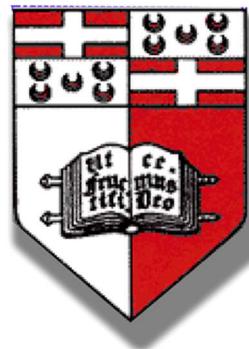


**NETWORKING EXPERIENCE IN A
MALTESE COLLEGE
EDUCATION NETWORK**

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**Education Department
University of Malta**

**Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

September 2019



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ABSTRACT

Networking Experience in a Maltese College Education Network **by Maria Montebello**

This thesis provides an educational leadership study on a personal five-year networking experience in a Maltese College Education Network. The major focus of the study is the exploration of lived experiences of educational leadership in a new reform. The main research question explores to what extent the notion of leadership, as advocated by the Maltese Education Reform Document *For All Children To Succeed* (Ministry of Education & Employment, 2005), corresponds to the lived experiences of a School Administrator in a school college network environment. The conceptual framework of the thesis is based on some of Arendt's major concepts including totalitarianism, ideology, plurality and freedom. The narrative inquiry approach has been selected to be able to carry out a thematic approach whereby each critical theme is analysed through the reading of both the lived experience of the researcher and the policy document itself. This analysis is supported by the contributions of different theories in educational leadership including social justice, education leadership, inclusive leadership, transformative leadership and feminist leadership. This study shows that there is a substantial mismatch between the vision of the reform document and the researcher's lived experiences. It promotes the view that what is needed in education is more than words in policy documents or 'what works.' It is recommended that, in today's globalised world, educational leaders nurture the capacity to understand, analyse and problematise their personal experiences within their own local environments. This thesis concludes with a number of other relevant recommendations on this subject.

Keywords:

Educational Leadership, College Networks, Education in Malta, Narrative, Arendt, Lived Experiences.

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

I, the undersigned, do hereby declare that I am the legitimate author of this Dissertation
Networking Experience In A Maltese College Education Network.

Maria Montebello
September 2019

DEDICATION

*To my Family & School Community
with Lots of Love*

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The story behind this study begins in 2005, with the publication of the new reform document *For All Children To Succeed: A New Network Organisation For Quality Education In Malta*’ (Reform Document, 2005) by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment. The full document is to be found in Appendix 1.

The Maltese Education system faced the challenge of having to change the way it functioned – from a hierarchical, apex-governed structure to a new network organisation. The Maltese government launched an extensive revamp of the education system. In very general terms, this revamp involved grouping state primary schools (catering for children aged between 3 and 10), referred to as ‘feeder’ schools and secondary schools (catering for students aged between 11 and 16), referred to as ‘receiving’ schools into autonomous regional colleges. This will be discussed further in a later section.

The full name of the new reform document is *For All Children To Succeed: A New Network Organisation For Quality Education In Malta*’ (Reform Document, 2005). As mentioned above, it was issued by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment in 2005. Throughout this study, this document will be simply referred to as the Reform Document, 2005.

Before referring to the Reform Document in greater detail, an outline of Malta’s educational system and relevant legislation prior to the publication of the Reform Document will be given in the next section.

1.2 Historical Context of Malta’s Educational System

Even though Malta is such a small island, we enjoy an extremely rich and interesting history spanning over many centuries. The next sections will provide a brief overview of the milestones in Malta’s educational system prior to the Reform Document (2005).

1.2.1 Malta’s Educational System before the Nineteenth Century

In relation to the local educational system, historical records (Calleja, 1994) show that some form of education was available for the Maltese population as early as the Middle Ages during the Arab Period (870 – 1090).

Over the next four centuries, various religious orders arrived on the Island. The most influential and renowned was the Order of St. John, also known today as the Knights of Malta (www.orderofmalta.int). In 1530, Grand Master Fra’ Philippe de Villiers de l’Isle Adam took possession of the island which had been granted to the Order of St. John by Emperor Charles V with the approval of Pope Clement VII. Besides completely rebuilding the islands with extensive fortifications, hospitals, incredible palaces and gardens, during their stay here, education was given a great deal of importance.

Another religious order which significantly contributed to Maltese education over the years is the the College of the Society of Jesus (better known as The Jesuits). As early as 1553, the Bishop of Malta, repeatedly petitioned Ignatius Loyola, one of the founding members to start a College in Malta. Ignatius Loyola, later known as St. Ignatius, saw the benefits of sending Jesuits to Malta (www.jesuit.org.mt). Given Malta’s geographic position and the proximity of the Maltese language to Arabic, Malta seemed to be an ideal stepping stone to train missionaries in preparation for their work in the African continent.

On 22nd November 1592, a Jesuit College was founded in Malta by authority of Pope Clement VIII and with the support of Grand Master Verdalle and Bishop Gargallo (Gatt, 2008, www.manresa-sj.org; www.jesuit.org.mt). A number of primary, secondary and post-secondary institutions were also established around the same time (Calleja, 1994).

As a result of this *Collegium Melitense*, today's University of Malta is one of the oldest in Europe and the oldest Commonwealth University outside the United Kingdom (students.um.edu.mt).

As with the rest of Europe, under the guidance of the Jesuits and supported by the Knights, Maltese education progressed significantly during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In fact, the Jesuits were referred to as the schoolmasters of Europe (www.jesuit.org.mt).

The Jesuits continued to offer a very high level of education until their expulsion from Malta by Grandmaster Pinto in 1768 (www.jesuit.org.mt). The Grandmaster decreed that all revenue from the Jesuits' properties would belong to the Order of St. John. On 22nd November 1769, Grandmaster Pinto signed a decree constituting the *Pubblica Università di Studi Generali* which functioned from the old Jesuits' College in Valletta until 1968 (Gatt, 2008; www.timesofmalta.com). The Jesuits did eventually return to Malta and to this very day, many benefit from a Jesuit education.

State-funded elementary schooling was established during the French occupation of the islands which lasted between 1798 and 1800 (Calleja, 1994). During Napoleon's six-day stay on the Islands, he transformed various legal and administrative systems and also laid the groundwork for radical reforms in the educational system, which included free education for all. "*Since education is of prime importance to prosperity and public order*" (Testa, 2017, p. 76). These were the words of Napoleon Bonaparte while he was in Malta on 16th June 1798. He then laid down two important orders to do with education, namely that a substantial number of primary schools were to be established on the Maltese Islands and that a central school in Malta was to be built so as to replace the University and other faculties. The aim of Napoleon was to educate the Maltese population in line with French standards of the time.

Napoleon's visit to the Maltese Islands served as a new era to the Maltese educational system. Most of the new educational changes included new subjects in the Maltese curriculum, such as Science and the Armed Forces. He demanded that sixty youths between the ages of nine and fourteen enroll themselves in highly acknowledged colleges in Paris for intensive studies (Xerri, 2016).

1.2.2 Malta's Educational System in the Nineteenth Century

At the turn of the 19th century and as a colony of the British Empire, Malta's educational system was strongly influenced by the British system and underwent substantial innovations. One such example is the outcomes of the Julyan and Keenan Reports of 1878 (Calleja, 1994) which had far-reaching consequences and fundamentally changed the Maltese educational system. In 1878, English replaced Italian as the primary language of instruction for secondary and post-secondary education. This policy still exists although Maltese has gained in importance over the years. According to Zammit Mangion (1992), the earliest recommendation to train Maltese primary school teachers in the United Kingdom before appointing them Heads of School is to be found in the Keenan Report of 1879, and it was Savona who, in 1881, started such overseas training for Head Teachers.

Muscat (1997, p. 22) quoted Coulson (1986, p. 92) to explain how, for almost a century, our primary schools were identical to those in the United Kingdom.

The pre-war elementary school and the primary school of the immediate post-war years had a fairly clear and restricted purpose – the most important tasks were the [core subjects] and the socialising of children into the generally accepted values of society. Curriculum and teaching methods changed very slowly and the school's interaction with parents and the neighbourhood it served was limited. The Head was often the best qualified and experienced teacher on the staff. The comparatively stable and unchanging regime of the school made it possible for him [her] to carry out all the school's non-teaching tasks himself [herself] (Muscat, 1997, p. 22).

1.2.3 Malta's Educational System in the Twentieth Century

As argued by Calleja (1994) at the beginning of the twentieth century, a worrying number of Maltese children were not being properly educated. After the First World War, this was addressed through an important piece of legislation, The Compulsory Attendance Act of 1924, to oblige families to send their children to school.

Some decades later, due to poverty and another World War, educational levels were still not satisfactory. Calleja (1994) highlights that in 1946, this brought about significant changes in legislation and education was made compulsory for all.

Muscat (1997) illustrates how in the early fifties, lack of specialisation in primary Maltese schools enabled the School Head to be considered qualified, by virtue of his/her more extensive or more successful classroom experience, to supervise and control the work of teachers, to visit classes, to monitor registers and to scrutinise pupils' exercise books. The Head was expected to influence teachers by his/her own example and persuade them to identify themselves with his/her aims and methods. Muscat (1997, p. 28) quoted Caulson (1986, p. 22) to describe this image of the Head as a father figure, the 'Victorian *paterfamilias*.' Muscat (1997, p. 28) elaborated further on this 'patriarchal' Head Teacher image by arguing that it still persists in Maltese primary schools although it is on the decline everywhere else. This 'paternal,' or more accurately in Malta, 'maternal' headship style, was typical of our local primary Heads for many years. Lloyd (1985) described this position in his research about primary Head Teachers' perceptions of their role in the British context:

These Heads perceived themselves as active and fairly dominant influences in their schools. They had high expectations of staff, were not reluctant to criticise work which they considered was unsatisfactory and frequently referred to the importance of leading by example. Although many consulted their teachers and did involve them in the discussion of aims and objectives, they would only be prepared to accept outcomes which matched their own strongly held views (Lloyd, 1985, p. 302).

This also explains why, as Southworth (1989) points out, when these Heads take over from others, they are often not fully convinced of the former methods and try to change things which they do not like. Muscat (1997, p. 23) concluded that in the history of the Maltese Educational System Head Teachers were given a few managerial tasks to perform as everything seemed to be controlled by the Director of Education. Head Teachers were accountable for every stock item at their school, and they had an inordinate fear of the auditor who, they believed, could turn up at any moment to check their stores. Zammit Mangion (1992) affirms that Head Teachers knew exactly what their job entailed. They were closely watched from above to ensure that they did all the school's non-teaching tasks themselves.

1.2.4 Malta's Educational System after Independence in 1964

In 1964, the Maltese Islands gained independence from the United Kingdom and a number of educational reforms were implemented throughout the 1970s (Calleja,

1994). Even after Independence, Malta maintained its close links to the U.K. The Heads of secondary schools, both government and private, were chosen from among their own staff and they sought to run their schools along the lines of grammar schools in the United Kingdom. The concept of the ideal Head for these schools is clearly described by Goodwin (1968):

... he [she] will be a triple colossus: excellent as a scholar, impeccable as an organiser, inspiring as a leader... he [she] will have about him [her] a tang of aloof authority well able to exercise firm rule yet showing friendliness and compassion. He [she] will keep abreast of the educational times yet be so sensitive to tradition that he will hand on undiminished the heritage of the ages (Goodwin, 1968, p. 13).

The main educational milestones in the history of Maltese Education since Independence in 1964 are as follows:

- 1970: Every student had to attend secondary education (Sultana et al., 1997).
- 1974: The compulsory school leaving age was raised from 14 to 16 years of age (Sultana et al., 1997).
- 1988: A new Education Act was enacted which established the onus of the State to provide compulsory education to all Maltese citizens so as to meet the needs of society. This recognised the professional status of teachers and set up school councils (Laws of Malta, 1988). During this year, the age at which education became compulsory was lowered to the age of five.

The 1988 Education Act also laid the first foundations for decentralisation in the Maltese education system by establishing School Councils and the possibility of schools becoming legal entities. Farrugia and Attard (1999) explained how the Division of Education, in line with the government's policy of decentralisation was underscoring a policy of administrative / managerial decentralisation of schools.

- 1989: It was in this year that the first National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) was published. It clearly outlined what compulsory education was expected to deliver. Wain (1991) critically commented upon what became known as the ‘prescriptive approach’ which generally stipulates what teachers should teach.

I have fundamental objections against the subject-centred and traditionalist pedagogical philosophy which underlies the content and method. The National Curriculum, primary and secondary, is simply a reproposal of the status quo, a programme which is not only conservatative pedagogically but actually regressive in the light of current realities (Wain, 1991, p. iii).

1.2.5 Malta’s Educational System after 1995

The Maltese document *Tomorrow’s Schools: Developing Effective Cultures* was published by the Consultative Committee for the Ministry for Education in 1995. After this date, the ground-breaking implications of this document were instrumental when it came to promoting leadership as a critical factor behind change and development. This document brought to light the need to nurture a context with discussion and participation amongst all the stakeholders as a central theme of the reform process. This led to the setting up of a committee made up of educators from the education authorities, the Faculty of Education and the union representing our educators. Together, they engaged in a three-year consultation period, involving what many in the field consider one of the most engaging experiences that affected Maltese society. The objective was to debate what is critical for the economic and social development of our country through the reform of our educational system. This document propagated the role of the Head of School as ‘an educational leader.’ This contradicted the managerial role being attributed to Heads of School and people in leading positions within the contemporary market mentality.

The document argued for the need for Heads to reconceptualise their role to one that places them at the centre of the change process and of working with and for people. The human dimension was identified as critical for them to take on a more dynamic role in school development. The following quote illustrates that even as early as 1995, policy makers were making bold statements for the need to devolve greater

responsibilities where it mattered, that is, the school site, so that people working at different levels could determine the way forward.

Research is unanimous in identifying good educational leadership as a key characteristic of effective schools and school systems ... 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 those 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 ...

Headship requires a set of skills, attitudes and personal qualities ... Effective Heads have a vision ... They should know how and when to delegate responsibilities and are capable of leading and orchestrating a team of staff (Consultative Committee on Education, 1995, p. 31).

Therefore, in 1995, the decentralisation policy offered the required legislation to bring about the new reforms and to introduce a new organisational structure in the Education Division. The set up of the Department of Curriculum Development, Implementation and Review also took place during this year.

