relationships can be developed between Education Officers and the Faculty of Education on the one hand, and schools on the other, so
the knowledge and expertise of all is put at the service of the goal of developing effective learning communities?

- How can school evaluation teams, under the leadership of Education Officers, work with learning communities so that the principles of entitlement, effectiveness, equity and economy are respected? What role do parents generally, and School Councils specifically have in this?

- What are the conditions - of employment, of school management, of participation in curriculum planning and implementation, of policy-making on the school site and in the Education Division - which would encourage teachers to invest wholeheartedly in their profession, and to become educational leaders, committed to their primary task of caring and educating students?

- How can teacher deployment be best carried out so that maximum use is made of human resources, and what, if any, are the benefits of a centralised deployment system?

- How can teaching teams, working around themes and centres of interest, reduce professional isolation felt among staff (especially in Primary school), and encourage a new culture of collaborative work, integrated teaching and learning, and a stronger identification with one's school?

- How can school-based staff and school development programmes be implemented?

- What systems of accountability can be developed for all partners involved in the educational enterprise, so that lines of responsibility for the fulfillment of the entitlement for quality education are transparent in the learning community?

\textit{The Curriculum:}

- What constitutes, today, worthwhile knowledge that all students are entitled to?

- How can this knowledge be organised so that it respects the principles of continuity on the one hand, and integration on the other?

- How can the curriculum reflect the multiple histories, cultures and knowledges of Maltese and Gozitan citizens?

- Which approach to teaching, or pedagogy ensures effective learning within the normative constraints of truly educational considerations, and which language policy should be developed in this regard?

- How can the context in which learning takes place complement and stimulate, rather than contradict the curriculum itself?

- What processes of curriculum development, innovation and evaluation will respect the right for all partners to participate in the formulation of worthwhile knowledge?

- How can we ensure that new forms of knowledge - such as information technology - be included without also including new forms of control and alienation, or reproducing inequality at outcome?

- What strategies can be developed so that difference between students is recognised and catered for without excluding anybody from their entitlement?

- What processes of evaluation can be put into place, in such a way that these serve the interests of learning rather than only - or principally - the interests of competitive credentialling?
• How can we avoid curriculum overload, which creates stress for pupils and teachers alike, promotes a focus on coverage rather than mastery, and further alienates and fails demotivated students?

These three key areas of schooling, and questions and challenges such as those outlined above, will be addressed in turn in the following sections of the document. Needless to say, other questions can be posed, other challenges identified, and alternative forms of resolving the problems can be proposed. What we set out to do is to explore the ground to the best of our ability, drawing on experience, research and a grounded knowledge of the system of education as it currently functions in order to declare what it is that we think could and should be happening.

The three areas identified as Schools as Learning Communities, Educational Leadership and Curriculum are treated in separate sections for heuristic reasons. In the everyday process that we call “schooling”, all three are inter-related in complex ways, so that we cannot talk of one without addressing aspects of the other. Thus, to give just one example, one cannot consider the curriculum without at the same time discussing the role that is to be played by teachers, parents and administrators as educational leaders, or arguing for a specific learning environment which provides the context for the communication of curricular content. This inter-relationship, indeed, inter-dependence between the three areas must be kept constantly in mind, and efforts will be made to point out the inter-linkages specifically throughout the document. In addition, schools are complex sites working at different levels, which we could here refer to as the macro (policy-making within a national context), meso (or institutional) and micro (classroom) levels. Whole system policies such as streaming in the primary school, selection at 11+, channelling by ability in secondary school and others have an intimate relationship with the practices adopted by individual schools, and the quality of learning in classrooms.

A conceptual model (Figure 1.2) of the different levels will help us address this complexity.

![Multi-level model of schooling](image)

With this model, and given our concern for cultures of learning and for learning outcomes, we start with individual pupils (Chapter 2), and with a consideration of the ways in which schools as complex, embedded and situated institutions cater for the
multi-faceted and inter-related needs of the individual child, a condition we deem essential in the provision of an effective education.

Having considered the needs of the individual learner, we then move on to a consideration of the ways in which educational leadership at the different levels outlined in Figure 1.2. above can develop the required settings for effective learning to happen (Chapter 3). We will highlight a number of school practices that have been consistently identified as producing effective learning environments, even though, if we are to do justice to the complexity of schooling, such practices should be disaggregated, that is, explained differently for each sector (infants, primary, secondary, vocational) concerned. In our attempt to keep the document to a manageable size, we have opted to consider only one or two sectors in developing our arguments. Readers are however invited to think through the implications of points made for all sectors, especially those they are concerned with or are working in. Finally, we will look at the set of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills that are to be shared with learners through the curriculum (Chapter 4). A few concluding remarks are made in Chapter 5.
Chapter 2: Schools as Learning Communities.

2.1. The Learning Individual.

We must start from a most fundamental premise, namely that all persons have a right for a quality education which will enable them to critically understand the world they live in, and to make a profitable contribution to it through their personal, civic and productive activities. A corollary of this is the right of the collectivity to have educated citizens. While parents, secondary socialising agencies such as clubs, catechism centres and so on, and increasingly the media have a vital role to play in educating children, our focus is on schools as key learning communities, entrusted by society to transmit and problematise the legacy of knowledge generated in the past, and at the same time to equip students to critically understand, face and manage the present and future.

At the heart of this process is the learning individual. Children bring different abilities, aptitudes, experiences, backgrounds and interests to the school. All bring with them a capacity to learn. The fostering of cultures of learning must be always premised on the understanding that pupils are different and therefore our planning must take this difference on board so as to secure equity, entitlement, effectiveness for each pupil and economy for the system. The task of the school is to respond effectively to these differences - related not only to individual psychological, biological and mental frameworks, but also to group membership dependent on gender, class, and regional affiliation. Some of these children will have moderate to severe learning difficulties, others will have motivational problems, but all have the capacity to learn. It is the responsibility of the school to acknowledge, understand and respond to the different learning needs of individuals and groups, and to cater for them effectively in order to provide what is the entitlement of all: a quality education. That is, indeed, a difficult challenge, but that is precisely why our society bestows on teachers and educators the status of professionals, with all the privileges and responsibilities that that status entails. It is also why society in general, and parents in particular, entrust teachers with the care of the most precious - and at the same time, most vulnerable - beings: children.

This is a fundamental understanding of schools which must remain central in any discussion of its different functions and roles. From this understanding stem others, linked to a consideration of schools as learning communities which are meant to cater for the different needs of students, including the physical, emotional, intellectual, cultural, social, and moral well-being of each child. Each aspect can be addressed briefly in turn, for a consideration of each facilitates the understanding of the kind of schools we would like to have in the immediate future.
2.2. The Physical Well-Being of the Student.

There are several dimensions that could be considered when addressing the physical well-being of the child. We know from detailed case-studies of different school buildings in Malta and Gozo that school sites are rarely safe or welcoming enough. Large glass panes, uneven and slippery floors, mouldy walls, inadequate lighting, excesses of heat and cold, inaccessible rooms for students who use a wheelchair, and so on are only part of the dark picture that requires immediate attention. Most schools are also bereft of a stimulating and pleasant environment, whether this concerns colour schemes, comfortable, functional and attractive furniture, decoration accessories, or landscaping of grounds. Compared to what most children are accustomed to in their own homes, schools look back to an indigent past, rather than to what is for many a relatively affluent present. They certainly fail to respond to the aspirations many parents have for the well-being of their own children, or to make up for what is missing in deprived homes. The situation is worse precisely for those schools that ought to be the priority of the state, if we are to adopt the principles of equity and economy outlined earlier. It is impossible for schools to become learning communities, and for students (or teachers and parents) to identify positively with their schools, if the places that we offer them fall far below the standards many of us would accept for our own homes. Indeed, the physical environment gives the first and arguably most important lesson in the covert curriculum of the school: it declares, through a state of affairs that speaks louder than words, the kind of esteem children are held in. Students are sensitive to these messages, and indeed, vandalism and poor behaviour is generally highest where the environment is most decrepit, where classrooms are shabby, bare and untidy. A most important aspect related to the physical well-being of the child is that of sports education, or rather an education for healthy lifestyles. National statistics regarding obesity, lack of physical fitness, diabetes, and heart disease are only one of the indicators of the failure of Maltese schooling to inculcate a culture of health.
Proposals:

- Draw up a check-list of qualities that characterise safe and 'user-friendly' schools, against which different school buildings are assessed, thus identifying priority areas for maintenance and reconstruction work.
- Ensure that all schools provide facilities for specific purposes, e.g. arts, crafts, music, etc., as well as multi-purpose halls.
- Close down or refurbish/restructure school buildings that do not conform to a set of minimal standards.
- Twin each school to an industrial or commercial enterprise, with the latter being invited to donate a fraction or percentage of their annual profit to the school they are associated with.
- Use aggressive, focused and preferential state funding in favour of a group of schools (zones/sectors of educational priority) on a roster, scheduled according to criteria faithful to the principles of equity and economy, so that new synergies of enthusiasm, commitment and activity are created.
- Reorganise the architectural section of the Education Division, whose duties should also combine capabilities to advise schools on such issues as safety, colour schemes, landscaping of grounds, and ergonomic design of furniture.
- Install lockers in secondary schools to enable students to leave books at school, and to avoid back injury due to the daily carriage of excessive weight.

2.3. The Emotional Well-Being of the Student.

The physical environment affects the emotional well-being of the student as well. It is here - with regards the emotional well-being of the student - that the Maltese educational system plays havoc with children in a way we deem unacceptable. At the heart of the problem is a culture of competitive achievement that distorts an understanding of learning as a co-operative enterprise, where each individual's abilities and potential can develop in a positive interaction with others and with learning resources. This distortion is sanctioned by an inordinate emphasis on examinations, on selection, on inter- and intra-school streaming, so that schools resemble rather more sorting and channelling mechanisms than communities where meaningful learning takes place. Students are generally caught in this culture of achievement, as are also parents who, reading the signals sent by the system, and not wishing their children to have second or third best, resort to indiscriminate use of private lessons, so that little time is left for play, creative recreation, and the enjoyment and celebration of life. Other students, finding that they cannot develop in the context we are describing, give up on schooling altogether.

This culture of competitive achievement, which later on in life transforms itself into a 'diploma disease' manifests itself in myriad ways and to the detriment of the kind of culture of learning that we would want to see in our schools. Teachers instruct with examinations in mind; examinable subjects dominate the curriculum while creative arts, expressive arts, physical education, the critical discussion of civic life, and so on are summarily dismissed as unimportant. The pedagogy too emphasises what is in the short-term the faster, but in the long-term the most ineffective of learning modes, through instructional, teacher-centred, rote-learning, with an eye on boosting performance at examinations and tests. Project-work, interactive and co-operative
learning, discovery modes of pedagogy, learning-by-doing, interaction with the
community have, generally speaking, little if any place at all in the lives of students at
either the primary or secondary school. Computer technology, while promising to
introduce elements of the more modern types of pedagogical interaction, will easily
fall into the same mode unless the whole approach to learning changes. This is due
to the pervasiveness and power of the traditional model, which has enveloped such
well-meant curricular innovations as ‘systems of knowledge’ at the post-secondary
level, despite the subject’s laudable thematic and integrated approach to knowledge,
and its emphasis on project work.