The National Minimum Curriculum (Ministry of Education and Employment, 1999) clearly outlines the objectives local educational institutions are required to achieve:

The educational system should equip all individuals with a balanced mix of wisdom, knowledge, skills and attitudes in order for them to operate effectively in today's and particularly, tomorrow's world of work (The National Minimum Curriculum, Ministry of Education and Employment, 1999, p. 28).

The publication of the second National Minimum Curriculum took place in 2002 while it was only in 2012 when the follow up document, the National Curriculum Framework for All was published.

1.2.6 Malta's Educational System after 2004

Malta became part of the European Union on 1st May, 2004. Since then, the process of reform has been ongoing and in the last fifteen years, several major reforms have been introduced, one of which is the publication of the policy, *For All Children To Succeed: A New Network Organisation For Quality Education In Malta'* (Reform

Document, 2005) by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment in 2005. This presented a wide-reaching College Network Reform Policy for the Maltese Islands (2005), emphasising that:

In the context of our State education system, an ideal school network, would be a group of schools that cater from early childhood right through primary to secondary education. Whilst retaining their individual identities, the schools within the network would be co-ordinated by a leading facilitator who will be accountable to the school network Board.

In this way, ideal school networking should lead to the development of autonomous educational institutions, working within an agreed framework of performance, accountability and outcomes. This will be done on the basis of delegated functions and responsibilities, each co-ordinating their efforts to provide a continuous education programme that offers entry at kindergarten and exit at the end of secondary education (Reform Document, 2005, p. 41).

An overview of the underlying principles of this Reform Document (2005) will be presented in the following sections.

1.3 The Reform Document (2005)

The Ministry of Education presented the Reform Document (2005) so as to bring about reform through networking. This is often considered to be one of the most ambitious endeavours in the history of Maltese education in relation to the local state schools. Such an extensive reform was expected to bring about challenges associated with change management that would impact all professionals in the educational field in all sectors of teaching and school management across all sectors of the local educational system. *“The task ahead is a mammoth one. It will involve commitment, discipline and effective network leadership.”* (Reform Document, 2005, p. xxi).

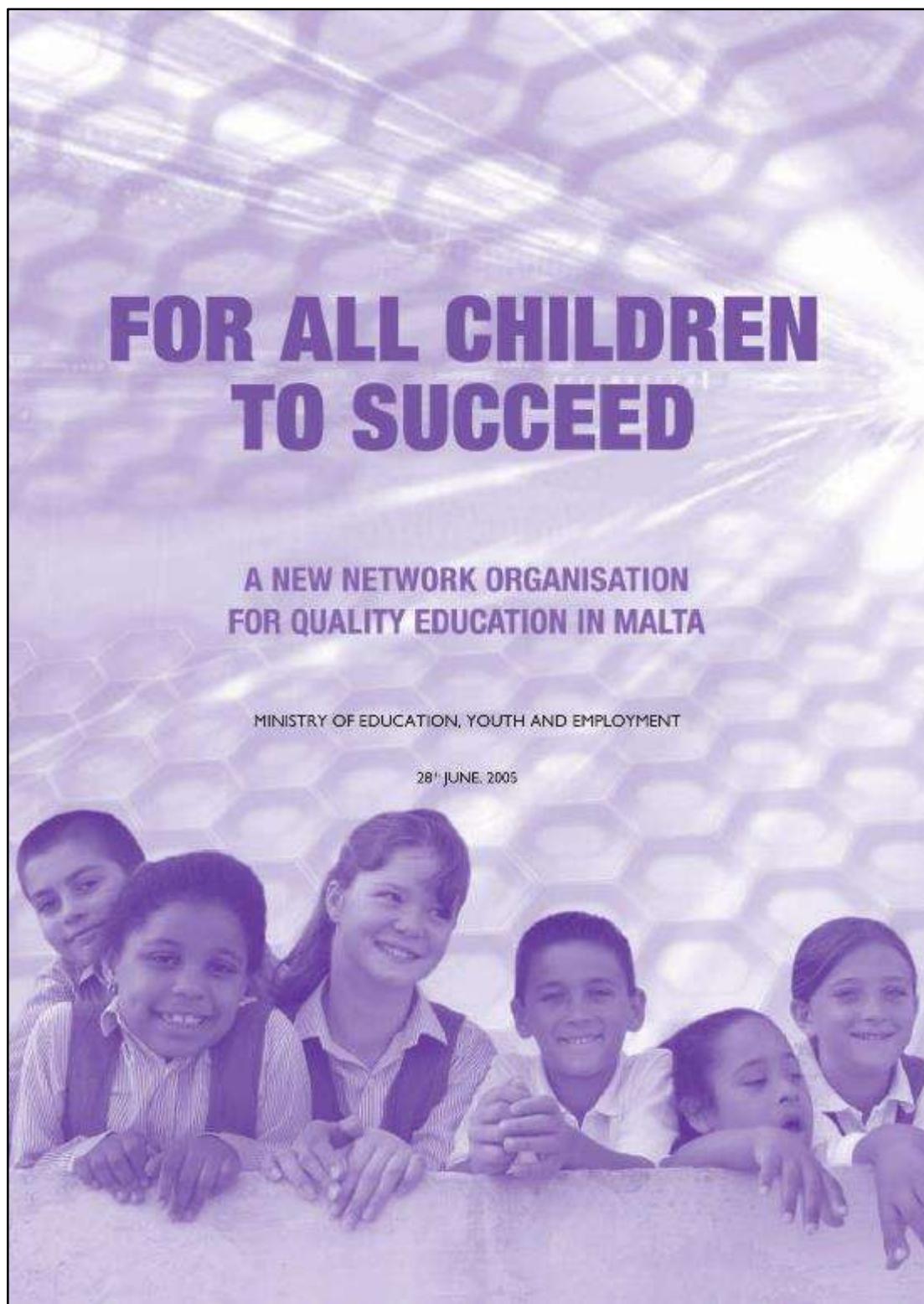


Image 1.1 The Front Cover of the Reform Document (2005)

1.3.1 Educational Review and the Reform Document

With this reform document, the Ministry of Education of the time (2005) embarked on a comprehensive process of educational review to cover the following areas, namely:

1. Early childhood education provision;
2. Inclusive education policies, structures and services;
3. School attendance and absenteeism;
4. State primary and secondary schools;
5. Education Division restructuring;
6. Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC);
7. Adult basic skills;
8. Career guidance;
9. Higher and tertiary levels of education;
10. Lifelong learning.

Since the Reform Document (2005) forms the basis of this study, the salient sections of the document's executive summary have been reproduced below for easy reference:

- *The Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment is close to completing a review of the education system, from early childhood education to higher education. The objective is to reform the whole system of lifelong learning into one which is smoother and seamless.*
- *This document addresses the issue of the governance of the education system and of the autonomy and decentralisation of State schools. Challenges faced by other areas in the field of education will shortly be addressed once reports by working groups set up by the Ministry are completed.*
- *The key challenge for Malta is to invest seriously, heavily and continuously in human capital in ways that affect life changes. We want all children to succeed. The next phase in Malta's education development is to ensure quality education for all.*
- *The network is being accepted as the main organisational form which can give depth and scale to this process of transformation. The education system, like all other societal systems, faces the challenge of having to change the way it functions – from a hierarchical, apex-governed*

structure to a new network organisation that can achieve quality education in Malta.

- “*Networks are now the most important organisational form of our time, reshaping the activities of families, governments and businesses. They are increasingly fundamental to successful enterprise and they challenge our notions of leadership*” (Hannon, 2004).
- *In accordance with the Government’s declared programme, the Education Division will be restructured into two distinct yet complementary juridical entities. The Malta Education Directorate (MED) will regulate, generate policies, set standards, and monitor the whole system to assure quality in all State and non-State schools. The Educational Services Directorate (ESD) will act as operator and will coordinate those services which can be more effectively and economically rendered centrally.*
- *The 1988 Education Act provides that the regulatory and policy-making authority is vested in and exercised by the Minister for Education. Legislation will enable the Minister to delegate authority to MED and ESD to carry out specific functions and in specific sector and to agencies set up for specific purposes.*
- *The Minister of Education will chair a small Standing Committee to ensure direction, coherence, synergy and coordination throughout the whole system.*
- *The shift from centralisation to decentralisation necessitates that schools network together. This will empower schools further in that they may be able to take decisions as suits to the needs of their students. Moreover, schools will become more autonomous, operating within a stipulated, agreed framework which also ensures accountability.*
- *In this way, through networking, schools will be in a better and stronger position to meet the needs of students. They will work in partnership with one another, share resources, will jointly solve problems and create new practices within the specific and particular context of a group of schools forming one whole unit. Networks will ensure a smoother flow from one level of education to another, as well as provide schools with the required space to develop their curriculum as laid down by the National Curriculum, and, also, according to the needs of their students.*
- *In a schools network system, children will still attend the primary school in their town or village and will proceed to a secondary school within that particular network. Each school will have its own Head of School and staff. However, each school will form part of a network with other schools and the whole network will be called a College. Each College will have a Principal who will lead the whole network and who will chair a Council of Heads of schools, again within that network. A College Board will provide direction to the whole network.*

- *The ideal network would include a number of primary schools. These would then feed students into a number of secondary schools.*

Therefore, the concept behind college or school networks brings together a few ‘feeder’ primary schools and a ‘receiving’ secondary school, in a bid to ensure continuity in the education of state school children, similar to that experienced by children in the local church colleges or private schools. The feeder schools would prepare young students for secondary school which would in turn be the receiving school for primary students at the end of their primary experience.

The Reform Document (2005) defines a College as follows:

‘College’ is intended to mean a school or a network of schools as the Minister responsible for Education may from time to time determine. A College will be under the responsibility of a College Board and will be administered by a Principal.

The Reform Document (2005) also provides a detailed list of the stipulated characteristics a College should adopt.

The Reform Document (2005) defines school networks as follows:

We are adopting here a working definition developed by Professor David Hopkins for the type of network in education that has a chance of realising the aspirations many have for them: “Networks are purposeful social entities characterised by a commitment to quality, rigour, and a focus on standards and student learning. They are also an effective means of supporting innovation in times of change. In education, networks promote the dissemination development of teachers, support capacity building in schools, mediate between centralised and decentralised structures, and assist in the process of re-structuring and re-culturing educational organisations and systems.”

The current schools building stock limits the simultaneous introduction of the ideal structure on a national level. Whilst therefore schools are being built, refurbished and extended, different forms of school networks will be introduced to demonstrate the benefits networking provides.

While more details on school networks are outlined in Chapter 4 of the Reform Document (2005), seven models of such school networks are presented in Chapter 5. Further information is available in Appendix 1.

1.3.2 Reactions to the Reform Document

As commented by Bezzina, 2001, school leaders and teachers constantly find themselves in a conflict between a belief in democracy and participation on the one hand and the daily experiences of bureaucracy and a lack of effective structures to function as decision makers. Earlier studies also reflected this weariness through disillusionment and stress (Bezzina, 1995; Borg & Falzon, 1989; Farrugia, 1986).

Even before the publication of the Reform Document in 2005, various organisations which are involved in the field of education in Malta were concerned about the outcome of this Reform. At the forefront, the Malta Union of Teachers described the vision of the networking document as '*kliem sbieħ*' [English translation of the Maltese phrase: '*well-intentioned words*'] but went on to comment that '*mill-kliem ghall-fatti hemm bahar jaqsam*' [English translation of the Maltese phrase: '*words and actual facts can be oceans apart*']. Bencini, the President of the Malta Union of Teachers (2004, p.vii) at that time, emphasized that the organisation agreed in principle with the concepts of the proposed networking document. However, he showed concern to the many questions that had remained unanswered and required proper clarification.

Il-Malta Union of Teachers taqbel fis-sustanza ma' dak kollu li qed jintqal, izda għandha ħafna mistoqsijiet x'tagħmel! Dan ifisser li d-Diviżjoni tal-Edukazzjoni ser tispicca biss bħala regulatur? Dan ifisser li ser tinholoq xi fondazzjoni oħra? Dan ifisser li kif qed jingħad, dawn 'l hekk imsejħa 'clusters' ser jitmexxew minn Principals u Bord ta' Governaturi? Jekk iva, min ser ikunu dawn in-nies? Dawn in-nies ser jigu impjegati barra mill-Kummissjoni għas-Servizz Pubbliku? (Malta Union of Teachers, 2004, p.vii)

[English translation of the Maltese text: *The Malta Union of Teachers is in line with the vision of the document, however, many issues call for clarification. Does it mean that the Education Division would end up acting as a regulator? Does it mean that some new foundation would be set up? Does this mean, as is being said, that the so called clusters could be led by Principals and Board of Governors? If so, who are these people going to be? Will these people be employed from outside the Commission for Public Services?*]

At the time, there were also criticisms directed at the proposed changes from the political field. The Hon. Carmelo Abela, the Shadow Minister for Education, Youth and Employment of the time was quoted in the Malta Union of Teachers' magazine

(Abela, 2004, p.xi) that he believed that the proposed reforms would be simply cosmetic. He referred to the new concepts proposed by the networking documents as ‘being clichés, buzz words or myths and suggested that they should be considered as such. Hon. Abela (Abela, 2004, p.xi) also quoted from *il-Gattopardo* by the famous Italian writer, Tommaso di Lampedusa, who stated that ‘*the more things change, the more they remain the same.*’

These reactions highlight the possibility that this reform policy could run the risk of simply being regarded as the ‘mythical dimension’ of policies that seem to conflate progress with organisational change.

By definition, a myth is a fictitious or at least unproven, object or belief. Very often, myths are widely held to be true, and thus can be misleading. Ellsworth (1989, p.27) argues that educational discourse, particularly in policies, has often developed along a highly abstract and utopian line which does not necessarily sustain the daily workings of the educational discourse its supporters advocate. This feminist author maintains that very often, educational discourse is based on rationalist assumptions that give rise to ‘repressive myths.’ By this Ellsworth (1989, p.298) implies that when participants attempt to put into practice prescriptions offered in the policy literature concerning ‘ideals’ of empowerment, voice and dialogue, they simply produce results that are not only unhelpful but which actually exacerbate the very conditions they are trying to work against.

To the extent that our efforts to put discourses of critical pedagogy into practice may lead us to reproduce relations of dominations in our classroom, these discourses were ‘working through’ us in repressive way, and had themselves become vehicle of repression (Ellsworth, 1989, p.28).

This contradiction will be analysed further later in this dissertation by illustrating the ‘myths’ surrounding the position of leader as proposed in the Reform Document.

There were also various reactions to the Reform Document (2005) from different academics in the local field.

In his research, Spiteri (2016) recognised that this Reform Document represented the greatest change and associated change management ever experienced within schooling in Malta since the introduction of compulsory secondary education in 1971.

I know now that the expectation in 2005 that the Heads would 'get in' and be converted to the new school management paradigm heralded by the Reform had been overly optimistic. Why had there been so little initial enthusiasm for a proposal that, according to the Policy, was meant to give schools more autonomy and resources and, ultimately, more say on the actual curriculum in the classroom? (Spiteri, 2016, p. 21).

Cutajar (2017) referred to the Maltese professional educators with many years of experience, who, according to his research, considered that they had been working within a conservative yet successful educational system. He noted that the challenge of convincing these professionals to endorse the Reform and adopt the proposed changes as the way forward, had been problematic.

1.3.3 Report on the Reform Policy [The Malta Union of Teachers]

After having observed the effects of the college reform over a period of three scholastic years, the Malta Union of Teachers were concerned about the impact that the revised college system and accompanying reforms were having on school children and education personnel. As a result of this and in 2010, the Malta Union of Teachers requested Prof M. Borg and Dr J. Giordmaina to carry out a research project to examine whether the college system and the accompanying reforms had managed to attain their vision and objectives of providing all children with a quality education, to ensure that all children were in a better position to succeed.

An online questionnaire survey was the main research instrument used with a sample of teaching grade personnel and members of the senior management teams from primary and secondary school sectors across the country.

The final report of the Malta Union of Teachers' research project (Borg & Giordmaina, 2012) acknowledges that the role of the school senior management team led by the school's Head is crucial in the running of a school.

The research report (Borg & Giordmaina, 2012, p. 125) quoted the following remarks by the Heads of Schools:

I have always worked as a Head within the College system so I cannot compare with what was like before. I find a lot of support from the College Principal and I have a very good working relationship with him though I do not always agree, which is healthy. I find support and collaboration from other Heads within the College. On the other hand, sometimes there are college based initiatives which continue to add a burden on an already overloaded job.

Heads should have more time to think (and) not go about managing more than one thing at a time. It has become a multitasking exercise to manage everything besides teaching and learning, which should always be top priorities.

The Head's role has been diminished due to an increase of bureaucracy.

The report states that much of the senior management team's time was taken up by administration and paperwork, with the result that the central part of their role as the school's educational leaders was greatly restricted, often limited to just a token input. Even though much hope had been raised that the College Reform would usher in important changes in the educational system, the research findings showed that an overwhelming majority of the 153 members of the senior management team (more than nine to ten) were in agreement that paperwork still dominated much of their work and that they were burdened with an ever-increasing load of paper/administrative work. This, together with the lack of sufficient clerical support to address the increase in paper work (as indicated by more than eight in ten senior management team members) resulted in an overwhelming majority (more than nine in ten) indicating that they had very little time for curricular work or to mentor.

The increased bureaucracy highlighted by the research findings once more raises concerns about the amount of information required by upper echelons of the education hierarchy and the burden this places on the senior management team. The questionnaire findings showed that more than seven in ten of the 153 of the participants were in agreement that the senior management team is frequently finding itself having to provide the same information to various 'superiors' in the hierarchy.

Moreover, less than six in ten participants were of the opinion that the Head of School should have the right to select teachers and other teaching personnel on his/her staff, as well as of his/her senior management team. As one Head put it:

School leaders need to be involved in the choice of their senior management team members and teaching personnel.

Just about two in three of the 1141 respondents in the various teaching grades were in agreement that their Head of School encourages different forms of distributed leadership. This is a quality that is acknowledged as being important for the success of the College system. Indeed, as one respondent remarked:

I think it all depends on the Head of School i.e. how much she collaborates with the staff and how much she allows staff to take initiative.

Moreover, the vast majority (more than eight in ten of the 1141 respondents) felt that their Head is indeed encouraging collaboration with the school, as do about half of the participants with regard to collaboration with other schools within/across college/s.

An overwhelming majority (more than nine in ten) were of the opinion that members of the senior management team and personnel in the various teaching grades should be made aware of what is being discussed in the Council of Heads meetings. The research document quotes one observation by a class teacher

The Head of School should keep us informed of the new changes that are being held within the College.

1.3.4 Other Studies based on the Reform Policy

Other research studies carried out both locally and overseas at various tertiary levels, having the College reform as their focal point, used the system of questionnaires as their research instrument. Both the school senior management team (i.e. the Head of School and Assistant Head/s and College Heads of Department in the case of secondary schools) and teachers made up the sample of respondents. A common factor in all these studies was to establish the effectiveness of communication between the College Principals, the Heads of School and the teachers.

On a general note and through these studies, it can be determined that Heads of Schools experience a more personal and ameliorated relationship with their Principal since the College Reform. Some argued that the roles of the College Principal and Head are perceived as being intertwined and having blurred boundaries.

Cassar (2008, p.24) argues that there should be a better definition of each role because there is evidence of various power struggles as individual Heads have felt threatened by what they perceived as being impositions by the College Principal. Research has shown that the concept of Knowledge Management (as defined by the UK's National College for School Leaders publications) is relatively new and its benefits have not yet been completely recognised.

On the issue of the impact of the College Principal on the Head's leadership role Spiteri (2007) concluded that College Principals were failing to achieve desirable relationships as they were not successfully and sufficiently supporting the Heads, improving their morale and encouraging greater confidence in their important work. Spiteri (2007) concludes that if this were to be achieved, this would result in the Head's further involvement for the sake of improvement.

When addressing the theme of Distributed Leadership (DL), Mallia (2009, p.48) argues that leaders need to become more familiar with the various aspects of DL and that this concept needs to be fine-tuned. It was determined that DL would assist schools in being less dependent upon single individuals. Heads and Assistant Heads were generally in agreement that there was more need for onsite training on DL by the education authorities. Participant Heads of Schools in Mallia's (2009) research study, believed strongly in team dynamics and worked closely with the senior management team. In this regard, other respondents in this study argued that DL cannot be achieved through the traditional approach focusing on the key person responsible for all school matters, but must be directed on the effective functionality of teamwork. Mallia (2009, p.24) argues strongly that Heads have to be willing to 'let go' rather than to simply delegate; they must be committed to creating a team culture within the schools. Policy frameworks should focus more on team leadership rather than the individual Head or Principal. There was consensus in this study that DL brought about new ideas and various solutions to problems on a daily basis which should result in a positive impact

on learning. Mallia (2009) concludes that many participants felt that because of internal and external pressures, DL is not implemented effectively in schools. Almost all the senior management team in this study felt that they did not have time to discuss, provide feedback and evaluate performance due to an increase in workload and lack of staff at this level.

A PHD thesis (Cutajar, 2012) analysed the nature of networking and collaboration in a policy context that required joint networking within and by individual schools whilst exploring the implications for educational leadership, governance and accountability within and between the institutions involved. Cutajar (2012, p.25) illustrates that all teachers in his interview sample complained that the new systematic structure and the *modus operandi* of the Heads of School was more or less a replica of the old ‘top-down’ model. It emerged that very few are those Heads who consulted teachers and discussed with them matters that concerned school policy. It also emerged that very few Heads of School adopted the Distributed Leadership Model in the day to day running of the school. Heads of Schools complained that the agenda for their Council of Heads meetings is more or less prepared by the Principal and that there is very little consultation about the agenda. They presume that the Principal brings to the meeting policies discussed at the Education Leaders Council. These findings underpin the importance of the primary theme of networking and collaboration and the three secondary themes of educational leadership, governance and accountability as core aspects of the College Reform. They also provide insights into how networking and collaboration, nurtured by the right leadership and governance, reinforced by an accountable mentality, can sustain the establishment of school networks in the Maltese Islands (Cutajar, 2012).

Spiteri (2007) also argues that there is a lack of human resources with expertise in the field. He determined that what was required was for all college stakeholders to shift into a new mind frame and that they should be driven by a common vision of mutual benefit and agree on ways of how to nurture more flexibility in colleges and schools. College Principals and Heads of Schools must be competent, have sound values, show a willingness to make concessions and be ready to accept short-comings amongst network members.

1.4 The Various Stakeholders Involved in this Study

Networking between schools is considered to be the main organisational form in a college, encompassing a framework driven by collaborative endeavour. Participants in a particular college network include school staff (administration, teachers, learning support educators and ancillary staff), psychosocial professionals (college counsellor, career advisor, social worker, youth worker and college prefect of discipline), students and parents. In the local context, the introduction of this school networking reform dates back a number of years and includes extensive preparation and legislation. In fact, the whole process of implementation spanned over a decade, commencing in 1995 with the required legislation to bring about a more decentralised educational system and progressing with the launch of the Reform Document in 2005. This groundwork was instrumental and necessary for this policy to be implemented.

While the Ministry for Education has been mentioned at the start of this chapter, there are many other groups of people who are very much affected by this Reform Document and who play a key role in the outcomes of this study. As mentioned by Borg and Giordmaina (2012, p. 4) in their report, *Towards a Quality Education for All – The College System Examining the Situation*:

To the stakeholders (but especially to educators) reforms can be a source of empowerment as individually and collectively they actively engage in reviewing the status quo, delineate clearly common objectives and generate novel ways of overhauling and improving practices to attain these objectives.

When describing the Reform Document (2005), Borg and Giordmaina (2012, p. 21) identified the fact that “*Networking and collaboration has to take place because they address social and personal relationships. Building this relationship and collaboration is not an easy task, especially since this necessitates a change in the mindset of the stakeholders in order for it to take place.*”

Borg and Giordmaina (2012, p. 5) also recognise that, “*More often than not, ... reforms are accompanied by a degree of uncertainty, apprehension and resistance among some of the stakeholders.*” The various groups are namely:

- The Students;
- The Parents;
- The Teachers and Specialised Staff;
- The Heads of Schools;
- The College Board, College Principal and Heads of Schools.

1.4.1 The Students

The students at the school being observed in this study are between the ages of 3 and 16 and generally live close by in the surrounding towns and villages. They are predominantly Maltese, however in these past years, the numbers of foreign students or students with foreign parents has increased substantially.

According to the Reform Document (2005, p. 41):

..this reform will create an environment where children and students benefit from increased self-confidence, encouragement, opportunities and the on-going support they need to acquire and to further their knowledge, competencies and attitudes needed to help develop their personalities. This will make them grow into active citizens capable of contributing towards their own well-being, their families and of society.

1.4.2 The Parents / Carers

According to the Reform Document (2005, p. 41):

... parents/carers will not only benefit from the positive effect networking creates on the education of their child. Parents, as partners in this experience, will be able to engage in their child's educational journey ...

1.4.3 The Teachers and Specialised Staff

According to the Reform Document (2005, p. 41):

This same environment [as outlined by the Reform Document] will provide teachers with greater job satisfaction and support will help them acquire the space and opportunity to work flexibly in a task/needs-oriented manner. The system will be diversified to dove-tail with students' needs.

1.4.4 The College Board, Principal and Heads of Schools

According to the Reform Document (2005, p. 19): “*Each College will have a Principal who will lead the whole network and who will chair a Council of Heads of Schools, again within that network. A College Board will provide direction to the whole network.*”

Appendix 1 of the Reform Document (2005, p. 71) clearly outlines the professional responsibility expected from the Principal and Heads of Schools as follows; “*The Principal and Heads of School are holders of management positions which imply the adoption of a top management mindset.*”

Detailed lists of the various functions of the key personnel within the College are to be found in the appendices section of the Reform Document (2005).

In their report, Borg and Giordmaina (2012, p. 23) recognised the complexity of this role of the Principal when they state that, “*one gains insight into the demanding responsibilities that the position brings with it, especially that of fostering collaboration and collegiality.*” They also comment about the relationships that should be present among key personnel in each College (Borg & Giordmaina, 2012, p. 22) as follows; “*So the Principal, as the leader of a College, needs to establish good relations with the Heads, in the same way a Head needs to establish good relations with his/her SMT and teaching personnel to establish collaborative practice in his/her school.*”

1.5 The Local Community

In the address at the beginning of the Reform Document (2005, p. 13), by the Minister of Education, Youth and Employment of the time, there are some all-encompassing statements about the local community. One such example is that “*we expect people in every community to experience a refreshing change and to take an active role in the process.*”

The Reform Document (2005, p. 21) further states that, “*School networks will use the community resources in ways that step up the involvement of the community at large. In return, school will increase their role as community learning and cultural centres.*”

In their report, Borg and Giordmaina (2012, p.18) clearly outline the benefits to be gained from having a close working relationship between the educational system and the local community as follows: “*In this era of change and innovation, the child stands to benefit when school leaders reach out to the community beyond the boundary walls of their institutions.*”

1.6 My First Diary Entry

My first diary entry was written at the very beginning of the new scholastic year, 2005 - 2006, following a preparatory meeting that officially launched the new reforms with all educators.

Excerpt from My Personal Diary: 1st September 2005: *I have happy recollections of September 2005. College networks were being proposed as an apt framework for attaining ‘quality education’ through the pooling of resources and the sharing of ideas and good practices. The guiding principle had to be ‘all of us are smarter than one of us.’ Furthermore, I realised that we were living in the paradigm of networking, as the most important organisational form of our time, being a brainchild of the World Wide Web. Personally, I found the idea of school networking to be a very favourable one.*

A milestone meeting was organised by the Ministry of Education with all state school teachers towards the end of summer 2005. This was the fruit of the publication of the policy document ‘For All Children To Succeed: A New Network Organisation For Quality Education In Malta.’ The meeting commenced with a celebration of the good practices that the Maltese educational system had utilised during the past decade. It was a pleasure to sit back and appreciate what a long way we had come to the present day.

With the help of Power-Point technology, the proposed structure models for the network organisation were presented to us for the first time in a three-dimensional way. Virtually, we were invited to an open day visit at the new Colleges having huge buildings, well-paved paths and impressive sports grounds. We were travelling so fast and the buildings seemed to engulf me from every side of the room. The journey was immersed in classical music. Till now no child could be seen or heard.