The inordinate emphasis on achievement creates a number of distortions in schools.
Often, the personal and social needs of the child are forgotten, submerged as these are
under heavy and demanding roles which, it must be pointed out, only a few respond
to. Less than 15% of each age cohort follow the tertiary level courses that the culture
of competitive achievement gears all students for. Not only that, but employers
themselves are not at all satisfied with the personality traits and intellectual
competencies that are the result of the kind of schooling prevailing in Malta today.
Employers in fact point out to the lack of communicative ability of many students, and
the underdevelopment of personal and social skills which it is normally assumed the
school is best-placed to inculcate. The culture predominating in schools looks back to
the past rather than to the future, when the work environment, besides civic
competence, requires persons who are dedicated to lifelong learning, who are flexible
and creative, and who have a commitment to the fulfillment of their own personal and
social abilities.

In contrast, the present school system encourages the high achieving to remain within
the narrow confines of examination-oriented learning and all that that entails
— including excessive stress, an approach to education which privileges extrinsic
rewards such a grades rather than the intrinsic satisfaction of learning, the stunting of
the development of wider aspects of one’s abilities and one’s personality. Those who,
for some reason or other do not achieve so highly, are labelled, often from as early as
the first year of the primary school, and thenceforth follow an unrewarding, often
unhappy school career which includes misbehaviour, constant failure, absenteeism,
and early school-leaving. In both cases, the school is not fulfilling its role as a
learning community. A caring school, one that responds to the learning needs of its
student population, is also an inclusive school, that is a community that works with
and for, rather than against individuals and groups. This it does by flexibly adapting
its ways of acting, its teaching methodology, its ethos and structure of relationships so
that it facilitates the growth of those in its charge. This might be a tough challenge,
but other countries have faced up to it more effectively, even though they do not have
the generous teacher-student ratio that we currently enjoy, i.e. one teacher for every
13.7 students, given that there are presently 3697 teachers catering for 50848 students!

A caring school manifests a number of different characteristics which learning
communities need to measure themselves up against. A caring school, intent on
respecting the emotional well-being of the student, ensures that the key transitions
between one sector or phase of schooling and the other are catered for. There are a
number of important transitions, which the school could facilitate with the help of
parents, such as the movement between home and kindergarten, kindergarten and
primary school, primary school and secondary school. Increasingly there are children of returned migrants as well as foreigners and refugees who are expected to adapt to our school system, to a new medium of instruction (Maltese language), and to a new teaching/learning culture without any preparation or support at all. This support element should be looked into in as holistic and integrated a manner as possible, so that teachers of Personal and Social Education, guidance counsellors, school psychologists, spiritual directors, personnel from the medical and education welfare services, and Form teachers work as a team, building on each others' expertise and efforts in an organised and systematic manner. But this should be complemented by the atmosphere and ethos that pervades the whole school, so that there is no contradiction between the messages and orientation of the caring professionals, and the ruthlessness that characterises the culture of competitive achievement. Another way of putting this is to say that ideally, schools should strive to have personal and social education across and through the curriculum, rather than as a discrete element, as if to compensate for a lack in the general orientation of the school.

**Proposals:**

- Tone down examinations and tests in favour of other forms of continuous assessment, pupil profiling, and a more meaningful use of the cumulative record card.
- Class teachers in primary schools, and form teachers in secondary schools to adopt a more pro-active role in profiling students, in drawing up records of achievement, in adapting teaching strategies to different learning needs, and in preparing and implementing programmes of remediation.
- Provide adequate clerical assistance and information technology to schools so that information necessary to cater for the personal, intellectual and social needs of each student can be collected and accessed by the relevant members of staff.
- Adopt a Charter of Students' Rights.
- Establish a national telephone service which provides students, and especially minors with advice, information and support.
- Set up a pastoral care team to develop a caring school community.

### 2.4. The Intellectual Well-Being of the Student.

Catering for the emotional development of the child cannot be separated from the *intellectual well-being* of students. One complements the other, to the extent that often students experience intellectual work as a form of violence. Students cannot learn if the school does not recognise differences in learning styles and rate of development, if the predominant mode of teaching is through verbal representation, when a large number of students are capable of integrating new material if they are involved in actively manipulating objects, that is they learn by doing or in other ways. There should be careful monitoring of low achievement and failure at school, with systematic and continued evaluation and assessment, and programmes of remediation put into place effectively and immediately.

All the research on school failure suggests that it is only when programmes are implemented early on in the life of a primary school age child that difficulties with basic competencies, such as literacy and numeracy, can be overcome. Research also
suggests that remediation is most effective when programmes are short, intensive, involving parents, and when adequate human and educational resources are put at the disposal of students. These students should not be removed permanently from their usual classrooms, but should remain mainstreamed, with special sessions scheduled for them throughout the week, and in some cases, after school hours. Attainment targets for each year should be clearly specified and negotiated, with a framework of national guidelines, between teachers and parents, who are both accountable, as partners in the educational development of the child, in an effort to ensure that these basic goals are in fact reached. As suggested by the principle of entitlement, the emphasis should be on outcomes: all students are to reach a specific minimum standard; teachers should have full autonomy to modify, extend, and teach using pedagogies which are most appropriate to their talents and to the orientation of their students. The emphasis is rather more on developing a taste for learning, a methodology of researching, acquiring, and critically manipulating knowledge than on giving as broad a coverage of as many fields of learning as possible, which seems to be one of the key weaknesses of the National ‘Minimum’ Curriculum as it now stands.\textsuperscript{15}

This new emphasis should be guided by what is today a generally accepted tenet in most developed countries, namely that up to 80% and more of each age cohort of students are capable of continuing its studies up to the post-secondary school level. This is a far cry from the elitist understanding of educational ability that informed 19th century school policies in the Western world generally, when not more than 2% of each age cohort were presumed able to study at a tertiary level. And yet this selective and ultimately disabling view of students generally prevails in Malta, where we have yet to accept the challenge that the teaching of children is not limited by the mythical intellectual quotient of students, but rather by our ability as teachers to find the appropriate pedagogical tools to respond to the different learning styles and needs that we are confronted with.

It will be difficult to radically transform the present and dominant culture of traditional teaching and learning. However, even within this mode of schooling, there can be improvements which enhance the effective pursual of outcomes. Where there are adequate resources - such as trained teachers, classroom space, adequate books for each subject and easy access to school libraries, use of teaching aids, opportunities to create new curriculum materials, access to videos, tape recorders, computers, laboratories, and so on - then teachers can integrate these into whole class teaching in a manner which means pupils have a variety of inputs, can move to higher level tasks, and do not waste time copying their work from the blackboard. Observations carried out in Maltese primary schools suggest, for instance, that an inordinate amount of time is spent in mechanically creating texts, or going through whole class ‘working’ or simply ‘correcting’ (which is usually marking) homework\textsuperscript{16}. This is certainly not the intellectual fare that our children deserve, and it becomes clear that even within traditional teaching there is much that could be done to provide maximum opportunities to learn which are currently absent from our schools.

Insufficient attention has been given to the importance of collaborative educational programmes between parents and teachers in the intellectual development of children. A prevailing view within schools promotes the idea that the classroom is the
‘teacher’s territory’, and that parents have little to offer to the educational enterprise. And yet the evidence is quite the opposite, as research on effective schooling readily confirms. Schools cannot achieve their educational goals unless they enter into a partnership with parents, sharing with them their understanding of what they mean by a good education, listening to them to appreciate their aspirations as well as concerns and anxieties. Schools cannot effectively teach children without the collaboration of parents, and yet few schools have developed the kinds of programmes that draw parents regularly to the classroom, share with them curricular targets on a monthly or term basis, make good use of the educational resources of parents, or seriously consider the implications of contractual educational obligations of both parties.

And yet, Maltese parents are generally willing to embark on this kind of partnership. Research carried out in 26 primary school communities indicates that a large majority of parents would, for instance, be quite keen to make use of educational advisory bureaus. There is an obvious need here to provide such a service to parents, who are willing to support the educational development of their children, but who do not necessarily have the information, skills and knowledge to do so. If there is indeed a commitment to equity and to parental involvement in the schooling process, then it is necessary for schools to start providing such a service. Parents also generally expressed a desire to be more involved in school and classroom life. Certainly, then, this is a human resource that schools must learn how to tap.

Proposals:

- Set up a monitoring group whose task it is to diagnose and combat school failure.
- Ensure that basic numeracy and literacy are achieved by all by the end of Year 2 at the primary school level.
- Develop collaborative cultures between subject teachers within and between schools.
- Establish collaborative management structures where teachers and school administrators discuss educational matters on an ongoing basis.
- Introduce programmes of learning for parents who want to make a contribution to children’s education.
- Allow schools to choose their own text-books, providing them with sufficient resources to purchase these together with the learning resources, permanent and expendable, that come with them.
- Set up Educational Advisory Bureaux for parents and the wider community in each school.
- Encourage team-teaching so that teachers monitor each other in a collegial manner, and to facilitate each others’ professional development.
- Introduce programmes of learning which link hand and mind for all pupils, such as craft, design and technology and other technical options, and encourage the development of skills for autonomous learning.
- Develop a policy about the medium of instruction.
- Make sure that all courses are open-ended, and do not lead students into learning cul-de-sacs.

2.5. The Cultural Well-Being of the Student.

A school which conceives of itself as a learning community ensures that the ethos and general culture that prevails throughout the year encourage learning in all possible ways. It is for this reason that special attention ought to be given to the cultural well-
being of each child. There should be more opportunities for students to go out into the community to critically explore their wider environment, and to help strengthen their understanding of what it means to live in a participative and democratic environment. There should also be more time at school to enable students to participate in extra-curricular activities, in drama, photography, sports and other forms of active, collaborative learning. A courageous but essential decision would involve the re-introduction of a longer mid-day break, which not only respects the natural attention rhythms of students, providing more of an opportunity to relax and move about before continuing with more intellectually demanding tasks, but also provides sufficient space and time for the kinds of activities we have in mind. A longer school day would also reduce the likelihood of parents feeling the need to send their children to private lessons, both those relating to so-called academic subjects, and others relating to leisure-related activities. It is through such extra-curricular activities that schools can more successfully develop wider learning interests in students, as well as skills in such areas as leadership and civic competence.

Proposals:
- Extend the school day to include a higher degree of cultural and sport animation.
- Set up a system of incentives for teachers to organise extra-curricular activities during the mid-day break, after school hours, during week-ends and holidays.
- Establish the principle that each school must each year make some form of cultural contribution to the community in which it is located.
- Encourage the twinning of Maltese schools to foreign ones.
- Encourage the use of project work.

2.6. The Social Well-Being of the Student.

Such activities also encourage the social well-being of students, to the extent that they provide opportunities for co-operative and collaborative projects. Over and above this, we conceive of schools as learning communities when the social dimension of our lives is given more than passing recognition. Our understanding of schools is that they are most effective in inculcating solidarity between individuals and groups when difference - social, cultural, ability, and arguably gender (race does not quite apply to Malta, but will increasingly do so in the future) - is represented in the learning community. For the same reason we are in favour of the mainstreaming of students with disabilities and with special learning needs, as long as difference is recognised and catered for within that same mainstream. There is therefore perfect agreement with the policy recommendations of the National Commission: Persons with Disability, which state that 'to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with special disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily' (Special Education in Malta: National Policy, Section C, para. 3). It is salutary for students to learn to live with such differences, to appreciate the qualities in each category of persons, and to see how such diversity, when expressed in a context of solidarity, is a strength to the whole group. Schools inspired by such values would ensure that persons in these different
categories are represented among the staff complement, and that those categories normally enjoying least esteem hold positions of responsibility and status in the school community. Parents' diversity too is to be respected, welcomed and valued.

Acknowledgment of the social dimension of schools as learning communities leads us to a recognition of the painful fact that one group's effective schooling may be bought at the expense of another group's failure. A selective system usually means that the success of those selected for achievement is possible because of the failure of those labelled and processed as unsuccessful. Moreover, selection, differentiation and a belief in meritocracy serve, as already suggested in the preamble to the document, to locate failure at the feet of individual pupils. We hold that the system's selectivity necessarily constructs failure and as such is damaging both to the individual and to the collectivity, since an unacceptably large number of Maltese pupils are bound to 'fail' in a number of ways.

Proposals:
- Re-consider private and independent schooling within the framework of the four regulative principles guiding this document.
- Encourage mixed ability teaching in primary schools, through the provision of adequate training for teachers, as well as through the provision of resources - both material and human - appropriate for the different ability ranges in a classroom.
- No selection at 11+.
- Do away with 'opportunity centres' and provide adequate support within schools to ensure the principles of entitlement and equity.
- Reconceptualise streaming as a form of provision of human and material resources to those most in need of them, within a system which is, for the larger part of it, mainstreamed.
- Provide a multivariant curriculum with a core entitlement and then some ability or level option/choices in some subject areas so as to create diversified, engaging curricula for pupils with different needs and interests.
- Reduce the academic orientation of all subjects, to employ alternative foci and approaches, i.e. practical, topical, multimedia work, etc.
- Develop clear policies of gender and social equality in all schools, and ensure that education officers monitor schools on the basis of these policies as well.
- Reassess core curricular material, including textbooks and IT software, for class, gender, ablist and racist bias.

2.7. The Moral Well-Being of the Student.

Needless to say, our conceptualisation of schools as learning communities has emphasised the moral dimension of the whole educational enterprise, and by placing the dignity and rights of the learner at the heart of this enterprise we have outlined a moral vision premised on a set of inter-related values such as caring, respect, the interplay between duties and rights, autonomy, democratic and open management, equity, co-operation, the channelling of resources to those most in need, service to the community, and so on. We firmly believe that it is this kind of educational environment that should characterise tomorrow's schools - and that is already germinating in some of the more enlightened schools on the island - that provides the optimal conditions for the moral well-being of young Maltese citizens. Certainly, we envisage forms of specific values education in the curriculum, though, as in the field
of personal and social education, we would emphasise the necessity and greater
efficacy of such teaching taking place through and across the curriculum, and through
the ethos that the school develops.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposals:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure there is no contradiction between the declared values of the school, and the values that emanate from the ethos and everyday life of the same school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regulate the moral life of the school on the basis of contractual rights and responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promote social relations that are marked by respect.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.8. The Development of Effective and Caring Learning Environments.

The extent to which schools set out to cater - and succeed in catering - for the well-being of the student is our measuring stick in adjudicating between effective and less effective schools. In outlining the needs of the learner we hope to have established a set of agendas and strategies for tomorrow’s schools and for facilitating the development of a new culture of learning and of effective learning environments. Schools that are caring, that value student experiences and abilities, whatever these may be, are more likely to engage the attention and co-operation of learners. In other words, more learning, whether this is understood in traditional or more progressive terms, is likely to take place in the kind of schools we have in mind. In making this point we are here emphasising that schools do make a difference at the individual level, and indeed we have taken pains to highlight the conditions which must prevail if students are to develop their potential, in all its facets. We must also emphasise that schools make a difference at the social level as well, in reducing or in exaggerating already existing divisions of ability, class, gender and race. As we have already intimated, policies adopted by different schools can effectively help individuals to blossom or to close up, to engage enthusiastically in a process which leads to lifelong learning, or to develop a disliking for formal learning in all its guises. Policies adopted by different schools can reduce social differences, or exaggerate them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1, Educational policy options and social difference.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reduce Divisions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- not fee paying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- socially mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- mixed ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- religious tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- provision for children with special needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- multicultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- gender equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- values working class culture and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- includes learners with disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exaggerate Divisions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- fee paying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- socially selective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- academically selective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- excluding on religious criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- no provision for children with special needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- monocultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- no policy of gender equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- excludes working class culture and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- excludes learners with disability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In other words, it does matter which school a child attends, and there are strong indications of what particular features of school organisation and functioning which contribute to ‘quality education’ are. Such outcomes as pupils’ presence in lessons, pupils’ co-operative learning behaviour, attendance and delinquency rates, as well as examination results are systematically related to the structures, pedagogical practice and ethos adopted by different schools. Among the process criteria that can be manipulated by school staff we can here mention academic emphasis, teaching behaviour, class control, the use of punishment and reward during lessons, friendliness of the school, pupils’ specific responsibilities, staff stability, stability of a pupil’s circle of friends, staff organisation, characteristics of a pupil’s own neighbourhood, and the balance of intake so that the greater the ability and social mixing of the school, the more effective it became. Indeed, it is possible to outline the characteristics of schools which provide an optimal learning environment. If ‘school effectiveness’ is differently defined (according to whether one values examination results, popularity, image, ability to attract the best human and material resources), then we have been absolutely clear on our own position: an effective school for us is one that caters for the well-being of its students, and by so doing facilitates the development of the intellectual, physical, emotional, cultural, social and moral life of learners.

Effective schools that commit themselves to the full development of those entrusted to them, caring and listening schools that are in pursuit of a quality education for all, are characterised by an atmosphere of order, and provide a sense of purpose, of pleasure in learning engaged in co-operatively. Such schools are disciplined, but it is a meaningful order that is exercised intelligently in a supportive context, with clearly recognised principles and guidelines for pupil behaviour. There is joint planning by teachers in staff development programmes, since teachers share in the articulation of the goals for the school. Activities, resources and people come together in an efficient and planned manner in pursuit of established goals, and there is necessarily a general sense of educational purpose, a strong school spirit, and consensus around the central values and aims of the school. There are expectations on the part of the administration, of staff and of parents of high academic success, and these expectations are combined with specific actions which emphasise these attitudes and expectations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Literature</th>
<th>Local Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful Leadership</td>
<td>Limited Leadership:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision: a common purpose</td>
<td>- overall control of administrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
<td>- limited control over curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(clear aims and goals)</td>
<td>- design and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher consistency</td>
<td>- limited contact with teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good classroom management</td>
<td>- staff;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective teaching and learning</td>
<td>- little to no classroom contact;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. work centred environment, intellectually challenging teaching, limited focus within sessions)</td>
<td>- hardly any involvement in classroom management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative decision-making</td>
<td>Vision: swamped by exam demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-qualified staff</td>
<td>(no local research available yet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development policy</td>
<td>No collaborative culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and in-service training</td>
<td>Varied staff members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good communication</td>
<td>(New area: a policy has just been introduced).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional working relationships</td>
<td>Communication: limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Teaching highly individualistic in nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint planning by teachers in staff development programmes</td>
<td>Limited interaction of an <em>ad hoc</em> nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive working environment</td>
<td>No joint planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High academic expectations</td>
<td>High academic expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A positive climate: good management of pupil behaviour</td>
<td>Limited record keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring of pupil progress (Record keeping)</td>
<td>School environment: varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive school environment</td>
<td>Resources: varies from school to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate school resources</td>
<td>Limited parental involvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.9. The Need for Structural Change.

Those involved directly or indirectly with the educational scene in Malta might have different reactions to the kind of analysis we are proposing, and to the kind of alternatives we are promoting. Among the reactions will be a class which would claim that some of these ideas and practices are already, in fact, being implemented, to a greater or lesser extent, in some state and private (church and independent) schools on the island. Another class of reactions will consider that we have been rather too critical and dismissive of the efforts of dedicated educators, even if these have been working within a traditional mode of teaching and learning. Indeed, the fact that all of us are connected in various ways with schools and with teaching ensures a recognition of the efforts - often beyond the call of duty - of several colleagues who strive day in day out with the challenge of providing positive and caring learning environments for Malta's children. However, as these teachers will be the first to admit, their efforts, and the efforts of progressive schools who dare go out on a limb to be different, are ultimately greatly constrained by the general culture of teaching and learning that currently prevails. Many innovative teachers - and schools - find themselves working against the grain, and one can only do this for a limited period of time, before disillusionment - one of the characteristics of burn-out - sets in. Some transfer themselves to more progressive schools on the island. Many give in and allow themselves to be swamped by the drudgery and often ruthless demands of a system we have characterised as immersed in a culture of competitive achievement. This is why we have declared, in the preamble to this document, that the solution lies in creating adequate structures and incentives which change the processes and the very culture of learning in our schools. We need only to see how our present system measures up to the challenge of catering for the well-being of students, as outlined above, to realise the extent to which this change is necessary. We need only to consider the extent to which our schools share, or fail to share, the characteristics of internationally recognised effective learning communities - as outlined in Table 2.2. - to understand the necessity of engaging in a process of reform in earnest.

While in a document of this type it is usual to privilege general ideas, concepts and principles which will then be discussed, modified and applied in different learning contexts, we would like to provide further examples of the implications of such ideas, concepts and principles to real practice in schools and classrooms. Table 2.3. focuses on the primary school sector in order to outline, in as practical a manner as possible, how the diverse elements of our analysis thus far - i.e. in terms of an effective response to the different needs of the learner, as regulated by our concerns for entitlement, effectiveness, equity and economy - are played out at the meso (school) and micro (classroom) level. The details of classroom and school life, together with the proposals that are made, help bridge the gap between abstract ideas, and the implications of these for real practice, and show, in a summarised and tabular form, many of the concerns expressed thus far.
Table 2.3. *Needs of Infant and Primary School Pupils.*

**social skills**
Children entering school for the first time need to find a welcoming and prepared setting. This would include pre-entry visits by their parents and a visit by the prospective pupils too.

Their teachers should have a good grasp of infant and primary teaching and child psychology.

**state of readiness**
Children’s state of readiness needs to be accurately diagnosed and this would also include social dimensions, such as whether they can blow their nose, go to the bathroom unaccompanied, know when to ask for help etc. In each case a teacher would need to prepare a program of social skills that her class could develop over the school year. We know from constructivist theories of learning that the role of the adult and the acquisition of appropriate social skills are essential for the learning outcomes of young children.

**school ethos**
Whole-school policies regarding noise, movement, tardiness, behaviour and others would need to be communicated in a manner suitable to the age and sensitivities of young children and backed up by a system of classroom induction into social skills.

Here some examples illustrate the embeddedness of social and learning skills:

- prepare pupils to share (for group work)
- encourage and support independence (for independent work)
- encourage good working patterns (attention, creativity etc.)
- support communication (oral, listening skills)
- support physical activity (manual dexterity, mobility, activity)
- profile individual social learning needs
- develop non-sexist gender identities

A school with very young children should not only conform to the National Minimum Conditions on safety and other aspects of schooling but should actively promote inviting and secure learning spaces for this age group.

Just to give some examples, classrooms need to:

- be attractive, colourful, comfortable and safe
- be well resourced with suitable material
- have the space for activity centres, reading corners, quiet areas
- have flexible classroom furniture
- have the space for pupils to leave belongings in class
- have size of furniture, height of shelves etc. according to pupils’ age
- clearly organized i.e. copybooks not mixed with schoolbooks
- show evidence of pupils’ work
- reduce extremities of heat, cold, light and darkness

**physical/environmental**

**class belonging**

**welcoming, safe, child centred local community identity**

The whole school should be prepared for pupils of different ages in terms of safety, welcoming and inviting, creating a personal sense of belonging and also evidence of local and national community features.