I still remember some basic points that I had jotted down on a small notebook that I had carried with me to every meeting. It was said that networked education could be realised better by introducing policies to drive school support. To my mind, they were also a natural expansion of the reformation process that we had undertaken over the past ten years. I really hoped that the proposals in the networking document could support the system to more effectively translate the document's concepts into practice.

In mid-July 2007, the news headlines announced the signing of the 'Agreement between the Government and the Malta Union of Teachers' to facilitate the implementation of an Education Reform Process for All Children To Succeed. The Press Release (MYERR 076/07) announced 70 measures agreed upon for the better performance of the students' learning and the Teacher's duties (2007:3). As I stood motionless in front of the television monitor, I started to dream once again.

Would the organisation of the new school buildings (as shown in a three-dimensional form two years before) reach all marginalised students? Would the huge buildings 'melt' down to flexible learning zones that could adapt themselves to the needs of the children, rather than requiring the children to adapt themselves to the needs of the school?

As educators, would heads of schools and teachers succeed to acculturate themselves to volunteer to give their services, to offer their expertise, to give out their energy in favour of all children to succeed at all points of the College, including those hovering on the peripheries? Would the proposed network structures give us a possibility to do so? Would the suggested network leadership in the document empower the heads of schools to give the possibility to the network participants to fulfil their full potential? How would the demarcation lines of the school boundaries be pushed further away to embrace other schools and learners?

I felt the need to question so many things and I was determined to start a long journey in search of the answers.

1.7 Personal Involvement in this Subject

My involvement and interest in this subject was so great that in 2005, I chose to study the way in which leadership of schools was organised in Malta, as the area of philosophical reflection for my dissertation for my Master's degree in the philosophy of education. My Master's dissertation provided me with the opportunity to carry out a close examination of both the vision of the network policy and the views expressed by the policy makers in the foreword messages of the networking document (Reform Document, 2005, pp. xi-xii).

By utilising a feminist philosophical conceptual framework, my initial analysis was focused on the theoretical vision of the Reform Document. My philosophical analysis was guided by the Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Education definitions of feminism as 'a way of rethinking the usual' (Blake et al, 2003). This critical inquiry led me to explore the philosophy underlying the new reform, the proposed network models for Maltese schools and the assumptions underlying the proposed selected structures.

This study developed and examined the theoretical flow of power, as well as the role positions of the network leaders within the models that were being proposed to fulfil the document's vision of instilling greater innovation and flexibility in the educational system. The study met the challenge of 'rethinking' the network models produced and using the critique of these models to recommend an alternative perspective to the present school network models and their proposed leadership.

Following poststructuralist philosophical insights, I became aware of the limitations of an unquestioned single 'given' approach and shifted my attention to other ways of conceiving leadership. Through this current study, I intend to widen the scope of my Masters' dissertation to explore this aspect further and from a wider perspective.

1.8 A Study in Educational Leadership in a new Reform

With this current study, my intention is to explore the potential strength of empowering leadership to bring about meaningful change in the local educational system. This will involve considering different and alternative modes of leadership

which may prove to be relevant and effective to bring about the new networking reform.

As outlined above, for my Masters dissertation, I studied the works of various contemporary theorists in educational leadership. I intend to continue this research for this PhD, focusing on the benefits of rhizomatic networks and referring to the works of Hannah Arendt, which date between 1958 and 1975.

Based on the intellectual work located in a combination of experience, belief and reading, Arendt (1958a) constructs arguments that speak about the contemporary world and focusing on governance and institutions in general. Arendt has developed concepts which certainly provoke ideas, meanings and understandings which could be utilised for educational leadership by examining the interrelationship between plural persons generating ideas and acting. This can illuminate the dangers of substituting action with activity.

For this study, I selected Arendt's perspective over and above other theorists since her works offer the vehicle for a critically engaged approach to local issues pertaining to the educational reform investigated in this study. This involves undertaking a detailed analytical inquiry which provides all the necessary tools for conceiving alternative modes of leadership that may be considered relevant for the new networking reform, as required by the above-mentioned legislation.

Therefore, I intend to utilise this inquiry methodology in a more detailed way, as proposed by contemporary theorists, with a special focus on the works of Hannah Arendt.

This study therefore aims to examine experiences within schools created by organisational hierarchy and bureaucracy which may lead Heads of Schools to accept relations which subordinate their interests to those of others with greater authority (the Ministry) and the mechanisms whereby teachers, students and parents adapt positions and experiences, as representative of their (Heads of Schools') interests.

This study intends to also explore alternative visions of leaderships. This could offer a new concept of leadership within the school's network. This concept is not meant

to be a static solution but more as an initial ‘seed’ for further reflections and contemplations. A live, dynamic perspective cannot present static figures but keeps changing snapshots. A perspective is not a recipe; it does not just tell you what to do. Rather, it acts as a guide to what to pay attention to, to what one needs to become aware of, to what difficulties to expect and how to approach problems. Through a critical examination of the actual lived experiences of the implementation of the school networking reform in the Maltese islands, this study aims to investigate any possible inherent tensions between the theoretical framework of the document and the actual lived experiences of the reform.

1.9 Subject Overview and Research Questions

The vision of the document proposing networking for Maltese schools (Ministry of Education, 2005) therefore maintains that through networking, schools can be in a better position to meet the needs of the students. Schools can be given the opportunity to work in partnership with one another, to share resources, to jointly solve problems and to create new practices, if the network structures sustain the networking vision.

In this context, this study addresses the following major research question:

To what extent does the notion of leadership as advocated by the Maltese Education Reform Document ‘For All Children To Succeed’ (Ministry of Education & Employment, 2005) correspond to the lived experiences of a School Administration serving in a school college network environment?

The search for this major enquiry has been guided by the following set of minor research questions:

What concept of educational leadership does the document and the actual lived experiences reflect?

Does the concept of network as advocated by the policy document correspond to the actual lived experiences?

What are the implications of the policy document discourse on voice, power and social justice in grounded experiences?

What transformational spaces does the implementation of the reform provide to the network participant?

Current views on research value the personal reflections of the researcher as much as the questions explored empirically. Therefore, I believe that my own perspective is relevant to these questions as, throughout this study, my role was that of Head of School in one of the colleges in the local context. I have an insider view of the lived experiences of the first years of the implementation of the new reform. In this study, I have a dual role – that of a researcher and a participant within the same study.

This study represents for me a crossroad in time; a historical juncture in which I remain poised between the innocence and naiveté of being a newly appointed Head of School (I was appointed in 2008) to school administration and the reflections of a philosophy student privileged with the power of hindsight and research.

This current study will commence with an attempt to narrate my lived experiences of the first stages of the introduction of the new networking educational reform in our country in the light of my current research efforts, to give some possibilities of hope to the tension they embody and the story they tell.

1.10 Overview of the Inquiry Methodology

My lived experiences have been a point of departure for my philosophical research. In fact, there has been no need to transpose myself to some other remote environment to undertake the research. All that was required throughout this study was to rethink my everyday life learning and experiment with this strange and exciting novelty. In this scenario, the concept of school networking is not unfamiliar to me. By exploring it more systematically through this study, my intention is only to sharpen it and to make it more useful as a thinking tool.

Articulating a familiar phenomenon gives me a chance to push my intuitions - to deepen and expand them, to examine and rethink them. In this sense, the concept of school networking and its leadership is neither new nor old for me, as an author. It has both the eye-opening character of novelty and the familiarity of a lived experience. These two ingredients will be stirred together during this study in an ideal ‘recipe’ to investigate the level of congruence between the proposals of the networking reform document and the actual lived experiences of the implemented reform (the main research question).

By utilising Arendtian theory, I aim to investigate in greater depth whether the experience of the new local reform has any totalitarian conditions that could stifle participation, voice and empowerment in actual practice. The research investigation will be carried out through ‘narrative inquiry’ as an emergent research methodology in the field of educational administration studies. The view of experience to which this study refers and which will serve as the cornerstone of the subsequent analysis, has its roots in John Dewey’s (1938) pragmatic philosophy.

Since I have situated the foundation of narrative inquiry within a Deweyan theory of experience, this has allowed for the study of experience to acknowledge the embodiment of the person living in the world. Framed within this view of experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only on individuals’ experience but on the ‘themes,’ ‘concepts’ and ‘issues’ within which individuals’ experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted. This constant view of experience understood from a narrative inquiry approach will make possible the location of narrative theory within a poststructuralist feminist perspective methodology which similarly advocates ‘situated grounded knowledge’ and grass-roots experiences.

The first investigative aim is therefore to critically examine the main themes and concepts derived from the actual lived experiences of the school networking reform. These themes will be taken from an experience that is storied, both in the living and telling through my personal journal extracts. The journey of this study will be explained in the next section which will give a general overview of the whole thesis inquiry.

1.11 Overview of the Study

The exploration in search of the main research question objectives will be carried out in short journeys through subsequent chapters in this study. **Chapter 1** has given a brief overview of the historical context in which this study is set. It has traced the various milestones in the Maltese educational system through the legislation that was drawn up to bring about such radical changes. The salient aspects of the Reform Document of 2005 were also reviewed in this chapter. An excerpt of my first diary entry is presented which reflects the introduction of the reforms, as well as a brief

description of my personal involvement in this field of study. In this chapter, I explained that it is my intention to undertake a critical inquiry to explore the potential strength of empowering leadership to bring about change in the local educational system. As a result of this process, I was able to draw up the subject overview and present the research questions. The final section of this chapter clearly describes the stakeholders who are affected by the educational reforms resulting from the Reform Document (2005).

While **Chapter 1** offers an introduction to Arendtian insights to be utilised as a means of rejecting ‘monocausal’ explanations, which can create an understanding of the elements that might lead to a totalitarian domination in a Maltese college network setup, **Chapter 2** presents a literature review related to the main subjects of this thesis, namely leadership and networking. The literature review also analyses the benefits of introducing a lens through which to identify the main network models and the principal leadership concepts being proposed by the policy document for college networks in Malta. The proposed leadership concepts will be analysed within the main tenets of the leadership continuum presented by educational leadership literature. This review of the leadership continuum will be utilised to investigate the main leadership concepts within the proposed leadership style for the networked environment as propagated by the new reform.

The literature review will be followed by a discussion in **Chapter 3** of the socio-political context of the policy document. This discussion will help contextualise the study, eliciting the main concepts that contribute to the actual formulation of the reform.

This discourse of leadership and networking, with special reference to the introduction of the so-called distributed leadership in Maltese college network models, will then be analysed through the concepts of an Arendtian framework. In this study, the process of spreading leadership from those hierarchically privileged individuals, mainly head teachers to teachers, support staff and children would be questioned through an Arendtian framework to investigate the extent to which it is viewed as propaganda whereby the culture ideology of leadership is being manipulated to secure increased support for the reform process.

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is presented in **Chapter 4** where a case will be made for the use of an Arendtian theoretical framework as a thinking guide and reflective lens on local issues pertaining to the college network reform in Malta and the corresponding leadership.

The Methodology Chapter, **Chapter 5**, will situate the study conceptual framework within a methodological process unfolded as a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering relevant and useful information necessary to answer the emerging research questions of this study. The design of this study will be outlined, and the specific data analysis procedures discussed and explained in detail. This chapter will also critically deal with major rhetorical issues underlying the methodological process that include authorial representation, truthfulness (the question of narrative truth), possible limitations of the report, interpretive authority and issues of representation.

The Data Analysis and Representation Chapter, **Chapter 6**, will analyse in depth the collected data through the narrative enquiry approach. Following the organisation of the data, the data analysis process will utilise a qualitative analysis method to achieve a sense of the personal reflections while trying to critically engage with the main issues posed by the study research questions. The main categories derived from the data analysis will form the main key concepts of the study. The analysis of these themes will be reflected upon through the main concepts derived from the works of the theorist, Hannah Arendt who contributed significantly to political leadership arenas and which the researcher has applied to the education sphere.

The data analysis chapter will be followed by the Discussion Chapter, **Chapter 7** and the concluding chapter, **Chapter 8**. In these final chapters, a summary of the study statements about how the findings relate to the literature review will be given, as well as recommendations for future studies, the identification of limitations, a discussion about implications and the inclusion of a creative closure that speaks to the essence of the study and reflecting its inspiration for myself as the researcher. The various outcomes determined by this study are reviewed in the concluding sections of the final chapter.

1.12 Conclusion

As has been shown in this chapter, prior to 2005, the operation of schools within the state system was generally dependent on the decisions taken centrally at the former Education Division (The Central Administrative Building for Education). Except for sporadic instances, schools had limited horizontal connections with other schools at their level and hardly any vertical connections with schools operating at a lower or higher level. The reform process commenced way back in 1998, following the Education Act 1998 and various ministerial proclamations in different fora on the decentralisation theme, indicating its inclusion on the agenda for educational policy.

In the implementation phase of the decentralisation policy, it became clear that for decisions to be decentralised and schools to be better empowered, the forging of properly networked connections was necessary. The shift from centralisation to decentralisation necessitated that schools were encouraged to network together.

The main principle underlying the school networking reform document within the Maltese context was to encourage the school management to be more effective and in a stronger position to meet the needs of its students. The aim was for schools to work in partnership with one another to share resources, jointly solve problems and create new professional practices.

This study therefore aims to not just be a review study about leadership, but a leading study that will promote an understanding of the concepts of Head of School and School Leadership, as well as to create a greater understanding of the processes involved, in cultural, political and networking terms.

This study will not reach its aim if it merely presents an alternative or opposing view and does not provoke Heads of Schools to begin to seriously examine the assumptions that underlie their leadership experience. In this study, narrative inquiry is an invitation to leaders to disassociate themselves from an ‘imposed’ sedentary way of thinking about school leadership and to start cultivating the art of exploration, questioning and transpositions towards new approaches, thus becoming involved in a continuous learning experience in school leadership.

CHAPTER 2 THE LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The research question of this thesis focuses on five major components related to school lived experience in the local context, namely; leadership, networking, power, voice and social justice. This chapter offers a detailed literature review of these five components. The main inquiry of this study explores to what extent the notion of leadership, as advocated by the Maltese Education Reform Document '*For All Children To Succeed*,' corresponds to the lived experiences of a school administrator serving in a school college network environment.