- safe railings, stairs, low walls, windows, furniture
- attractive common areas: well maintained and socially useful
- names on doors, clear markings of rooms or areas
- pupils’ work, photos and others they have chosen on walls
- material from local community (but relevant to pupils) on display

**effective**

**trained teachers for effective/economy quality teaching**

**pupil of different class (first language) ability and sex will need help in different aspects : equity entitlement: share resources equitably**

**economy: purchase resources that can be shared by different classes**

**economy: devolve funds to schools for quick and relevant upkeep effective: prepare schools for financial devolution equity : allocate more to school with history of environment**
• some national material again socially relevant to pupils
• use space for social and educative purposes
• create sense of belonging by encouraging use of space
• reserve or arrange for separate use for children of different ages
• prepare space for parents i.e. meeting room, notice board etc.

School effectiveness research shows that the age of a building does not have a significant correlation with teaching results. However physical characteristics such as poor light, lack of fresh air and excessive noise are linked to poor achievement and to vandalism. Often a negative link was found between schools size and the way pupils experience school. Small is beautiful, child centred and reduces extremes of selection (streaming), allows for a school based community spirit and ethos to develop.

Classrooms as learning communities

In school effectiveness research it is found that effective schools show a determination to achieve better results, maximize net learning time and promote structured teaching. These imply a number of important points for primary teaching. Another essential point is that since all learning is sequential, then unless pupils have mastered one sequence they cannot master the next. This has entitlement implications which include ensuring that all pupils have indeed mastered the first sequence before moving on. Alternatively programs have to be prepared for those who cannot move on to the next step. Current practices of going on with low achievers or special needs children falling behind is not ensuring entitlement for these groups. If we accept different achievement levels for some pupils, we must at least be clear what these are and what their entitlement is within this, i.e. what do we need to do so that all primary school children can read and write and count, at least in one language?

These questions should not make us focus only the pupils as if achievement was their responsibility alone. Classroom learning environments need to be examined closely to see what can be done at this level. This should be considered in relation to curriculum proposals above. Here we deal with classroom management changes that could be more conducive to learning communities.

Examples of these include:
• making clear what has to be learnt (formulating clear objectives)
• splitting teaching material into manageable units for the pupils
• offering these in a well-considered sequence
• exercise material in which pupils make use of ‘hunches’ and prompts
• regular testing for progress with immediate feedback of results

structured teaching

effective learning time

lack of adequate materials:
textbooks, handouts, photocopying facilities

attainment targets for individual pupils

entitlement
trained teachers in early years a priority
mixed ability approach essential

It is a principle of quality education that opportunity to learn is directly related to the amount of time a pupil spends on task. In our schools there are serious problems in this respect. Apart from substantial decrease in school time over the last few years (up to three weeks at the latest count) classroom research demonstrates that many teachers are not using time effectively. In some cases this may be due to a lack of the resources for effective teaching (such as a variety of texts, handouts, multimedia resources etc. which cut down on time at the board or in copying from the board). In others it is that teachers are not trained to use time effectively and do not have clear attainment targets for individual pupils. Many then spend their time waiting to be seen to. Unfortunately there are also a number of teachers who let time pass in giving and correcting home work in class, when they should be doing this at home. Others do not make use

there should be no place for extra tuition after school
of prepared materials which means that much time is spent preparing them i.e. copying a whole text. Copying is not learning. Similarly the pedagogic mode of whole class teaching can be effective for parts of a lesson but when used for questioning often means that those not interacting are wasting time.

**motivation**

**achievement**

Increase effective learning time at school\(^9\)

- stimulate motivation to learn among pupils
- positive reinforcement positively influence achievement
- extend institutionalized time spent on learning, school day, year longer
- give homework judiciously, it should not replace classwork nor take up much class time
- establish clear attainment targets for individual pupils/groups and **prepare lesson plans** or parts therefore to make sure individuals maximise the learning time they have
- ensure that all pupils are on task
- effective net learning time should be established per pupil
- increase effective learning time within institutionalized time
- increasing time for a certain subject by reallocating total learning time among all subjects
- make efficient use of cross-curricular (integrated) teaching
- valid assessment specification to provide coverage of learning objectives (how far what is being tested is taught during lessons.)
- introduce special club/interest activities during long breaks

Obviously effective learning time is directly affected by order. Where there are disciplinary problems the time needed for organization and management greatly increases, while pupils' concentration becomes less.

**Schools as learning communities**

**structured learning**

**school management policies**

- coordinated and considered choice of methods that enhance structured teaching
- a school information system that helps staff to test frequently and to record and use test results
- a pupil monitoring or test service system (computerized test or item bank) as part of school information system
- programmes in which high cognitive skills are systematically practised
- work with explicit curriculum document
- motivate staff to draw up work and lesson agendas (team discussion and counselling)
- high expectations for pupil achievement

**renegotiate teachers’ conditions of work to include a longer working day and some idea of accountability for pupil achievement**

- All teachers need training (even basic) in classroom management

---

**pedagogy**

- hours
Table 2.4 Needs of Secondary School Pupils

In focusing on the learner at this stage, we find that the impact of different (micro, meso and macro) policies are not easily separated. In itself, this apparent complexity forces us to avoid simplistic solutions in our planning. It will be clear from the comments below that unless a holistic approach is adopted in school planning we will simply find that hard won changes in one sector are creating problems in another.

For example, whilst the selective mechanism of the 11+ (and similar selective exams for Church and Private schools) might seem sensible to some, we know that the children who do not manage to pass the exam, enter their new secondary school with a sense of failure or of academic futility. Therefore, much of the work that needs to be done by the teachers of these pupils will inevitably be concerned with trying to re-motivate the pupils and to encourage self-esteem. Other factors can have the same effect of depressing the pupils' self-image, for example the use of different (easier) texts for what is ultimately the same syllabus. Well aware that suggestions for reform here might serve to legitimate the present policy which are number of us do not support, we have nevertheless included a series of points which could serve, in the short term, to promote the well being of secondary school students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transition</th>
<th>The move from relatively small local schools to large, often multi unit secondary schools can be distressing for new entrants. Given that school climate and environment can have a number of effects on pupils' attitudes to school, it would seem useful to develop specific policies to make this period less difficult. Some of these also include the types of difficulties many teachers face themselves when they are assigned to schools and classes at short notice and without an induction programme.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| social and physical needs | • an induction programme for new entrants, parents and teachers (on curricular, behavioural and other policies)  
• a map of the school, and clearly marked sites in the school itself  
• a list of contact persons for problems with timetabling, academic matters, health, bullying etc  
• places to leave personal belongings, especially if they do not have a home base  
• home bases allow pupils to acquire a sense of belonging and to put their work up for display as well as invest in the attractiveness and maintenance of their classrooms.  
• these objectives (to display and use their work, to have a sense of identity in the school) can and should also be managed, with planning, when it is teachers who have the home base  
• being clear about learning objectives, academic and social expectations  
• ensuring that the teachers of the new entrants have been assigned to the class in time to prepare and welcome this group  
• encouraging teachers to learn pupils' names  
• reconsider the policy of streaming on the basis of the 11+ exam (postponing selection till option choice when pupils can be set)  
• which would give the pupils a further opportunity of improving their achievement, reduce anxiety and repair damaged self-esteem, and greatly minimise the inefficient deployment of teachers in small classes  
| entitlement: all pupils are entitled to feeling safe and welcomed in school |
| ethos and school climate | effective |
| re-consider selective policy | economy |
| environment | Apart from the special needs of this group, other school factors have a number of implications on the quality of teaching and learning and on |
pupils’ attitudes to school in general.

At the school level

**School ethos**
- be well maintained and make social and academic use of space
demonstrate pupil culture and knowledge
- safe (including from ‘invisible’ corners were bullying can take place)
- staffrooms can be spread around the school to allow pupils to have a focal point, to maintain order, to foster an ethos of sharing space and to give teachers more responsibility in promoting this ethos. These also need to be functionally comfortable and attractive for the satisfaction of teachers’ work environment and stress-related needs etc

**Resources**
- clearly identifiable social spaces ie Tuck shop, hall, library
- head’s office should be a model of what can be found in staffrooms and classrooms ie organized, attractive, comfortable, functional and efficient in deployment of resources (ie telephones, computers etc) and open
- laboratories, libraries need to be suitably equipped and maintained and used and usable; thus a record should be kept of the use of these resources which could then be referred to when budgetary demands are made for them
- use of special rooms should also be monitored so that underused space can be allocated to teachers who wish to split class or make use of a certain type of facility ie PSE teacher uses needlework room, a literature teacher may which to have half the class working on one dramatisation and the other half on another

At the school level a crucial factor is the deployment of teachers, which is discussed in more detail in a supplement to this document. Here it is important to consider the effect of the exercise on pupils,

**Deployment**
- allocate trained subject teachers to those pupils who demonstrate special learning needs
- join classes (different streams) rather than leave pupils without a teacher

**Planning**
- assign teachers to classes well before the beginning of the school year
- develop school mentoring for untrained teachers so that they have some basic classroom management and subject methodology skills
- support beginning and student teachers with an induction programme
- develop consultation with and development of staff
- reassess role of Heads of Department/subject co-ordinators and have clear outcome targets for their work. Currently there are a number of Heads of a department of which they are the only members. Re define job description and include specific targets as an integral part of the description.

For example:
1. to prepare additional curriculum material
2. to develop pupil profiles in that subject
3. to contribute to the identification or production of suitable computer software in the subject
4. to mentor new or untrained teachers
5. promote team teaching
6. help teachers integrate subjects around themes
7. develop Maltese and Gozitan curricular materials
8. promote the use of different pedagogies and resources ( multimedia, fieldwork, group work, OHPs, debates, projects, wall displays and others )

**At the classroom level**

School effectiveness research holds that more than the curriculum, it is the implementation strategy of the teacher that influences the achievement of pupils. Attention to pedagogic practices is therefore essential. Curriculum matters must be considered in conjunction with teaching behaviour and instructional strategy. Creemers (1992,p.3) provides a useful list, summarizing the findings of important studies of factors that contribute to effective instruction. Teachers have their own carafk knowledge of what is effective in their classroom but the list is useful indicator of the effective instructional strategies of other teachers.

**Instructional Strategies**
- direct teaching
- mastery learning

**Curriculum**
- restricted set of objectives
- emphasis on basic skills
- cognitive learning and transfer
- structuring of the content
- advance organizers
- evaluation and feedback

**Grouping within the Classroom**
- mastery learning
- heterogenous grouping
- co-operative learning

**Teacher Behaviour**
- management of the class(room) (orderly and quiet atmosphere, time for learning)
- high expectations
- restricted set of objectives
- emphasis on cognitive learning
- structuring content/lessons
- clarity of explanation
- redundancy
- high -order questions /wait time
- structuring seating and homework
- evaluation and corrective feedback
Chapter 3: The Role of Education Leaders

The development of schools as learning communities which cater for the well-being of students, and which bring together the experience and expertise of teachers and parents so that this work in favour of the educational needs of children is no mean task. A crucial part in facing up to this challenge is that played by the school head, and by others responsible for educational leadership on the islands.

3.1. Educational Leaders and Effective Schooling.

Research is unanimous in identifying good educational leadership as a key characteristic of effective schools and school systems. Educational leadership can be considered at different levels, namely at the departmental, school and classroom level. In all cases and at all levels, good leadership skills make the difference between performing schools, and schools which would much rather blame students and parents for failure than themselves. It is effective school leadership at all levels which will ensure that the four regulative principles guiding our vision of education - namely entitlement, effectiveness, equity and economy - are translated from abstract concepts to enlightened educational practice.

It is important to consider how educational leadership can and should be exercised at all levels of the state education system. In consonance with our desire to emphasise the needs of learners over and above that of the system, we would wish to start by considering the educational leaders most close to the learners themselves, namely parents, teachers and school heads. It is only after a consideration of the roles of these particular actors that we then turn to that of Education Officers. The document will not deal directly with the part that is to be played by the Directors and Assistant Directors of the Education Division, given that the Management Systems Unit’s proposals in this regard have already been partly implemented. Our own views can easily be adjudicated given the premises on which the following sections are built.

A system of education predicated on the principle of responsiveness to the learning needs of individual children cannot but bring together the key actors working in favour of the same child, namely parents, teachers and heads. Hitherto parents have been involved in the educational process of their own children on a nominal basis, through School Councils. Teachers, despite their formal professional status, have not been recognised as ‘leaders’ who have the ability to exercise autonomy in terms of such vital responsibilities as curriculum development and innovation, setting of learning goals, evaluation of student attainment, diagnosis andremedying of failure, choice of textbooks and so on. Heads of schools have increasingly been asked to carry out new tasks related to a reconceptualisation of their role at the helm of the school, but more often than not these new demands are administrative and even clerical in nature, with more time being dedicated to financial auditing and management, rather than with real educational leadership as we understand it to be.
The result of all this is that schools are generally not those communities where parents, teachers and administrators come together to develop a sense of purposeful educational leadership, where a common vision for the school is negotiated, formulated, and pursued.

3.1. Heads of Schools as Educational Leaders.

The catalyst for this re-foundation of schools is the Head, for whom a new role is being outlined. We are here no longer talking about a senior teacher whose experience and seniority of service qualify him or her to lead a school. Indeed, we note the encouraging reform ushered in recently in agreement with the Malta Union of Teachers which establishes that teachers qualify for headship only after following a professional course in educational administration and management, and that this, together with proof of aptitude for the post rather than seniority are now the criteria for leadership positions in schools.

Headship requires a set of skills, attitudes and personal qualities which, when present, make a difference between mediocre and effective schools. Effective heads have a personal vision of what it is they would like to achieve in their schools. They should know how to articulate that vision, and how to encourage and motivate teachers and parents, as well as students, to own that vision and to share in the responsibilities of making it come about. They should be specialists in the sector they are operating in, maintain some teaching responsibilities so that they can keep in touch with curricula and pedagogical developments, and act as role models where necessary. They should know how and when to delegate responsibilities, and are capable of leading and orchestrating a team of staff by harnessing their individual skills and capabilities for the general good. In consonance with our stress on responding to personal and social needs of learners, we envisage heads to be people-oriented, encouraging trust and openness by being direct and forthright in dealing with colleagues. They should be endowed with personal qualities (e.g. a model professional, well-organised and well-prepared, personable, approachable and accessible, enthusiastic and optimistic, positive and constructive in outlook, manifesting confidence and not standing on ceremony), as well as with managerial qualities (e.g. having vision, good strategic planning skills, willing to consult others, decisive when the occasion demands it, a good listener and communicator, encouraging colleagues to aim high, being in close touch with the main events of the school, proficient in motivating staff, able to convey the impression that they have their colleagues’ concerns at heart, protecting and backing staff).

It is not enough that heads have vision, and the personal and managerial qualities that are functional to their leadership position. They must also have the power and the resources to make that vision a reality. The Head of school should be directly involved in the recruitment of staff for his or her school, in order to enhance the possibility of developing a collaborative and cohesive teaching team. One could also envisage a situation where parents are partners in the choice of teachers and of a new Head of school, as members of a more powerful School Council. The key issue at stake here is the reconceptualisation of schools as collaborative enterprises which set out to harness the expertise of teachers and the experience, dedication and interest of
parents so that all this works in favour of the learning child. There are bound to be sources of conflict and of difference between the different partners, but that is precisely where the Head comes in to lead and to negotiate, to facilitate dialogue and development so that educational goals are clarified, and pursued both in the home and in the school and classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1. The Role of the Head of School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Literature</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice corporate management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• have a vision, and encourage others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to share it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• collegial in outlook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• consults teachers on school policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• creates appropriate structures for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• people-oriented: open-door policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• parent-head contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong instructional leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• curriculum design and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• joint planning and preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• frequent talk about teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within a general, national curricular framework, the Head and staff should work together to develop learning goals and strategies, ensuring that all students do, in fact, learn. The key role of the Head is to develop strong, collegial working relationships with staff so that educational visions are translated into real practice, through the choice of syllabi and relevant textbooks and teaching resources, the development of a school ethos, the design and implementation of curricula, the mode of teaching, whether this be in the traditional individual mode or in teams. For us, the effective Head is one who is strongly focused on the primary function of education - the achievement of learning goals by pupils, in an atmosphere which caters for the total well-being of each individual. The Head sets out to ensure that staff and parents own the educational vision of the school, and towards this end adopts an open-door policy so that all partners - including students - feel they can effectively participate in the life of the school. The Head should not be isolated in his or her office: he or she monitors the quality of teaching that is present in the school, meets teachers regularly, is in a position to assess the continued staff development needs, and is part of a larger team of school administrators who, under the leadership of Education Officers, exchange concerns and ideas, and develop strategies for the development of more effective schooling. Heads should be formally accountable to their Education Officers, though they are also accountable to their teaching staff, parents and students, all of whom should be provided with regular opportunities to evaluate the quality of leadership being provided.
3.3. The Educational Leadership role of Teachers.

Teachers too share with the Head the responsibility of curricular development, innovation and implementation. They are the ones most directly responsible for the learning that is going on in the classroom, and their professionalism ought to be seen in the way they use resources in order to develop meaningful learning programmes that connect with students' everyday lives. They are responsible for maintaining motivation in learning, for liaising with parents to ensure that learning objectives are reached, for developing attractive teaching styles so that each student gains access to the knowledge, skills and abilities that she or he is entitled to. They are ultimately the ones who have the difficult task of adjudicating which resources go where and to who, guided as they should be by the principle of equity and economy.

The central question in Malta with regards to teaching is: what conditions - of employment, of school management, of participation in curriculum planning and implementation, of policy-making on the school site and in the Department of Education, of resource availability - would encourage teachers to invest wholeheartedly in their profession, and to become educational leaders, committed to their primary task of caring for and educating students? Significant progress has been achieved, thanks to the hard work of the Malta Union of Teachers and to a cooperative government, in terms of an upgraded salary structure for teachers. And yet, this has not been translated into a major change in the culture among teachers, who are kept dependent on initiatives of the Department or of the Head, in matters normally closely related to professional autonomy, such as curriculum development and innovation, evaluation of learning and of attainment, the development of a school identity and ethos. Despite significant increases in salary, too many teachers still choose to invest their energy in after-school, profit-making enterprises. While some of these activities are regulated by a professional Code of Ethics, more drastic measures need to be taken to induce teachers to invest the larger part of their working energies in the school and classroom. Financial and career incentives, for instance, could be put into place so that teachers who organise after-school cultural or sports activities, or who take initiatives linked to the implementation of their school’s particular educational vision are rewarded. Promotion prospects, permanent teachers’ warrants, and new benefits such as sabbatical and paid study leave should indeed be limited to those teachers who give proof of the kind of work investment that we have in mind, an investment which shows itself when, for instance, teachers apply to teach...
in schools known to be ‘difficult’, when they follow in-service courses in order to maintain their professional ability and standing, when they organise cultural and sports activities during their free time, when they take an active part in the development of curricula, in researching their own school environment so that progress can be registered, in the better functioning of the School Council, and so on.

There can be no change in the culture of teaching unless all teachers are trained. We consider it unprofessional and immoral to have unprepared people in schools, and to accept a situation where these are not prepared for their pedagogical responsibilities even in a basic way. Temporary untrained teachers presently make up 29.1% of the teaching corps. To put it differently, one in every three students in Malta is taught by untrained teaching personnel. Some casual teachers are extremely dedicated and hard-working, but given a choice, how many parents would volunteer to be included in the thirty percent whose children are not taught by fully trained and qualified teachers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Cert.</th>
<th>Diplm.</th>
<th>1st Degree</th>
<th>P-G Dip.</th>
<th>High Deg.</th>
<th>Tech. Qual.</th>
<th>Other ('A' Level)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade &amp; Technical</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary &amp; Post-</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 3.1. Teachers’ Qualifications according to Sector.

Given our analysis, we cannot agree with a policy which continues to employ casual teachers when there is no evidence that there is a teacher shortage. Rather, what prevails is a misuse of the human resources available. This includes the over-use of the optional subjects system whereby a fully qualified teacher is engaged with a very small number of students, sometimes as few as three to four. The educational system cannot afford such luxuries and then accept that classes of 30 students are taught by casual temporary teachers. Another cause arises from the fact that a good proportion of trained teachers are not involved in teaching duties but perform administrative work which can be carried out by non-teaching personnel, though due to the 1994 MUT agreement the situation has improved in this regard. Also, under present conditions, the work done by subject co-ordinators is minimal and does not warrant the light loading.

Given our concern not only with efficiency, but with equity for students and economy for the system as well, we cannot but emphasise the fact that those students who need the more trained teachers, i.e. students who are not achieving, who are de-motivated,
and who do not get the required educational support from their homes, tend to be taught by untrained staff. Figure 3.1. above suggests that rather than directing resources where they can have most effect, they are concentrated in less needy areas. This works against the principles we adopted in this document, and is educationally misdirected.

Proposals:

- Carry out an extensive study in the utilisation of qualified teachers aiming at a higher level of efficiency and ensuring that all students are taught by fully qualified teachers.
- Establish the principle and develop a practice whereby disadvantaged, low-achieving students are assigned well qualified, capable and committed teachers, who in turn will be offered incentives and rewards for their services.
- In the short-term a school-based training programme can be devised for untrained teachers who demonstrate suitable professional attitudes and commitment. This should not be considered training for certification, and new policies on how to deal with this problem have to be investigated. The preparation should involve constant and careful mentoring and monitoring by the head and/or other trained staff.