2.2 The Concept of Leadership

This chapter will review selected concepts of leadership relevant to the field of education. These leadership concepts will be placed on the leadership continuum to enable critical reflection on their implementation in actual practice. Special emphasis will be placed on 'distributed leadership,' as the recommended leadership for college and school networks included within the Maltese reform. This will require a definition of school networks and a thorough analysis of the different types of networks. Particular focus will be given to the Maltese School Network Models, as proposed by the Reform Document. The literature review will also situate the concept of leadership in a school network, within the Arendtian framework of leadership and governance. This will enable an Arendtian discussion of power, voice and social justice in the next chapter of this study.

In our era, leadership is being depicted as the 'solution' to all problems. As argued by Gunter (2013), this is also the case in schools and other educational institutions. This makes the concept of leadership one of the most popular in many fields of thought. Leadership is constantly being discussed in many academic disciplines, practical fields and the popular press.

People from all areas and across all times attempt to describe leadership in terms of a particular set of relationships among people. The importance given to the notion of leadership is due to various reasons that include both the positive aspects of leadership, as well as the less popular aspects of this concept.

2.2.1 Classical Literature on Leadership

This section of the literature review commences by referring to very important ‘classic’ leadership literature that might be described as fundamental to the main arguments of this study. Given the chronological date of their works, the contributions of the various writers could be considered quite outdated (MacGregor-Burns, 1978), (Foster, 1989) (Sergiovanni, 2000). However, the main principles derived from this leadership literature are basic and essential to any comprehensive review of educational leadership.

Foster (1989) argues that the great interest in the concept of leadership is attributed to a certain instability and insecurity within our society and the pre-set institutional ways of life which organisations aim to improve. Foster further argues that “*facing an uncertain future where a mistake can have deadly and unknown ramifications, we ask that somebody be empowering enough to guide us*” (Foster, 1989, p. 3).

Whether the reason is due to questions of a universal nature or questions of a more local dimension, and whether the main aim is with improving an institution or improving chances of survival, leadership meets some kind of modern need, a deep desire to both master situations and to change them for the better. But what exactly does the concept of ‘leadership’ mean? As with other such labels, the term is a vast one and open to various interpretations. It is, as MacGregor-Burns (1978) has noted, one of the most controversial concepts in our language. There remains, however, a sense that leadership really matters and does make a difference. But before the term can be utilised meaningfully, it is necessary to try to tease out the various ways in which it has been used and to try to come to an agreement on its essential concepts. To accomplish this, this literature review first examines the concept of leadership through an analysis of the different concepts of leadership on the leadership continuum. Alternative perspectives of leadership are discussed through a critical feminist perspective theory. It then proceeds to critically examine leadership within

networks with reference to school networks. Finally, it attempts to apply these views to examine the proposed ‘leadership’ by the college network policy in Malta. The main tenets of this proposed leadership are set within the analysis of the leadership continuum for a wider and deeper analysis.

2.2.1.1 The Leadership Continuum

Foster (1989) argues that in a temporary usage, there are essentially two different end points of the leadership continuum which have formed specific definitions of leadership. One tradition is derived from the political-historical discipline, the other from business management and public administration.

Foster (1989) describes the political-historical model of leadership as having a long history centred on the role of outstanding individuals. From this point of view, leadership is largely a sequence of events, actions, decisions and happenings through which individuals have orchestrated a transformation in society. In Image 2.1, the use of authority by the leader is mapped against the areas of freedom for subordinates.

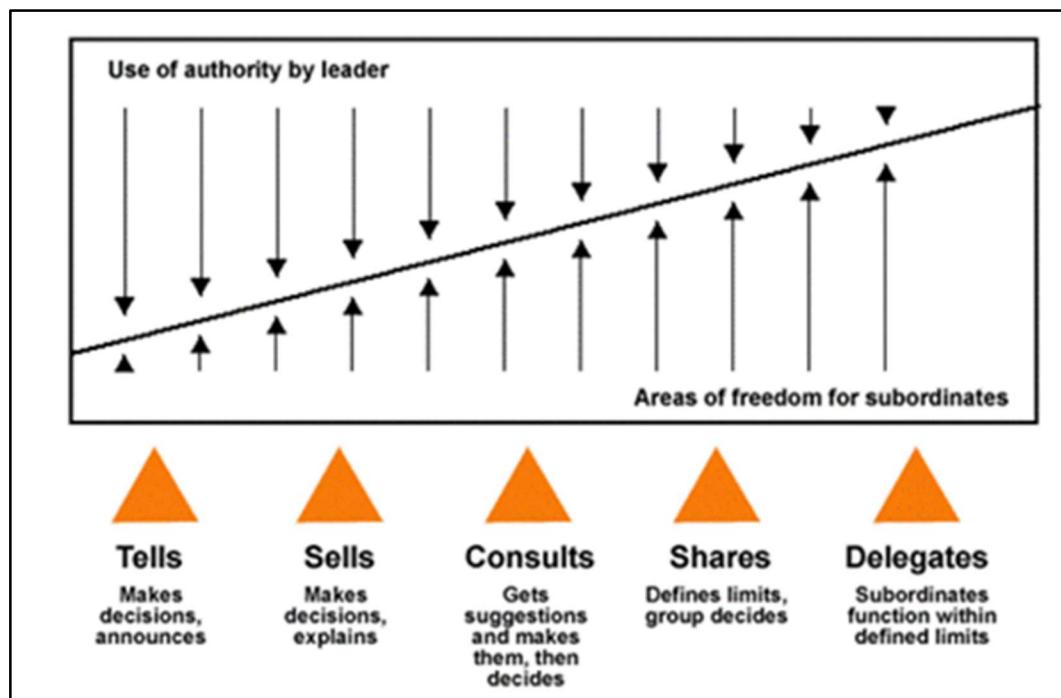


Image 2.1: Leadership Continuum

Source: Dudovskiy (2013).

Retrieved from: <https://research-methodology.net/leadership-continuum-theory-by-tannerbaum-and-schmidt/>

Foster (1989) describes the other end of the leadership continuum from the sociology of organisations and the administration/management literature. Here, leadership tends to enforce power and control and is dependent on a variety of strategies designed for goal accomplishment. This study argues that neither approach is sufficient for a clear analysis of the concept of leadership. Yet both need to be analysed to demonstrate the contemporary focus on leadership studies.

2.2.1.2 The Political–Historical End of the Spectrum

The study of leadership undertaken through the lenses provided by this model is a study of power, politics and historical facts. There have been leaders who have been remembered throughout history for their outstanding power, fellowship and use of their resources. These are exemplified by familiar names: Ghandi, Churchill, Roosevelt and so on. The stories, the history of these ‘heroic leaders’ tell us in a retrospective fashion what qualities, machinations and visions were of value in accomplishing a new and different social order.

Foster (1989) argues that this model of leadership, however, is not solely biographic, though it depends on biography for its sustenance. MacGregor-Burns (1978) asserts that an abstract and theoretical formulation of leadership can be derived through the study of individual biographies. By analysing the life stories of such individuals, MacGregor-Burns (1978) affirms that there are essentially two basic types of leadership. He labels these concepts as ‘transactional’ and ‘transformational.’

Transformational leadership is largely based on exchange relationships between leader and follower. For schools, transactional leadership is seen in the education directorate’s relationship with unions, with individual teachers and with parents (MacGregor-Burns, 1978, p. 20).

Such transactional leadership requires negotiations, concessions, accommodation and a forceful support for the leader developed through the fabrication of the various role players. Foster (1989) argues that transformational leadership is cut from a different cloth entirely. Here MacGregor-Burns (1978) addresses what in the popular imagination might be termed ‘real leadership.’

Transformational leadership is the ability of an individual to envision a new social condition and to communicate this vision to followers. The leader here both inspires and transforms individual followers so that they too develop a new level of morality when it comes to leadership (MacGregor-Burns, 1978, p. 29).

MacGregor-Burns (1978) argues that transformational leadership implies high levels of morality, both in reaching goals and in working towards the acquisition of values. Much of this kind of leadership involves requesting tasks from followers, rather than merely promising them goods. Transformational leadership involves a change from the current realities to what are perceived as ‘better realities.’ Nothing is unchangeable in such a transformational leadership concept.

At the time, MacGregor-Burns’ work was very useful to the development of leadership studies. He managed to conceive leadership from a wider spectrum. His view of leadership is not limited to managerial terms but also embraces a moral and value-driven dimension. Such a perspective transcends leadership from merely technocratic dimensions. His work, however, has not been without some criticism. Tucker (1981), for one, has contended that MacGregor Burns’ work does not do justice to the concepts of leading and wielding power.

Tucker (1981) suggests that these two are very different concepts: leadership entails a moral dimension that enhances leaders to help followers to create new moral heights, whereas power wielding does not and therefore, using MacGregor-Burns’ definition is not leadership at all. Tucker insists on an alternative perspective for leadership based on politics. What leaders do, for Tucker, is “*to define the situation authoritatively ... prescribes a course of group action ... (and engage in a) mobilising function*” (Tucker, 1981, p. 18).

According to this view, leaders are not so much transformational as they are goal-setters and mobilisers. Clearly, this robs the concept of transformational leadership of a great deal of its power and reduces the idea to the politics of group management. While Tucker (1981) contributed significantly to the development of the political and group dimensions of leadership, MacGregor-Burns’ contribution is of value when it comes to stressing the moral and value base of leadership. Both, however, fail in their

highly individualistic treatment of the issue. Both continue to see leadership as residing in an individual, only to be brought out voluntarily by circumstances. While MacGregor-Burns (1978) acknowledges the fact that leadership involves leaders and followers, he nevertheless insists that leadership is essentially a trait that certain individuals possess. Such a view neglects two crucial aspects. Leadership always takes place in a context. It is implemented within a society based on human interactions, rather than the sole acts of individuals. Leaders can take advantage of preconceived ideas and already existing propaganda. In this case, leadership is simply entering the currents of mainstream consciousness and changing it through dialogue and persuasion.

Foster (1989) argues that even leadership on a voluntary basis involves ‘convincing’ others through qualities like charisma. Undoubtedly this occurs, but the more common path involves both mutual negotiations and shared leadership roles. Leadership cannot function without fellowship. The voluntary aspect of leadership found in the political-historical model tends to neglect this essential aspect of leadership. Leaders generally need to exchange their philosophy with their followers who might follow them in leadership posts, whilst realigning the vision and the mission. In this sense, critical reflection is part and parcel of leadership practices leading to change, analysis and awareness of possibilities. Such concepts of the political-historical model emphasise visions and ideas that totally oppose those propagated by the bureaucratic managerial model, which is at the other end of the leadership continuum and is discussed more fully in the next section.

2.2.1.3 The Bureaucratic Managerial Model

Foster (1989) argues that a second and more influential model in management is the bureaucratic-managerial one. As the name implies, this model of leadership normally describes the way business and other managers, as well as scholars of management, talk about the concept of leadership. Bottery (2004) argues that this model contains several major assumptions. Among them is the assumption that leadership results from an organisational position, the ‘leader’ occupies the highest role in the organisational chart. Foster (1989) argues that this assumption is almost universally held among management writers and forms the basis for the various models of leadership which have been developed in the last decades. A common assumption is

that leadership is task-oriented and that the tasks are set by institutional demands. Thus, according to Foster (1989), the reason for exerting leadership at all is not social change, or meeting followers' needs, but achieving certain organisational goals.

In this concept, as described by Foster (1989), the leader is a conduit between organisation and labour, and must motivate and deliver. Indeed, the production function is described by Foster (1989) as the legitimisation of the exercise of leadership. Each of these assumptions stands out clearly in an analysis of the major models of leadership in this area. Major theories of leadership, such as 'situational leadership' or Fiedler's (1972) contingency model of leadership (leadership styles based on the execution of tasks and demands in each situation) focus on developing effective management skills. In these approaches, one needs to be concerned with the nature of the task assigned to employers, with their level of ability and maturity and with the leader's own position in the firm. According to Foster (1989), leadership essentially becomes getting the employees to do what management wants them to do.

The idea of the 'leader' in these leadership styles of management depends on the prior context of an organisation. Leaders can only exercise their powers within a context that is bound by certain rules and responsibilities and the leader's role is expected to be centred on the tasks of making sure their roles and responsibilities are accomplished.

As argued by Foster the strong assumption here;

... is that leadership only occurs because of position. Top executives control their organisations through the enforcement of power meant to make individuals execute the tasks and feel good about doing (consideration) at their level of competency (maturity) (Foster, 1989, p. 4).

On the other hand, one can design a work place that is more people-driven and focused on human relations rather than organisational goal achievements. These two ends of leadership continuum, a task-oriented approach and a people-oriented approach, form the core of contemporary leadership approaches in management. The task-oriented approaches have been very appealing to industrial managers, with their assurance of providing a modicum of control over the production process. It was only a matter of

time before they transcended into all other areas of life, from ‘domestic management’ to ‘educational management.’

Foster (1989) argues that if one accepts the assumption of leadership as position, then it is necessary to accept the task-oriented approach assumption that was discussed: leadership is dedicated to organisational goal-achievement. The bureaucratic-managerial model of leadership ties the exercise of leadership closely with performance and performance is defined by goal achievement, whether these goals are just meant for performativity or other organisational concerns.

At this point, the following objection is brought to the discussion – there are claims that achieving organisational goals, results, standards and performance are indeed the main tasks of leadership; these are the tasks that leaders ‘do.’ Some argue that goals are only delivered through organisational control and assurance of power. Joseph Rost (1985) argues that this objection holds only if we continue to confuse leadership with management. The concept of leadership is totally different from a managerial one. It is not equivalent to a managerial post or business effectiveness. Foster argues that it is crucial to understand that while leadership may occur in organisational settings, and may be exercised by position holders, there is no necessary or logical link between the two concepts. Yet, both terms are continuously interchanged and the most obvious ‘culprits’ are those writing in the administrative/management literature. The concept of management and leadership has become so common in all practices that is almost unacceptable to speak of person-oriented leadership that is not focused on production and task delivery. In the next part of this chapter, the leadership continuum will now be applied to the concept of leadership in education.