3.4. The Role of Parents.

The idea of a collaborative partnership in the running of an educational community can be brought home most strikingly by School Councils. It is perhaps here that the school head, together with staff, parents, and in some cases students as well, under the chairpersonship of the School President, can develop a vision for the school, as well as practical strategies to implement that vision. Thus far School Councils have tended to be seen by parents and teachers mainly as fund raising bodies, and indeed, the Education Act has specifically played down their role in matters related to the educational life of the school, including teaching, administration, and the maintenance of order. We would argue that this is precisely where the School Council should be most active, and where parents are not included on a nominal basis, but rather seen as partners, under the leadership of teaching staff, in the formulation of an educational policy for the school. The school is, after all, ultimately accountable to parents. It is not sufficient to maintain that it is the teaching staff which is expert in the field of education. Besides the fact that most parents today have ever higher levels of education - in some cases higher than that of teachers - ignorance is never sufficient grounds for the exclusion of partners from dialogue and participation. If anything, it is a justification for the organisation of training courses for all those elected on the School Council, including Presidents, Heads, teachers, and students - besides parents. One cannot make a case for decentralisation, for freeing initiatives at the local and grass roots level, without also establishing structures and setting into motion processes that encourage the building of bridges between the school and the home, and between the school and the community. This is particularly true of primary schools, which, in collaboration with Local Councils, can easily become Community Schools, sites teeming with activity for the cultural animation of the town or village they belong to.
Proposals:

- Encourage the establishment of an Association of School Councils, so that there is better co-ordination of the collaborative work of parents and teachers, and to diffuse ideas for good practice.
- Promote a Parents’ Charter in terms of rights and responsibilities of parents in the educational development of their children.
- Develop training programmes for all parents (and teachers, presidents, heads of schools, and students) who are elected to serve on school councils.
- Promote school policies that involve all parents in the educational project.
- Promote a collaborative culture between teachers in order to better facilitate a collaborative culture between them and parents.

3.5. Education Officers

*Education Officers* have a special role to play in ensuring that the individual child, whoever he or she may be, does get the quality education service that we are arguing is the entitlement of all. They are the link between the policy makers and the administrators of the Education Division on the one hand, and the schools and classrooms on the other. Through their overall knowledge of the general direction of the education system and of what is actually happening in the schools they are responsible for, they can advise, channel resources, evaluate, provide guidance and expertise in the development of curricula. They should facilitate the development of educational plans for each school, and provide the necessary back-up, in terms of both resources and skills, so that educational programmes are evaluated on a regular basis. They should help in the organisation of staff development in line with the overall educational vision embraced by the school, and in this and other ways they ensure that the highest possible educational service is being offered by all teachers and administrators. In that sense they should have the power to hold the latter accountable, as they themselves are accountable to their own superiors.

The issue of *accountability* is of great importance here, and indeed, we have highlighted its value in a number of areas in this document. If the regulative principles we have proposed are to be more than mere catch phrases, there must be a clear structure of responsibility so that ultimately the results of learning programmes, whether these are positive or negative, can be traced back to specific persons or groups of persons. This is not intended to introduce a measure of control for the sake of it, but rather in order to tackle school failure and success in as systematic a manner as possible, with various evaluative measures being introduced to ensure that learning stages and challenges are adequately dealt with. We would wish to refer to this as *developmental accountability*, to distinguish it clearly from the inspectorial and control connotations that the word might have. Education Officers should have a crucial role to ensure effective learning. They can help the schools understand better the significance of examination and assessment results, whether these are organised at a national or school level, and they can guide in the development of specific teaching strategies and programmes which take the results into account.

Education Officers need to be provided with opportunities for professional development if they are to assume this widened role, and they require a structure of
support - clerical back-up, facilities, services, and professional development opportunities - in order to enable them to fulfill such responsibilities as are being outlined for them in this report, and as are already contemplated for them in the various relevant official documents. They need this support if they are indeed to take responsibility for a number of schools in a region, or for a particular aspect of educational service (such as guidance and counselling, or education for student with special learning needs), a responsibility which requires not only educational vision but also administrative capability. Education Officers as we are envisaging them would have regular meetings with the heads of schools they work with, would encourage the exchange of ideas and of good educational practice, would meet with the School Councils and teachers in order to be ever aware of the issues that need to be addressed, and would themselves be a conduit to the Directors of the Education Division so that policies are developed with the concerns and real difficulties of practitioners in mind. The college of Education Officers would function as an important think tank, and would provide a solid foundation for the general development of the Education Division.

It is clear from the consideration of the responsibilities of Education Officers that incumbents should not fill the posts by mere virtue of their seniority. The qualities that are required include experience at the different levels of the school apparatus, but also include a proven ability to lead, to take initiatives, to facilitate growth and development in others, to constructively confront others when it becomes clear that duties are not being fulfilled. It must also include evidence of constant professional development, since Education Officers are expected to remain in constant touch with innovations in their area of expertise, through reading the relevant literature, attending conferences, and following courses related to their field. They should have the ability, the time and resources to read - and if necessary themselves carry out - research. They should collaborate closely with the Faculty of Education to ensure that the most reliable information, as well as the most important developments in particular fields of education, inform what happens in schools and classrooms. Education Officers should themselves be accountable to the Assistant Directors and Directors of Education.

Proposals:

- Identify clearly the role that is to be played by Education Officers, ensuring that they are responsible for specific schools and/or subject areas/teaching methodologies, and that they spearhead the new culture of learning that is being promoted in this document.
- Ensure that Education Officers function as animators of schools in terms of guiding heads, staff and parents in establishing goals for learning, and in constantly evaluating teaching programmes and learning outcomes.
- Create much stronger and formalised linkages between Education Officers and the Faculty of Education, so that research and other leadership tasks can be shared effectively for the benefit of schools.
- Develop strong and clear lines of responsibility in schools which are ultimately monitored by Education Officers.
- Provide Education Officers with the opportunity to develop professionally in their field of specialisation.
Chapter 4: The Curriculum

4.1. Definition

We have thus far highlighted the needs of the learner and described the conditions and contexts that lead to effective learning through purposeful educational leadership. But what, precisely, is the teacher to teach and the student to learn? It is to answer this question that we must necessarily turn to a consideration of the curriculum, that is the instrument through which education takes place. In its broadest sense the curriculum refers to all the formal, informal (or 'hidden') and non-formal learning experienced by pupils within the context of their schooling. As we have already pointed out, not all learning occurs in the school, and the school cannot, and should not, claim to be the sole educative agency in society. At the same time, school learning cannot be isolated from the other learning that occurs in the life of pupils through other agencies, like the peer-group, the media and the family, just as the school itself cannot be disembedded from the social context. Moreover, the curriculum cannot be thought of simply as an instrument for transmitting knowledge effectively. Several normative questions, even at the most general level, occur. Among these one can mention the following:

- What is worth teaching?
- Who should be involved in selecting worthwhile content and methods?
- What policy instruments and texts are needed?
- What methods ensure entitlement to what is worth teaching?
- How should the knowledge be chosen and how should it be transmitted?
- What should the more general personal, social, and national aims of the curriculum be?
- How are the considerations of teaching/learning effectiveness limited by the ethical and political constraints on it?

In sum, the curriculum is not simply a tool for passing on 'neutral' vocational or academic knowledge, for the teaching of 'subjects' but also a tool for socialisation, for the transmission of a culture, of values and norms of behaviour, and for political education whether one refers to the formal package of subjects chosen, or to the mode of transmission of the knowledge they contain (or pedagogy), or to the learning context, to the environment of the school or classroom itself.

The evaluation and implementation of the curriculum should, therefore, also fasten onto all these factors which this document has summarised into the four qualities of entitlement, effectiveness, equity, and economy. The interplay between these, the curriculum and other generally recognised principles of curriculum planning and design, is discussed elsewhere.
evaluation will be discussed in the sections that follow. An effective curriculum, for instance, conceives of the educational process as one and continuous, though with different and distinct stages. This continuity needs to be ensured through the curriculum and can be referred to as the principle of **vertical integration** of the curriculum. Its other complementary principle is that of **horizontal integration**, that is the integration of learning resources across the curriculum. Integration, vertical and horizontal, is assured between different stages of the educational process and is a feature of pedagogy (of the modes and strategies of teaching/learning), of the selection of content, of the deployment of educational resources human and material), and of planning.

There are many issues one could raise in this context and with reference to the four regulative principles. If we consider the principles of entitlement and equity first, then the following questions, among many others, arise:

- What are the desirable learning outcomes that are fundamental for all pupils, and how can they be achieved for everyone? The first is a question of equity, the second of entitlement. Once the first question (the question ‘what is just?’) is answered, one needs to answer the second (‘what does justice entitle each pupils to?’). Effectiveness and economy should be measured in terms of how they contribute towards the attainment of just outcomes.
- What are the factors in the schooling process and in the national system in general that disadvantage, or could disadvantage, success or attainment for pupils related to their gender, class, ethnic or family background?
- To what extent does the curriculum (teaching/learning styles and strategies, texts, expectations, objectives, environment, resources used etc.) privilege or disadvantage pupils from particular backgrounds or particular identities?
- How should we judge the policy for deploying or recruiting teachers in the different sectors of schooling in the light of pupils’ entitlement according to the principle of equity?
- How are material teaching and learning resources and technologies - and the funding for them - assigned to different schools, and how are priorities identified?

Related questions can be asked in connection with our commitment to effectiveness and economy, which we would also like to see regulating discussion about the curriculum. Among these questions are:

- What should be the teaching styles, methods, objectives, organisation of knowledge and modes of assessment for pupils in primary and secondary schools?
- How should the two stages, primary and secondary, be distinguished in terms of their general objectives?
- Should they both have a subject-based curriculum, as is currently the case, with all that this implies, or should learning in the primary school be differently organised, as we believe it should, on a topic basis and with more emphasis on the acquisition of different learning skills, personal and cooperative, rather than on the accumulation of information?
- Should there be formal assessment at both stages, and what should be the purposes of assessment?
What kinds of assessment tools will help me measure the desirable outcomes?
How should curriculum objectives and learning modes evolve from one stage to the next (always remembering that schooling also covers the pre-primary and post-secondary stages and that these need to be regarded as part of the continuum)?
How is continuity ensured between the school curriculum and the outside world of the pupil’s lived experience?
What kind of administrative and monitoring structure does one require to correspond with the effective management of this coordination?

Proposals:

- Change or modify text-books to remove gender stereotyping, and to be more inclusive in terms of the histories and experiences of people belonging to different social groupings.
- Provide resources to all schools so that they are properly equipped - with photocopyers, writing boards, craft materials, libraries, charts, etc.
- Establish monitoring structures and practices, such as continuous assessment and pupil profiling, which ensure that all students get the curricular knowledge and skills they are entitled to.
- Provide adequate funding to ensure that teachers have appropriate teaching resources.
- Plan the provision of human resources carefully, guided by the principles of equity and economy.
- Support teachers through school-based in-service training.

4.2. The General Schooling Context.

The above should provide the general evaluative context within which curriculum policies currently being implemented in Malta are assessed. The current schooling structure of the educational system in Malta is currently divided as is well known into a state and private (church and independent) sector which incorporate the following stages:

- Kindergarten: ages 3 & 4.
- Primary: ages 5 - 10.
- Secondary: ages 11-16 with three routes, 2 ‘academic’ (junior lyceum and area secondary) and 1 technical (trade school).
- Post-secondary: ages 16 onwards.

There are a number of crucial factors and policies related to the schooling structure, regarded in this very general sense, which influence the curriculum in different ways. These include:

1. The division, in the State schools, of the primary school into two cycles, a separate School ‘A’ and a School ‘B’;
2. The implementation of streaming policies, whether across the board or in the last years of primary school as is currently the case in the state sector, or in secondary schools in general whether the streaming is overt or hidden, but not the less actual;
3. The method of \textit{transition} into secondary school which involves an 11+ type examination whether into the junior lyceums or into the Church schools; and later into a particular track within the secondary school curriculum (business, science, or languages) or into trade school, after the third year of secondary schooling;

4. The policy of \textbf{national} syllabuses and the holding of national-based examinations;

5. Events in the \textbf{post-secondary} sector whose requirements condition, in a particularly strong way, the curriculum of the secondary schools which teach to these requirements. This sector, the post-secondary, is currently in a stage of transition and development with the new SEC examinations still in a process of settling down, with the new and as yet undebated and untried Matriculation Certificate for entry into University, and the new plans for the reform of the whole sector (including the setting up of a Junior College). Urgent study is needed to establish the implications of these changes for the secondary curriculum.