2.2.1.4 The Classical Concept of Leadership in Education

Foster (1989) argues that the concept of leadership has been strongly influenced by the terminology of modern management.

The idea of leadership as an empowerment to others and as a vehicle for social change, adapted and co-opted by managerial writers so that new leadership appears as a way of improving organisations, not of transforming our world. What essentially has happened is that the

language of leadership has been translated into the needs of bureaucracy (Foster, 1989, p. 47).

2.2.2 Contemporary Literature on Leadership

The notion of ‘distributed leadership’ features frequently in contemporary empirical work on leadership (Gronn, 2003; Harris, 2008; Gunter, 2013). For example, Harris (2008) claims that the contemporary empirical work on leadership is mainly focused on the notion of ‘distributed leadership.’ This has been defined by Blackmore (2012) as a “*perspective that recognises that all workers are co-producers of different forms of knowledge and able to exercise influence as leaders in what Senge (1990) refers to as the learning organisation*” (Blackmore, 2012, p. 18).

Interestingly, the available evidence on distributed leadership is not specifically found in literature directly focused on leadership practices. Harris (2006) claims that the available studies on distributed leadership are very limited and focused on small school samples. The findings from studies carried out in USA by Camburn, Rowan and Taylor (2003) followed by Spillane and Camburn (2006) investigate the idea of ‘distribution to the few.’ These studies focused on one hundred elementary schools and highlighted that leadership functions were only distributed amongst three to seven members in each school.

These studies illustrated that leadership tasks were not distributed fairly across all staff members but focused on the contribution of only a select few. The analysis study of distributed leadership practice has been developed further by Spillane and Camburn (2006). This research and the subsequent work provided an analytical perspective of how leadership tasks are assigned to people. This study on distributed leadership examined different types of leadership and management tasks and affirmed that this correlation between leading and managing is quite normal. The preliminary analysis did, in fact, show that work related to the school was indeed being distributed and not only involved formal leaders but all levels of employees.

The studies by Camburn et al. (2003) and Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) both used distributed leadership to analyse leadership processes in schools. However, many criticise these studies focusing their argument on the fact that the main interest

of this study is how leadership is delegated rather than distributed. While ‘delegation’ refers to tasks that are handed over to other members of staff by the leader, ‘distribution’ is the sharing of tasks in a consensual way by the members of staff.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) and Silins and Mulford (2000) provided two important detailed studies focusing on leadership and student learning outcomes. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) outlined the positive influence that leadership activity has on teaching methods and student involvement. They highlighted the importance of the relationship between teacher leadership and student achievement. The researchers confirmed a positive correlation between more distributed forms of leadership and certain positive student achievements. It was noted that teacher involvement in decision-making makes a difference in the teaching and learning situation and leads to improved achievements as well as higher levels of morale. There are strands of research highlighting the positive impact of distributed leadership.

The first strand of literature is focused on school culture and school ethos. Rosenholtz (1989) is one of the writers who argued that distributed leadership leads to a more positive climate in school. This generates a positive attitude in schools. In turn, this positive attitude leads to better school performance.

The second strand of research on distributed leadership is found in studies on school improvement literature. In their review of successful school improvement efforts, Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2001) provided a complete list of the principles of what they termed ‘the improving school.’ At the top of this list, the authors placed distributed leadership as a main priority. Literature on leadership provided by Fullan (2001) and Hopkins (2001) suggested further that distributed leadership was associated with improved school achievement.

The third strand of research can be found in the teacher leadership and professional development literature (Harris, 2005). Here, there is a direct correlation between teachers’ efficacy and levels of morale with distributed leadership. The research findings illustrate that a strong teacher collegial culture secures a better-quality teaching environment (Little, 1990) (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). This literature provides positive evidence about the impact of teacher leadership on student

performance (Rosenholz, 1989). In summary, there is evidence to suggest that distributed leadership has a positive effect upon organisational development and change. However, this research base is limited.

As Lashway noted, *"the research base for distributed leadership is still embryonic. While there is considerable theory, we have relatively little empirical knowledge about distributed leadership"* (Lashway, 2003, p. 24).

Two recent projects by Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) aim to address this empirical gap. The Leithwood and Jantzi action-based research consists of a multi-media study which is composed of a qualitative study, followed by quantitative work. The research intends to provide systematic evidence about the correlation between distributed leadership practices and controlled practices in leadership in education with regards to students' achievements. The resulting evidence from the first stage of the study shows that school leadership can be beneficial to students' achievement when it is widely distributed.

2.2.2.1 Distributed Leadership: Normative Frame Applied to Practice

Gronn (2003) used a normative lens on distributed leadership to identify patterns of distributed leadership in schools. This approach is interested in both the descriptive and prescriptive elements, more specifically both how we understand the concept of distributed leadership and how we might implement it in actual practice. Inevitably, such analysis of distributed leadership is also particularly focused on how we can generate the most long-lasting effects of distributed leadership. The potential increase of what Gronn has termed 'greedy work' in schools (referring to administrative and managerial work) has resulted in the increase of management tasks and activities to be shared. Therefore, the idea of a stand-alone leader is being slowly eradicated as the demands upon one individual are too large.

Schools are promoting the concept of 'teachers as leaders' through the setup of new communities with leadership responsibilities. With regard to the concept of responsibility, Muijs (2003) and Harris (2005) found that an extended mode of distributed leadership influencing decision-making practices and related consequences was the responsibility of teams, rather than a single management team.

The setup of new reforms, structures and organisation in education requires new concepts of educational leadership and management. A relevant study to the local college network reform is the research carried out by Harris (2008). In his study, Harris (2008) quotes the example of the British government that has been promoting and developing school networks as federations and network learning communities to improve standards. Harris (2008) argued that such reforms in education have increased the challenges, the administrative tasks and work load on school leaders. Schools must extend their services even beyond the school day. Extended schools provide a range of services and activities to provide different services to the whole school community.

Harris (2008) further argued that such new practices involve major changes in leadership roles and patterns. Class teachers need time to meet. Effective structures need to be set up and provided for so that teachers are able to meet and plan together. Teachers need to be entrusted with leadership tasks that grant them power and authority. Distributed leadership requires more time and more suitable processes to be implemented effectively. Teamwork requires the processing of information and the generation of solutions to problems. Such processes lead the way to organisational learning:

We identify renewal of the overall enterprise as the underlying phenomenon of interest and organisational learning as a principal means to this end. We are presenting organisational learning as four processes – intuiting, interpreting, integrating and institutionalising – linking the individual, group and organisational levels (Gibson & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2001, p. 24).

It often happens that schools operating distributed leadership practices tend to give little attention to how leadership roles are shared and disseminated. This requires attention to boundary management with educational initiatives. One can expect the setup of new organisational forms that are different but dependent sub groups of educators working on separate but related development. As organisational theorists have highlighted, groups in an organisation need continual management to be able to work together in harmony. Such leadership and management functions require careful supervision and mentoring. In my opinion, practices of distributed leadership lead to

wider decision-making processes. This requires the amalgamation of formal decisions by the senior management team and other decisions by staff in informal leadership tasks. Inevitably, there is the danger of conflicts in such open decision-making process.

This literature on distributed leadership highlights the importance of leadership influence: leaders in formal leadership roles need to provide supportive structures to set up an effective organisational climate. So, one can argue that although distributed leadership initiatives are meant to flatten hierarchical organisations and to empower teachers, the role of the school leader remains a very crucial one. The controversy is that distributed leadership still requires strong and reliable leadership control to function in an effective way.

Leithwood and Jantzi argued that distributing leadership:

... does produce greater demand: to coordinate who performs which leadership functions, to build leadership capacities in others, and to monitor the leadership work of those others, providing constructive feedback to them about their efforts (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, p. 40).

2.2.2.2 A Critical Analysis of Distributed Leadership

This discussion of leadership practices and patterns illustrates a significant shift in educational leadership concepts and styles. Leadership within a distributed leadership framework is perceived in a totally different way from the leadership concepts on the leadership continuum discussed in the first part of this chapter. This outlook needs to also take into consideration the correlation between distributed leadership practices and student achievements.

The advocates of the concept of distributed leadership have argued that this type of leadership perspective leads to positive outcomes in schools. Ongoing research still implements this hypothetical correlation position between distributed leadership and school improvement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Harris, 2007). It seeks to examine whether the implementation of distributed leadership leads to more improved schools and leadership modes. It is widely acknowledged that there is a global trend to advocate distributed leadership in diverse organisations as the preferred mode of

leadership in contemporary times. However, there is still little empirical evidence of its actual effectiveness.

One can argue that applying the concept of distributed leadership to this study will emphasise the importance of leaders inculcating a collegial climate for distributed leadership, based on supportive structures and cooperative organisation. The crucial question in all this leadership work remains to what extent distributed leadership leads to academic improvement. Spillane and Camburn (2006) suggest that researchers need to tackle two important questions if they are interested in measuring the effects of distributed leadership on school life. These are, first, the issue of the school participants proposed by researchers as the main recipients and contributors to distributed leadership, and second, the dimensions of leadership that are meant to be distributed among members of staff. These vital issues create a vast demand of analysis and lead to a critical perspective on educational leadership. This study will carry out this analysis through alternative visions of leadership in the next sections.

2.2.3 Alternative Visions of Leadership

The mainstream literature on educational leadership which has been discussed here focuses mainly on the notions of style, quality, effectiveness, leadership continuum, organisational and cultural change. Hallinger and Heck (2010) argue that leadership in education does not really have a measurable influence. It has more of an indirect rather than a direct effect.

As argued in the beginning of this chapter, leadership is being expected to solve all possible problems. Alignments and adaptations to school reforms and practices are constantly being justified by the mantra ‘change is the constant.’ Within this mindset, leadership is being assigned the sole accountability of somehow creating the right conditions conducive to the possibility of improving teaching and learning, irrespective of the school context, capacity building and other grounded realities.

Critical feminists, such as Fraser (1997), Blackmore (2013) and Sachs (2013) argue that contemporary leadership discourses are laden with overworked descriptors utilised over decades: instructional, visionary, moral, e-leadership, servant, entrepreneurial, distributive, transactional, transformational and the recently

introduced term of emotionally intelligent leadership. Although frequently discussed, Blackmore (2013) argues that these leadership styles are not often implemented in practice. It therefore seems appropriate to agree with Blackmore (2013) who asserts that concepts of leadership, such as transformational and distributed leadership take on different meanings within different theoretical paradigms. These are discussed in the following sections to establish a working view for this study.

2.2.3.1 Transformational or Visionary Leadership

Based on the discussion above, transformational leadership refers to leadership in self-managing institutions and contemporary educational restructuring. The emphasis in this leadership perspective is on persuasive leadership. This mindset provides exclusive powers to the school leader who requires strong communication, imaginative and innovative skills. Caldwell and Hayward (2002) note that visionary leadership has transformed schools into small businesses with a focus on marketing and financial skills.

Likewise, recent policy documents are replete with the notions of servant and moral leadership. Feminist theory acknowledges that Sergiovanni sought to reintroduce values into the educational leadership field (Sergiovanni, 1996). He recognised the need of these values in an era dominated by the market and managerial terms. For Sergiovanni, putting substance back into leadership meant advocating the moral purpose of leadership. Critical feminists of educational leadership (Blackmore & Sachs, 2003; Blackmore, 2007) note that while performativity requirements are putting emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness, Sergiovanni's focus is on relationships and trust as the primary drivers of moral leadership.

Within this scenario, it is also useful to take into account the view of 'transformational leadership,' as advocated by MacGregor-Burns (1978). At the same time, it is important to distinguish between transforming and transactional leadership. The cited references quote that transforming leaders earn the moral authority through their actions, whereas transactional leaders are everyday managers. The above discussion of leadership theories has demonstrated how MacGregor-Burns (1978) and Sergiovanni (1996) advocated the notion of leadership as centred on relationships, mutuality and power in response to the contemporary managerial mentality.

Recent educational leadership contribution referred to in this review belonging to Leithwood and Jantzi argue that some individuals (leaders) can carry out both transformational and transactional leadership concurrently (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Blackmore (2013) argues that leadership is being redirected to the individual with the notion of the context largely ignored. Blackmore states categorically that *“despite this concern about ‘failing schools’ rather than ‘failing systems’ or policies, policies still hinge around comparing ‘like’ schools as if context does not matter”* (Blackmore, 2013, p. 34).

2.2.4 Critical Perspectives on Distributed Leadership

The major works of Gronn (2003) discussed above on distributed leadership argue that distributed leadership is meant to advocate teamwork, more effective human relationships and a shared work load:

The proponents of distributed leadership (Gronn, 2003) see it as conducive to building professional knowledge and encouraging a focus on pedagogical leadership. Practitioner pedagogical knowledge, formally and informally acquired and supplied in everyday practice, is likely to be made more explicit, valued and shared if teamwork is the basis of the organisation of professional learning to be dispersed and flexible modes and spaces (Blackmore, 2013, p. 34).

Contemporary critical feminist theory (Yeatman, 1990; Weedon, 1997; Blackmore, 2013) is in line with critical pedagogy (Fraser, 1997) in arguing that distributed leadership might not necessarily mean democratic leadership practice. The focus is still on the school treating external factors as not constituting the practices of the school but rather as something to be responded to through the leaders' actions. Rudduck and McIntryre (2007) argue that there is little recognition of students as co-producers of knowledge or indeed bringing their own cultural baggage to schools. In contrast to this, critical feminists such as Trifonas (2003), value student voice, consider the politics of differences and identify the institutional structures, processes and cultures that produce educational inequality.

Utilising this critical lens, critical feminist theory (Thrussell, 2006; Gorard, 2010; Blackmore, 2012a) argue that distributed leadership within a management discourse of outcome-based education system requires schools and students to align their work

to pre-set objectives and goals. Within the paradigm, “*teachers and students must fit schools and system needs and not schools adopting to student needs*” (Blackmore, 2012). In such situations, leadership is dictated by policy and resources, rather than the needs of the students.

2.2.5 Alternative Leadership Approaches

In this section, a number of alternative leadership approaches are considered, namely feminist leadership, inclusive leadership, social justice leadership and ethical educational leadership.

2.2.5.1 A Feminist Leadership Approach

As mentioned earlier, feminism offers leadership studies a problematising approach that can lead to alternative ways of leading. A general overview of ‘feminism,’ as given below, illustrates how this theory offers leadership studies a ‘problematising approach’ which can bring about alternative ways of leading.

One of the most challenging tasks in women’s history has been to trace, with precision, the various forms and modes in which ‘patriarchy’ appears historically, the shifts and changes in its structure and function and the adaptation it makes to female pressure and demands.

Lerner (1986, p. 238) traces the word ‘patriarchy’ to classical antiquity, in the third millennium B.C. and notes that it was also used at the time when the Hebrew Bible was written. It was later established as a system by Greek and Roman law, in which the male head of the household had absolute legal and economic power over his dependent female and male family members. It also implied that men held power in all the important institutions of society and women were deprived of access to such power.

Reynolds (2002) argued that in the twentieth century male dominance simply took new forms and did not end. If patriarchy describes the institutionalised system of dominance, paternalism describes a particular mode, a subset of patriarchal relations.

Recent feminist theory has developed through a critique of patriarchal values and interests informing social theories. However, contemporary feminists argue that recognising oppression, contradictions as well as power relations and interests which exist in specific structures and roles is only the first stage in the process of change for individuals and in the struggle to transform social institutions. Blackmore (1989) argues that this process requires the development of alternative senses of ourselves, and strategies for transforming existing institutions and practices.

Feminists such as Blackmore argue that:

... recognising the emotional management work of leadership is not merely being sensitive to other feelings or exploiting passion but requires recognition of one's own emotions and how they are displayed and perceived, as well as being aware of the emotional economy of the organisation so critical to a sense of wellbeing and trust upon which leadership is premised (Blackmore, 2013, p. 147).

Weedon (1987), Heckman (1992) and Brooks (1997) presented the argument that rather than turning their backs to theory and taking refuge in experience alone, feminists should think more of transforming both the social relations of power production and the type of knowledge produced. To do so, these feminists that referred to their theoretical contributions as 'poststructuralist feminism' were arguing in favour of tackling the fundamental question of how and where other forms of power are produced and by whom, and of what counts as power and knowledge. They were speaking of a transformation of the structures which determine how power is disseminated. Feminist poststructuralism, then, is a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change.

Weedon (1997) argues that through a concept of *discourse*, which is seen as a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity, feminist poststructuralism is able, in detailed, historically specific analysis, to explain the working of power on behalf of specific interests and to analyse the opportunities of resistance to it. Heckman (1992) elaborates by saying that feminist poststructuralism is a theory which decentres the rational, self-present subject

of humanism, seeing power and subjectivity as socially and historically located in discourses.

Whilst there is a multiplicity of feminist perspectives, all reject the uncontested field of leadership theory and practice. Theories of feminist pedagogy, (Luke & Gore, 1992; Boler, 1999; McWilliam, 1999) have also considered how emotions impact upon leadership and school life in today's performative and managerial era.

Feminist theory also utilises a critical lens on emotions within the organisational context and leads us to reinterpret human relation's notions of poor moral and stress, as adequate explanations for teacher behaviour as advocated by Blackmore (1996), Sergiovanni, (1999) and Sachs (2003). Nias (1996) argues that teacher anger and despair are not merely about stress arising from increased workload but from feelings of powerlessness.

Blackmore and Sachs (2003) highlights that these feelings derive from a sense of a lack of individual and collective agency due to teachers' and leaders' inability to redress the inequality arising from policies and practices. A performative mentality is producing a value shift in the field of education away from cooperation and care to gaining competitive advantage. Williams (1975) further acknowledges that such poor morale is not simply experienced by teachers, but it is part of a wider society aura.

Authors of feminist post-colonial perspectives of leadership argue that leadership is not only situated, but that the nature of knowledge in leadership is also contested (Mabokela, 2007; Mirza, 2009; Asher, 2010; Shah, 2010; Blackmore, 2012b). Postcolonial research on leadership contextualises leadership within wider issues, including economies, societies, globalisation, inequality, poverty and cross-cultural relations. A post-colonial perspective also takes in consideration the 'situatedness' of leadership and how leadership is influenced by cultural, organisational and structural constraints of place and time. Black feminists, such as Mirza, query "*black and ethnicised female identity and subjectivity and the way difference is systematically organised through social relations in our political and economic structures, politics and practices*" (Mirza, 2009, p. 2).

In view of this perspective, Leonardo (2009) notes that while discussion on gender in mainstream leadership has mainly focused on females and social justice, there has been no such questioning on males and their ongoing position, with regards to social justice, voice, identity and subjectivity.

Feminist theory also challenges the fundamental assumptions of research and academic organisation. It questions positivist research concerned only with categories, disciplinary fields, methodologies, data collection, analysis and statistical interpretations. Feminist pedagogical work recommends the value of the knowledge brought from life experience (Luke & Gore, 1992) (Morley & Walsh, 1995). At the same time, they challenge knowledge hierarchies and what gets valued in curriculum and assessment within schools. Yeatman (1998) stresses that feminist theory has historically been a source of political activism and social change as there was strong engagement between feminist academics, community activists and teacher practitioners. At the same time, Blackmore and Sachs (2003) notes that feminist research in leadership has been labelled as ‘soft’ by positivists because it was premised upon stories of women’s experience acquired primarily through qualitative research rather than large-scale statistical approach.

This thesis propagates a feminist problematic approach. Such an approach requires working from women’s “standpoint” within organisations and systems to unveil experiences and real-life situations. This thesis aims specifically to analyse the implementation of the new college reform in Malta through such problematic questioning as “*what is the problem being defined here, why now, who benefits from this policy and who loses out?*” (Bacchi, 2000, p. 24)

The question of analysis therefore becomes whether organisations in today’s world recognise the increasing expectations on leaders, together with the intensification of educational labour and increased paperwork. In this perspective, Deem and Ozga (2005) question how leaders are positioned in the expanding local, national and transnational organisations.

This literature review has provided the perspective of the individual leader as a human being embodied with emotions in a contextualised society. School leaders are

expected by their superiors to work in what is to be perceived as a performative and achieving organisation (the College and the school) with standardisation as the norm while failing to recognise how much context matters. This thesis fully supports Blackmore's and Sachs' claim that distributed leadership within a democratic frame requires a re-distribution of power and resources and not just delegation down the line from management of more work, risk and responsibility (Blackmore & Sachs, 2003).

The standpoint of this study is that leadership is a relational practice built on trust and respect and not just what individual leaders do or how they take decisions utilising their emotional intelligence or disseminating knowledge. This thesis propagates the critical feminist theory perspectives that "*leadership is about knowing and working towards a shared purpose in a principled manner*" (Blackmore, 2012a, p. 150).

Fraser (1997) warns that "*if there is to be greater diversity in and of leadership, this shared purpose should be informed by social justice principles on recognition, redistribution and representation*" (Fraser, 1997, p. 24).

Utilising this critical perspective, this study recognises that the implemented reform challenges in education are influenced by both internal and external factors. This study acknowledges the need of questioning and 'thinking without banisters' (an Arendtian metaphor) in order to work for social and democratic changes in schools. These changes within schools will necessitate alternative styles of leadership that embrace inclusion, social justice, equity and voice, in line with the Arendtian framework presented in this study.

2.2.5.2 Inclusive Leadership

Critical pedagogy theory contributes to educational leadership. Various critical theorists (Ryan, 2012; Bogotch, 2015; Shields, 2015) offer challenging insights and interesting alternative visions of leadership in response to the needs of today's society. Ryan (2012) advocates 'inclusive leadership' as a collective process geared to engender a particular outcome – inclusion. With ideal inclusive leadership, Ryan argues that all individuals and groups or their representatives participate meaningfully in policy, decision-making, and other influence or power-related processes geared to

generate the fair involvement of everyone in what schools and communities have to offer.

Educational administrators exercising inclusive leadership will promote the importance of horizontal relationships among organisation members, communication practices and collective enterprises that generate inclusive practices. Ryan argues that “*while inclusive leadership may be difficult to achieve in an exclusive world, it is an ideal worth working towards. Schools and communities can be better places for everyone when they are truly inclusive*” (Ryan, 2012, p. 24).

2.2.5.3 Social Justice Leadership

Another alternative approach is promoted by Bogotch (2015) who advocates Social Justice Leadership. This critical theorist argues strongly that in today’s world, we need educational leaders who are willing to take calculated risks and who possess sufficient knowledge of world events happening beyond schools and classrooms. Bogotch (2015) insists that in turn, we need an education system that will protect the rights of those who speak out and, more importantly, build programmes and take actions on behalf of others lacking freedom, opportunities and justice. This argument is sustained by Bogotch in the statement below:

... the truth for me, is that being a good and even a moral leader is not good enough when it comes to leadership for social justice. We, as educators, have let the dominant discourses and their specialised expert knowledge drown out our educator voices from social, political and economic debates. Unfortunately, local and global ideologies deliberately promote anti-educational and anti-humanitarian values in order to grab and maintain control/power over students, teachers, parents and societies (Bogotch, 2012, p. 131).

2.2.5.4 Ethical Educational Leadership

Both authors, Ryan (2012) and Bogotch (2012) promote Ethical Educational Leadership. Gross and Shapiro strongly believe that educational leaders cannot make wise decisions without possessing an intelligent and worthwhile set of values and virtues and stated that they “*... also believe that leaders need to think rationally, empathetically, and broadly before making an important ethical decision that may affect students, staff, parents and other constituents*” (Gross & Shapiro, 2015, p. 91).

Strike, Haller and Soltis (2005) also include the ethical code that expects educational leaders to formulate and examine their own professional, as well as personal codes of ethics in light of standards set by educational leadership. They then place students at the centre of the ethical decision-making process.

A revealing and meaningful perspective has recently been presented by Ward et al., (2015) who argue that leadership ultimately involves the ability to define the reality of others. The authors explained that:

Above all, leading learning is about the leadership role of creating reality for others: persuading the community that learning is not a competitive sport and losing is accepted and inevitable for some. That is the foundational step, but it is just the first. Praxis involves a cycle of entwined reflection and action, driven by clarity of goals and unremitting determination to sustain an environment where all children can learn (Ward, et al., 2015, p. 173).

Shields (2015) stressed that:

... rejecting deficit thinking and blame, each is convinced that it is essential to differentiate between what children have or have not been taught to do and what they are able to do. In their words, teaching what children have not had the opportunity to learn is the clear responsibility of the school community as a whole (Shields, 2010, p.582).

2.2.6 Leadership in a College Network

Following this wide perspective of leadership through different literature review sources from the educational field, this study critically reflects on the proposed type of leadership recommended by the policy document (Reform Document, 2005) for college school networks in the Maltese Islands. This reflection will commence with an overall analysis of the concept of networks regarding school networks and the proposed network models for the Maltese education system. It then proceeds to examine the possibilities of different modes of leadership in networks. The proposed leadership for school networks in the Maltese Islands will be critically reflected upon and a different alternative model of network and leadership recommended for a more equitable and empowering way of leading and communicating.

2.3 Networks Defined

Today's society is organised through international networks linking different entities together through constant communication. Networks are defined by Castells (2000) as "*open structures, able to expand without limits, integrating new nodes if they are able to communicate within themselves, namely as long as they share the same communication codes as values or performance goals*" (Castells, 2000, p. 502).

A network-based structure is defined by Dijk and Teun as "*a highly dynamic, open system, susceptible to innovating without threatening its balance*" (Dijk & Teun, 2006, p. 4).

Quinn defines networks, however extensive, as a sum of a "*multiplicity of subnets welded together as a Gordian knot, without ever jamming communication and degenerating into chaos*" (Quinn, 1995, p. 135). This author also asserts that networking links will continue to expand and to create the widest possibility of exchanges. The authors of these definitions encompass three basic features which make a system function as a network, namely communication, an undefined structure and cohesive goals.

This term was dealt with in further depth by Castells (2000) in his work on the Information Age. Maring (1998) put forward the new concept of '*The Wired Society*' to indicate a society that is interlinked by social networks. In Maring's (1998) work, the network society is described as a society that is primarily organised by social and media methods. This organisation and control by the media takes place at all levels of its organisation, including both the individual and the societal one. The spread of network organisations sustainably changes ways of working in all aspects including services, experiences, power and culture. Castells (2000) described networks as simply 'the basic units of modern society.'

2.3.1 Networking of Schools

In educational settings, networks are made up of learning communities working together. The local document '*Tomorrow Schools*' (1995) defined learning communities as "*collaborative enterprises, working together with others to improve*

the quality of the learning process, teachers' professional development and school climate" (Consultative Committee on Education, 1995, p. 26).

In an attempt to define 'school networks,' I have drawn from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Lisbon Seminar (reported in Hopkins, 2001) as follows:

Networked Learning Communities are purposefully-led social entities that are characterised by a commitment to quality, rigour and a focus on outcomes. In education, Networked Learning Communities, promote the dissemination of good practice; enhance the professional development of teachers, support capacity building in schools, mediate between centralised and decentralised structures, and assist in the process of restructuring and re-culturing educational organisational systems (Jackson, 2002, p. 2).

In Canada, Fullan (1991) refers to networks as an instrument for school improvement, utilising the concept of 'learning communities.' In Great Britain, educators advocate networks for ongoing training purposes (Veugelers & Zijlstra, 1995). Through networking and working together, these educators are focusing on the primacy of community building in schools.

As advocated by Sergiovanni (2004), they are promoting the idea of school as a community of learning within which beliefs, ideas and values are shared. According to Sergiovanni, working collaboratively alongside colleagues gives these educators an opportunity to think deeply on human interactions to improve learning standards. Fullan (1991) argues further that in a collaborative setting, teachers need to be proactive in identifying problematic issues and working collaboratively towards eliciting solutions. They work intensively to set up a common framework through which challenges are tackled in favour of the students' interests.

Berry, Norton and Byrd are also advocating the concept of:

... 'independent teacher networks' that have the potential to transform traditional concepts of teacher input and staff development. Independent networks – both physical and virtual – make it possible for teachers to draw on external communities that promote divergent thinking. Such

networks support the view that teachers have unique insights that can improve education and accelerate student achievement (Berry, et al., 2007, p. 27).