All of these policies, which we have just detailed, need to be measured on the criteria of equity, entitlement, effectiveness and economy. Their most obvious outcomes are:

- They make teachers, parents and pupils more \textit{examination conscious} and anxious about academic results, even in the earlier years of primary school where formal exams should be non-existent or very restricted, thus promoting a distorted view of educational values and creating a general climate of tension and stress which is endured both in the school and in the home.

- They encourage teachers at all levels to \textbf{teach to examinations}, to the evident detriment of a holistic curriculum which should cater for the all-round development of the child; the intellectual, emotional, creative, physical etc.

- They encourage \textit{traditional modes of teaching} that privilege memory and the storage of information and the exclusivity of academic knowledge at the expense of vocational knowledge, and the acquisition of personal, social and learning skills.

- They promote \textit{uniformity} of provision and a centralised control of the curriculum to the detriment of experimentation and novelty. This fact, in turn, inevitably has many deleterious consequences. It deskills teachers who rely on pre-packaged material in different ways and separates the conception from the execution of the learning programme. It discourages teachers from addressing the key question in teaching which is how to match learning strategies of different kinds to the ability, interests, and potential of the pupil, not the other way round, i.e. matching pupils to programmes. It discourages teachers from regarding each class, each child, as unique and different, and from making that difference something to be planned and catered for anew with each scholastic year. It also promotes stagnation in all sectors of the schooling system whereas curriculum research and development should be an on-going and dynamic process which keeps the system alive and contributes also to the teachers’ own professional development.

- They encourage a system which is \textit{‘top-heavy’}, with curricular and pedagogical practice in primary and secondary schools being inordinately influenced by developments in the post-secondary sector. Teachers too are encouraged to gravitate towards that sector because of better conditions of work and higher status, with obvious deleterious results for other sectors, especially primary schools.
The alternatives to these policies which we support are:

**Proposals:**

- Reintegrate state primary schools under one management.
- Abolish national examinations and streaming, carefully preparing the ground for this.
- Abolish the 11+ junior lyceum exam and the Church schools' entry exams.
- Implement a common curriculum (no options or tracks) right through secondary school with specialisation postponed until the later, post-secondary stage.
- Devolve control over the curriculum (including the selection of text-books and learning programmes) to the schools, with the support and evaluation of the Division of Education within the precepts and conditions of (revised) National Minimum Curricula.
- Reconsider comprehensive schooling.
- Simplify and reduce curricular content.

The arguments for these alternatives are not insignificant. The reintegration of the primary schools will decrease the already excessive fragmentation of the schooling experience for the pupils and allow more continuity along the vertical dimension in the primary school programme. It should also be more economic in terms of the deployment of human and material resources avoiding needless duplication (a well-equipped resources room is a must for any school and should feature in the list of future provisions). While streaming and the different kinds of entrance examinations into secondary schools State and Private go against the principle of equity since they create various kinds of discrimination against different sectors of the schooling population, particularly those who are disadvantaged by their social background or by learning difficulties.

It needs also to be established whether our differentiated secondary school sector is not actually backed with policies of staff and material resources deployment which, in real terms, signify injustice in entitlement for some sectors of the school population (corresponding with social disadvantages of different kinds) against others by addressing the 'best' or most qualified teachers and resources to the 'best' (academically) schools. The implementation of a common curriculum throughout secondary school would be in line with current perceptions in most advanced European countries that specialisation should be delayed as long as possible in order to avoid the channeling and narrowing down of the range of knowledge too early. While the devolution of control over the curriculum to the State schools, (private schools already have this control), is necessary for the professional development of the teaching staff and for the continuous updating of teaching and learning methods and provisions in the light of the currently best available learning programmes, schemes, and materials on the market. These, we believe, are conditions which are required by the criterion of efficiency and by the consideration of the right of the learner to the best available learning provision.

4.3. **The National Minimum Curriculum.**

At the moment we have NMCs in Malta for every level of schooling except for the kindergarten, where there is only a short policy document available. There has not
been enough debate about the purposes which this NMC is supposed to serve, nor is there any policy about how it should be implemented in the schools. The idea of having an NMC should be to have a common framework for national educational aims and objectives, and to specify, on grounds of equity, the requirements of a minimum schooling provision which should guarantee for all pupils in Malta a common minimum entitlement as a right. The first crucial step, therefore, in planning the NMCs should have been to identify that entitlement and to guarantee it for all children in an effective and economic way, in the light of the best teaching practices and schooling resources available, something which was not done.

As things stand, there is a popular impression backed also by some undergraduate research, that teachers, in general, are largely unfamiliar with the contents of the NMC. One, therefore, seriously doubts the extent to which its provisions and stipulations are being implemented in the schools. The reason why this state of affairs exists is complex but, for one thing, the strategy pursued in the of the drafting of the NMCs did not help. They were drafted by the Division presumably, without any apparent grass roots consultation, and therefore, since they were not consulted, teachers have felt no sense of ownership of the documents. Also, as policy guidelines, they leave much to be desired, though this is not the place for an exhaustive critique of them.

In sum, one needs to consider very seriously indeed whether the NMCs should not be drawn up afresh, keeping in mind the factors mentioned in this document, and with due exposition to and consultation with the teachers who are requested to implement it. The important principle here is that teachers should feel that they own the NMC not that it has been imposed on them by an abstract and external agency. Next, one needs to consider the nature of the support schools and teachers need to develop their own curriculum programmes and strategies autonomously within the general guidelines of the NMCs. This is the only way the educational system can evolve dynamically by drawing on its own concrete experiences and allowing variety of experimentation.

What is missing from the current NMCs is also the general statement of curriculum aims and general policy referred to earlier, which should determine not only the specific aims of each curriculum level in detail (the task of each individual NMC), but a context for general aims and a general policy which should inform each level and create continuity and development between them. For instance, there should be a clear language policy (Maltese\English) which provides a context corresponding with the overall aim of creating a bilingual population and for determining a strategy for the language of teaching itself in the schools. But the general statement should also outline normative aims that command consensus in the country and that need to be promoted as the values informing the educational system, principally the ones assumed in this document, of equity, entitlement, effectiveness and economy. Other aims should reflect, we believe, a commitment to democratic values and to the values that characterise a pluralistic welfare society.
Proposals:

- Generate different fora, at local (school) and national levels, so as to foster public debate about education and the curriculum.
- Develop a clear language policy in order to ensure an effective medium for the communication of the curriculum.
- Establish clear lines of accountability and responsibility in terms of ensuring that all students do receive their curriculum entitlement.
- Revise the current School Council regulations which exclude members from discussing curricular issues.
- Retrain teachers to fulfill role of curricular developers.

4.4. The Different Sectors of the System.

Information Technology and the Curriculum.

Notwithstanding the numerous changes that have taken place in the Primary and Secondary sectors of the Maltese educational system over the past decades, actual classroom teaching and learning in these sectors has, as we have already argued elsewhere in this document, remained very largely traditional and unchanged. This being the case one needs, very urgently, to consider the impact of the Government’s new plans for the imminent introduction of computers in primary and secondary school classrooms. The declared intention is for the teachers to use the computers in their classrooms as teaching and learning tools and resources. To develop pedagogical strategies that will utilise the machines will require the use of the software and curriculum packages prepared for their use to the maximum advantage, but it will also require teachers to employ a style of teaching oriented towards the management of learning rather than instruction, towards greater pupil self-reliance, and the ability to participate meaningfully in collaborative learning. This model of teaching/learning does not, however, fit the traditional style of teaching predominant in our classrooms at all. Thus teaching the teachers to use a computer and giving them the course packages is not nearly enough if these are to be used efficiently and equitably.

The implication is obvious; the technological innovation will require the teachers to adopt a new outlook and philosophy of teaching otherwise its impact will be only cosmetic. The change which could revolutionise teaching/learning in the classrooms through the introduction of new technologies must be accompanied by a revolution in the whole teaching philosophy and mentality of these schools away from the traditional, otherwise the impact of the technologies will be superficial or alienating and not worthwhile if not actually damaging. Again, the main dangers here are the de-skilling of teachers who may come to rely excessively on pre-packaged curriculum material (as they already do), the introduction of a technocratic mentality in the schools and of marketing considerations that are foreign to the interests of education, and so on.

One needs also to study the social and cultural impact of the change the technology and the new teaching styles will bring about. Here, one could usefully study the experiences of other countries and the substantial research already available
in this area. It is crucial that the implementation of the IT policy should not be regarded simply as a technical matter, a matter of achieving more effective learning alone. Most importantly, one needs to examine how the principles of equity and entitlement will be affected by the policy, how it will affect the learning opportunities of the different individuals in the classroom on the basis of their differences. One will also need to examine how it can affect the provisions for special needs education in the integrated classroom. Where children with special needs are concerned, failure to provide for modalities of access to hard/software can result in discrimination on the basis of equality of access, as in the case of:

- children with mental disabilities using software programs which require very complicated tasks and feats of memory to work;
- blind or visually impaired children when using graphics-based software;
- deaf students when using educational software which depends heavily on sound feedback to teach, reward, or to reinforce learning;
- children with mobility impairments when using a standard keyboard or mouse device.

In view of this, it is essential that equality of access becomes the guiding principle behind the purchase of any new hard/software by the Education Division. Potential suppliers should also be made aware that this is the principle behind any purchase made by the Division. In addition, since I.T. skills can dramatically improve the quality of life of disabled persons as well as chances for finding worthwhile employment in adulthood, children with disabilities should be given priority in the allocation of new hard/software, relevant to their needs.

**Trade Schools and the Curriculum.**

One important sector of our educational system where an interesting exercise in curriculum development is currently in hand is the Trade School sector. Curiously, in the light of the situation in the rest of the secondary sector, the new policy that has been decided upon is to postpone specialisation within the trade until the post-secondary stage. At the same time, a contrary policy is being followed in the rest of the secondary school sector where students are required to choose a very specialised option very early on in their course, after Form three. In the light of what we said above about the desirability of postponing specialisation, the development in the trade school sector must be viewed as a positive one and the possibility of extending the same thinking to the rest of secondary schooling, even, possibly, of using the trade school project as a pilot for the whole sector, should be considered.

The new programme for Trade School reform is being prepared for introduction during the scholastic year 1995/96. Concurrently, plans are in place so that, for the first time technology education will be introduced as an optional subject in the fourth year of secondary education. The model for the introduction of this option seems to have been taken, in its fundamentals, from the Design and Technology courses run in the UK. In its local version, however, it will have two alternative curricula with an engineering bias on the one hand and a caring trade bias on the other. This seems to be a continuation of the old trade school attitude which has now been rejected for the
trade school itself, where teaching a narrow skill was always regarded as the primary objective, and on these grounds its wisdom seems questionable.

**Technology Education.**

Technology education, itself, is referred to in the NMC (Primary) as one unit within Science education, but it is not being implemented yet in the current primary curriculum for various reasons which require investigating. The result is that the scope of technology education in our schools, which should be regarded as a very important, is being significantly curtailed. It needs to be remarked also that, strangely enough, technology education is not even mentioned in the NMC (Secondary). Attempts to introduce the subject as a 'craft' option were made about eight years ago but these seem to have collapsed with the result that it is now totally absent and abandoned.

To reiterate the point made earlier, the introduction of technology education in the trade schools should be used to pilot it at all levels. The introduction of technology education in all the sectors of the Maltese education system is highly necessary given the fast developments taking place in the technology environment which will predictably grow in the future. Technology education should, ideally, provide students with the thinking tools they require for the future and should be introduced forthwith.

Mention of the necessity of technological education from the earliest years of schooling may be met with the objection that the curriculum is already overloaded as it is. This is true, given the 'add-on reflex' that education systems everywhere have tended to adopt in reaction to new pressures, needs and demands made within the context of a changing society. While adding subjects and curricular items might have served a purpose in the past, a careful and systematic overview and a reassessment of curricular priorities and approaches is urgently required now as different new 'subjects', like I.T., media education, human rights education, etc. make their claim to be included. In many cases, it is the way the very notion of curriculum is viewed, in terms of discrete subjects with precisely defined periods on the time-table rather than as themes to which we bring understanding and skills from different but inter-related disciplines and areas of knowledge, that needs to be radically changed.

**The Curriculum and Schools for Children with Special Needs.**

It seems that the Education Division has never issued a curriculum or syllabi for Special Schools. Very often, teaching in these schools is based on programmes that were first created in schools abroad and may be unadaptatable for the local social environment. We are given to understand that these programmes were often introduced into Malta on the personal initiatives of the Heads of Schools or teachers of the particular Special School. The Schools at Wardija and Msida - unfortunately and unacceptably still referred to as ESN schools - cater for very slow learners while *Mater Dei School* (for maladjusted boys) has children with mixed abilities. The curricula here are almost comparable with those of the mainstream primary schools and children who achieve a certain academic level are transferred to mainstream
schools, in most cases Opportunity Centres or Trade Schools. Certainly, the whole issue of the curriculum for special education also needs addressing urgently but we believe that the policy that should be pursued in the name of equity and on the basis of the principle of entitlement - and as already established in other sections of this document - is that of integration of special needs provisions to the greatest extent possible within mainstream schools with all the implications this involves in terms of resources, help for teachers, and a more personalised curriculum provision. We agree with and fully support the position adopted by National Commission: Persons with Disability, namely that children with certain categories of disability have the right to be provided with special education in the form of specialised educational services. Like the Commission too we do not accept any form of schooling where the learner with disabilities is segregated for a significant portion of learning time from non-disabled children. Special Schools, rather than offering education in a segregated context, should rather assume the role of resource centres, providing equipment and amenities, as well as training and co-ordination services for teachers and multi-disciplinary teams catering for the education of mainstreamed children with special needs.

4.5. Curricular Management.

The Education Division is currently in the process of setting up a department of Curriculum Development Implementation with its own Director. We regard this as an important new policy which is very positive indeed and long-overdue. One notes, however, a significant shift in the structure adopted by the Division from that proposed by the 'Operations Review Report' which recommended a different system of management for the curriculum. Specifically, the Report recommendation was for two Directors for the Curriculum instead of one, one for Development and Instruction, the other for Review and Implementation, with the relevant Assistant Directors for each.

The Division has, however, decided instead to create one Director for both development and implementation. The new Department will also have three Assistant Directors; for Curriculum Development, for Curriculum Implementation, and for IT Education. The last mentioned post obviously corresponds with the Division's implementation of a new and radical IT policy at the national level which will, hopefully, respond to some of the remarks made about technological education above, but which also requires delicate and far-sighted planning both in terms of material resources and in terms of training teachers and other human resources required by the policy.

The Department's modified structure for the management of the Curriculum is as follows:

- Director Curriculum
- 3 Assistant Directors
- Education Officers

But what causes us concern is the advertised job description for the new post of Director Curriculum Development and Implementation, which is the following:
1. developing curriculum policy for all school programmes
2. developing IT as a medium of instruction in state schools
3. developing curricula (syllabi) for school programmes
4. reviewing, acquiring and/or producing appropriate curriculum and instructional support materials
5. selecting and developing textbooks
6. providing direction to schools in the implementation of all programme areas
7. assisting area offices with the implementation of policies
8. developing and administering national examinations
9. setting up teachers' documentation and resource centres

It is plain to see that, in fact, this job description reflects the traditional thinking of the Division about curriculum management. It reflects a policy of centralised control over the management and implementation of the curriculum which is out of phase with all that we have said above about the need for a new teaching culture which empowers schools and teachers, and which, most specifically, gives them ownership of the curriculum and manoeuvrability within the structure of the NMCs. This is the case, in particular, with regards to (3), (4), (5) and (8) above. These continue to refer to official syllabi, and specify that the selection of textbooks and instructional materials, etc. will remain in the hands of the Department.

Also, the MSU Report suggested that the Assistant Director for Special Education should be under the Director Curriculum Development and Implementation. The job description of the Director Curriculum Development and Implementation, however, makes no mention of Special Education. Does this mean that the Department has decided against a policy of mainstream integration with regards to children with special needs? Does it mean that all special needs provisions will be made by special schools to be regarded outside the mainstream structure? If this is the case, then we feel that the optimism we expressed with the initiative to set up the Department may have been somewhat misplaced.

An alternative set-up to the one projected by the Division would revise the job description of the Director in line with the very different model of management and control of the curriculum we have been advocating and add one more Assistant Director for Special Education Needs Education. Also, it does not seem to be a good idea to have one Assistant Director for curriculum development and another for implementation. An alternative and probably more efficient proposal would be to have an Assistant Director for Curriculum Development and Implementation (Primary), another for (Secondary and Technical), another for IT policy, and another for Special Education.
Finally, any sensible national policy for research, development, implementation and management of the curriculum requires structures of coordination between the schools, the Department of Curriculum Development and Implementation, and the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. The nature and management of these structures need to be determined immediately, and they need to be put into operation forthwith, not only in this area of the curriculum but in many others also, as proposed throughout the various sections of this document. It is only through this kind of partnership that one can hope for an educational system in Malta which truly corresponds with the demands of the twenty-first century.
We have referred, throughout our discussion, to a number of documents - such as the National Minimum Curriculum - noting that these have made very little impression on what actually takes place in schools and classrooms, that Heads and teachers ignore the implications of such documents, or even develop strategies to resist change. Such resistance need not necessarily be related to a desire to maintain old habits of teaching, but could also be a symptom of a lack of identification with a centralised bureaucracy which promulgates Acts of Education, curricula, syllabi, a code of ethics, systems of assessment and evaluation, and changes and reforms without consulting those very same people who, at the end of the day, will be responsible for transforming policy decisions into everyday classroom reality.

We do not wish the same to happen to this document. It is envisaged that this document will be discussed with various groups of people representing different - and divergent - interests, and that due weight be given to the views expressed. The report remains a consultative document, without any power at all except that bestowed upon on by the reader. However, we do not believe that participation solves all the problems that we have broached, although it certainly does help different partners to own the ideas that are expressed throughout the report. We need to ask: What is the link between analysis and action, between understanding and commitment?

The danger with reports such as these is that the authors - who have struggled together to reach consensus, to share a vision, to make the best of an opportunity offered to them to influence educational policy-making - indulge in a cathartic exercise, feeling that their duty is done once the problems have been described, and proposals for reform outlined.

On the other hand, the policy-maker who commissions such reports is often tempted to use the report as a legitimising exercise: the ‘experts’ have spoken, and all that is needed is to delegate persons with the responsibility of carrying out changes. But is this what policy-makers really do? Does a politician nowadays dare face the implications of such challenges as we have spelled out? Will a politician be ready to insist that parents should be active and equal partners with teachers in the task of educating children, to see to it that children who are ‘at risk’ get the best human and material resources, that school life revolves around the physical, intellectual, cultural and other needs of children - even if this means undertaking such ‘radical’ reforms as extending the mid-day break, mainstreaming children with special needs, removing inter- and intra-school streaming, and abandoning current evaluation and assessment policies? Most politicians in many countries use reports such as these to legitimise
those aspects of their own policy that have received approbation, ignoring and
defusing those that go at the heart of the matter to suggest that there is indeed a gap
between our declared commitment to the welfare of children, and the educational diet
we are offering them in our schools.

Teachers and school administrators also have time-honoured strategies of resistance
to documents such as ours. These range from, ironically, a dismissal of intellectual
work as being abstract and unrelated to real needs and concerns, to a public
approbation of the ideas expressed without this, however, making much of a
difference in the way the educational challenge is conceived and carried out. There is
also a danger here that some of the proposals recommended in this document remind
readers of experiments carried out in the 1970s, which are commonly perceived to
have been failures. We point out the different context for the reforms that we are
proposing, and the emphasis we have placed on the fact that the process of change
should be consensual and supported by all the human and material resources required.
These and many other difficulties are bound to arise...

...Which is why we are happy to have placed the child and the learner at the heart of
our analysis: for ultimately this document is about the valuing of the educational
needs of children, and about creating structures, systems - and above all classrooms
and schools - that do make a positive difference for each and every child that enters
them. We too have to dare to say most explicitly what we intimated at the start of the
report, namely that, the learning child must be brought back to the centre stage of the
educational enterprise, even if this means asking for more commitment, dedication,
and accountability from those who have the responsibility to provide the best that a
country can offer all its young citizens. And that is what we mean by ‘phronesis’, a
term which takes us back to the educators of classical Greece, but whose message is as
timely today as it was then. For ‘phronesis’ reminds us that understanding carries
with it a responsibility to be and the challenge to act in accordance with what we now
see to be the best - in terms of the most virtuous - course of action. Education has,
since its ancient beginnings, been associated with the search for the ‘good life’, a life
lived in accordance with principles that connect with the common good. Our earnest
hope is that the principles of entitlement, equity, effectiveness and economy, as
elaborated in this report and in relationship to the issues and themes proposed,
regulate our efforts to respond to the challenge of developing effective learning
cultures for tomorrow’s schools.
Notes and References

1 The conceptual framework was suggested by a liberal reading of Simkins, T. (1992) Efficiency, effectiveness and the local management of schools, *Journal of Educational Policy*, Vol 9, no 1, pp 15-33


7 As argued in a Department of Education (1989) report on School Based Development (INSET Centre) and in Bezzina, C. (1988) Educational Administration at the centre of change in the Maltese educational system, in Farrugia C.J. (ed) *Education in Malta: A look to the Future*, UNESCO/FIS, Malta.


14 As with pupil stress, see Cassar, R. (1991) *Stress as Experienced by the Junior Lyceum Oriented Pupil*, unpublished B. Educ (Hons) dissertation


17 It is useful to look at some of the current research on IT in education from different perspectives before embarking on policy shifts. Beynon, J. and H. Mackay (1992) (eds) *Technological Literacy and the Curriculum*, Lewes, Falmer Press brings together the work of practitioners and researchers from both sides of the Atlantic and is an useful introduction to the issues surrounding IT and Technology in education.

Scerri (1992) Malta’s National Minimum Curriculum, paper presented at the C.I.E.S. annual conference held at Annapolis, Maryland


17 A view which has been successfully challenged by the contributors to Sultana, R. G. (1994) (ed) *Genituri u Ghallima ghal Edukazzioni Ahjar*, Msida, Mireva.


19 Scheerens, J. (1992) *op cit.* has informed the discussion here.


1994


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