According to these authors, virtual networks are especially powerful since they empower the best teachers to work collaboratively in a professional community of learners (Berry, et al., 2007). Lieberman and McLaughlin (1992) recommend educational networks as a vehicle for collaboration, collegiality, professional development and an opportunity for educators to be both participants and developers of knowledge construction, as well as promoters of teachers' voices and opinions.

Active involvement promotes sharing of different ideas, solutions, differences and difficulties. Lieberman analysed the *"experiences of one networked learning community over the first year of its existence and recalled how an atmosphere of trust and support was created in which net workers could contribute and gain access to learning"* (Lieberman, 1996, p. 81). This atmosphere led the network participants to deal with problems (educational issues) in greater depth and complexity. Through accounts of school network practices, Hopkins (2005) elicited several advantages of school networking - the most important included dissemination of development for teachers, support to build capacity in schools and mediation between centralised and decentralised structures. He maintained that the observed benefits of school networking could support innovation in times of change.

2.3.2 School Networking within the Local Context

In Malta, the Reform Document *'For All Children To Succeed: A New Network Organisation For Quality Education In Malta'* (Reform Document, 2005) by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, affirms that in education, schools will manage to cater for learners' needs to work collaboratively, sharing ideas, resources and initiatives.

The essence of a network is described by the local policy document as a:

... light, flexible structure that is at the same time strong and resilient, even when damaged; and damage is certain to occur where there is diversity. Consequently, contrasting, even contradictory views are bound to evolve.

In such cases, the strength of the net is essential to avoid the collapse of the system. In this sense, nets have the possibility of being extended and remodelled whilst still in use. Moreover, they can be laid one over the other. They weigh little, but their multiple-level structure adds to their strength (Reform Document, 2005, p. 24).

The document also augurs that school networks would enable a paradigm shift in working mentality - from isolation to collegiality and describes this as follows:

“Networks enable us to meet the needs of individual learners in our schools. They also enable us to formalise collaborative arrangements and to investigate new forms of leadership. They provide the mechanism for us to learn from our peers and the space to develop effective and innovative practice. Networks increase access to good ideas and they allow groups of professionals to take collective responsibility for children. It is within this context of understanding and aspiration, that the proposals in this document for better schools and for the success of all children, has been shaped” (Reform Document, 2005, p. 37).

The local policy document (Reform Document, 2005) acknowledges that:

... our knowledge of school networks and their power to innovate and change perception and practice comes not just from education, but also from trends and practices adopted by a wider society. Our expectation of services, from banking to hospitals, from shopping to local councils, is for a service which increasingly fits our personalised needs. Services are no longer structured around organisational expectations or institutional needs. They revolve around individuals. The same has to be with education (Reform Document, 2005, p. 37).

The Policy Document views networks as an increasingly important feature of contemporary life. It acknowledges that across all sectors, networks are a source of organisation provision. In the educational sphere, the document states that isolated leadership inhibits learning.

2.3.2.1 The Main Components of College Networking in Malta

The Maltese college school network reform aims to create an environment where children and students benefit from increased self-confidence, encouragement, opportunities and the on-going support they need to acquire and to further their knowledge, competencies and attitudes needed to help develop their personalities.

This will make them grow into active citizens capable of contributing towards their own well-being, their families and that of society.

The Policy Document (Reform Document, 2005) emphasises a supportive work environment that promotes greater job satisfaction and achievement that would help Maltese educators to find space, time and opportunity to work flexibly and collaboratively. The intention was to create an organisational set-up which would be in a better position to meet students' needs. In addition, the whole school community will benefit from a positive and an effective networking system. Parents/carers can collaborate and participate more effectively in their children's educational journey. Schools will become a hub of community learning and cultural enterprise.

By pooling of resources and by sharing experiences, it is much easier for a network of schools than for an individual school to establish a degree of autonomy. A network can provide a better environment, can encourage and foster more initiative and innovation, more team spirit, an increased shared sense of purpose and direction. The pooling of resources will yield an overall result that is greater than the sum of the individual inputs by the different participants in a variety of ways (Reform Document, 2005, p. 41).

The Network Reform also aims to provide network support to individual schools so that it would help implement the curriculum more effectively by addressing all students' needs and interests. The school programme will make it possible for students to fulfil their aspirations and full potential.

Effective networks are designed around a compelling idea or an inspirational purpose. They have an appropriate form and structure. Successful networks manage to unite all their school communities around a purpose which is relevant and compelling, irrespective of context or circumstances. The purpose has at its core, improving achievement by students (Reform Document, 2005, p. 38).

The Maltese Network Reform affirms that the design of the new reform is focused on student learning. This aim is being promoted as the main contribution of networking of Maltese schools.

However diverse the schools in one's network, it is safe to assume that all of them wish to improve the student experience. That explains why they have committed to the network. Adults who work there want to engage with new ideas if they see in this a direct benefit to students. Those who lead the network will want to work in partnership with the other head teachers to identify and adopt a common learning focus (Reform Document, 2005, p. 38).

2.3.3 Different Types of Networks

This section will consider different types of networks, as presented by the Communication Networks Studies based on Leavitt (1951) and follow-up studies by Owens et al. (2011) in communication studies and group dynamics. This section will also consider different perspectives on networks from a philosophical point of view, following insights by Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

2.3.3.1 Communication Networks

Researchers at the Group Networks Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology conducted some of the first studies of communication networks in the 1950s. The author Leavitt (1951) studied the impact of various forms of networks by systematically opening and closing connections among individuals in small groups. Through research at the Group Networks Laboratory at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Leavitt identified and studied four types of communication networks by experimenting on group dynamics (Leavitt, 1951).

Leavitt's (1951) theoretical structures are presented as four network models, namely:

- **The Circle:** In a circle network, each person can only communicate with two or more other persons. Information must then be relayed through the circle. No one person leads or coordinates communication and each person in the circle is equal in power to the others.
- **The Y Arrangement:** According to their position on the Y arrangement, members can communicate with one, two or three other persons. The person at the bottom and the two persons on the diagonals converse with only one other person. The person at the head of the line, where the diagonals form a

junction, communicates with three others. This individual clearly has the most power, while all others communicate with just two people.

- **The Wheel:** The person in the centre of the wheel communicates with all others. Persons along the rim of the wheel cannot converse with each other. All information must flow to and from the centre. Power is strongly located at the centre which is the only node of communication.
- **The Comcon:** The comcon arrangement is like a circle in that all members are equal. However, in a comcon arrangement, individuals can communicate with three rather than two others. Power is equally distributed throughout this structure.

2.3.3.2 Informal Networks

Forsyth notes that “*even when no formal attempt is made to organise communication, an informal communication network will usually take shape over time*” (Forsyth, 1999, p. 39). Among the more popular informal networks is the ‘grapevine model,’ where communication is spread to anyone who might be interested.

Subsequent research studies on communication networks (Freeman, 1977; Shaw, 1978; Pozo, Manuel, González-Arangüena, & Owen, 2011; Moxley & Moxley, 1974) have differentiated the four network types into two categories due to their respective patterns of information exchange, namely the ‘centralised network’ and the ‘decentralised network’ as follows:

- **The centralised network:** Shaw coined this term to describe the Y Arrangement and the Wheel (Shaw, 1978). Both types of networks have a position located at the ‘cross roads’ of communication. The centralised type of network structure tends to use the ‘hub’ position as the data-processing centre and its participants gather information, synthesise it and then send it back to others.
- **The decentralised network:** As with the Circle and the Comcon, the above-mentioned authors explained that the number of channels at each position is

roughly equal, so no one position is more central than another. These groups will resort to a different organisational possibility when tackling challenges and organisational issues, including the so-called ‘each to all’ pattern that ensures the distribution of messages, until some members receive the right reply.

Research by Forsyth (1999) on the actual functioning of both types of networks illustrated that centralised networks functioned better than decentralised networks when it came to simple tasks. When the task was complex, decentralised networks were superior. When a problem is being tackled on a group level, by sharing information and taking a stand, the central position in the networks is still at an advantage to process the inputs and interactions of the group. During data processing, the number of communications being routed through the central role increases. However, a stage is reached at which point the central role can no longer manage to process the flow of messages.

2.3.3.3 The Rhizome Network

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) present a different type of network through their figuration of the ‘rhizome.’ This is defined as follows:

The rhizome is an uncentred growth, a multiplicity, characterised by connection and heterogeneity. It is constantly producing new shoots and rootlets. The rhizome, as a subterranean stem, grows horizontally rather than vertically (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 16).

Its main function is to spread out, rather than to strengthen one particular stem. Its offshoots are equally important and very often the original bulb dies off while the rhizome in its globality is still flourishing.

Old, mature and new stems of the rhizome merge together as one ‘being’ striving to survive through cracks in rocks and despite the lack of water and other minerals (difficulties of survival).

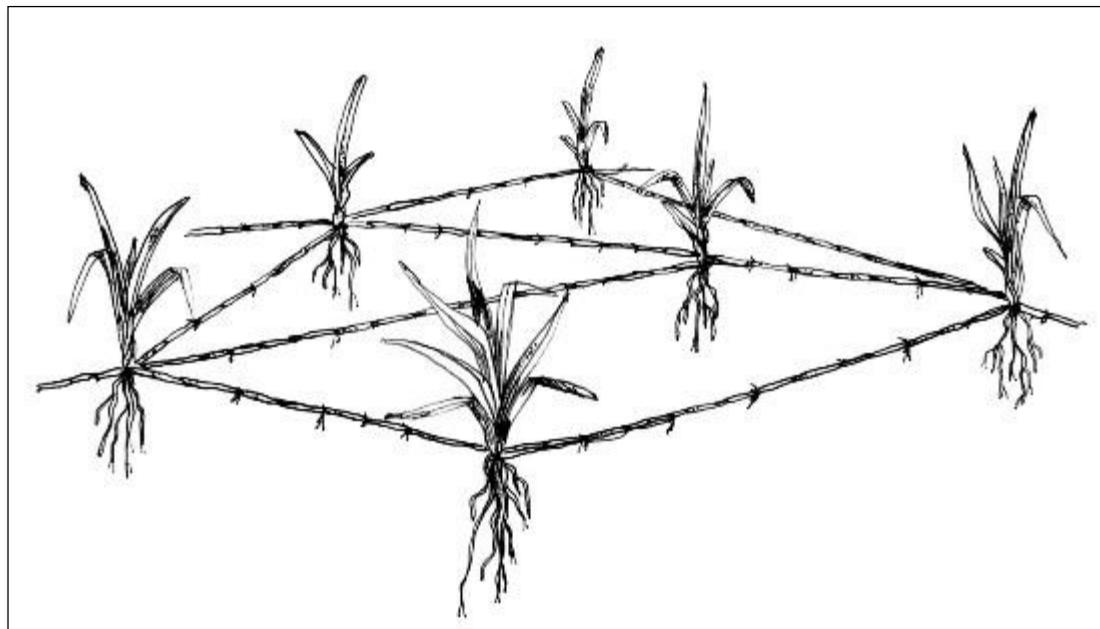


Image 2.2 An Example of A Rhizome

Rhizomes can include bulbs and tubers.

The rhizome is not selective but includes the best and the worst, as Deleuze and Guattari concede in their description of an example of a botanic rhizome that may include in it 'potato and couch grass, and the weed' (Braidotti, 1994, p.7)

The rhizome is different from the tree. The trunk is the major component of the tree running from bottom to top as a single centre. The branch-roots are subsets of the trunk and are similar to spokes radiating from a single centre. Such is indeed the principle of the tree: a centralised or hierarchical structure. This is comparable to the 'wheel.' A network structure modelled on the image of the tree will thus have a strong centre of significance. An element in this network model receives data from a higher unit and only gets information through pre-established paths. Such a centralised network grants all power to a centre organ. The hierarchical pattern is set up prior to the positioning of the individual who has to fit within the available slot.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe the outcome of a centralised system as a dictatorship style of leading and communicating as follow:

... to these centralised systems, the authors contrast a centred systems, 'the rhizomatic networks' in which communication runs from any neighbour to any other, the stems or channels do not pre-exist, and all individuals are interchangeable, described mainly by their function at a particular moment. Functions within the rhizomatic network are managed and the final, global result reached without a central agency (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 17).

The rhizome network is not something fixed and stable as is the Wheel, the Circle, the Comcon and the Y Arrangements described above. It is simply described by Deleuze and Guattari as a “*multiplicity without a central order undergoing a continuous change of state*” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 17).

2.3.3.4 Flow of Communication

Another perspective of viewing a network is given by Castells (2000) who argues that a network is not a structure-based model (as, for example, the four communication network models discussed previously) but consists entirely of a flow of information between networks. Castells coined the term ‘space of flows’ to define hubs where networks of communication crisscross (Castells, 2000). People are not tied to a single network structure, but to the flow of communication means. The importance of networks for Castells, is not the ‘network’ itself but what flows through it. From Castells’ perspective, a network with no flow cannot be considered as a type of network.

Castells’ work is quite similar to the Deleuze and Guattari figuration of rhizomatic networks. Both views try to capture the importance of the ‘fluidity’ of a network and the ‘rate of flow of this fluid.’ While Deleuze and Guattari applied the botanic insight to metaphorically describe this fluidity of the network (through the image of the rhizome), Castells, who comes from a sociological background, concentrated on compiling mathematical data to calculate the flow of information.

In the modern age, we are living in Castells’ space of flows through the internet revolution. He uses the World Wide Web as an example in that the number of transactions carried out each day is what is essential, rather than the number of computers physically linked to it. A computer that is connected to NASA in the United States but does not perform any transactions is not logically part of the Web (although

it is physically connected). The importance of this flow can be appreciated when the web is blocked by a viral outbreak. Although the personal computers are still there, there will be no ‘flow,’ as termed by Castells (2000). Thus, it can be highlighted that the network is essentially the flow of information, rather than the physical nodes. Power is found within the network (intrinsic) rather than external to it. This contrasts with the other communication network models which confine power to the outer physical position or structure set up by the network model.

Different notions of networks have thus been illustrated through different studies of networking. How research in communication networks has elicited four theoretical models of networks having fixed, stable structures is discussed in this first part of the literature review. The philosophical work of Deleuze and Guattari forwarded the rhizomatic network model that is fluid and unstructured. Other interesting perspectives on network typology were derived from the latest sociological work on the networking society researched by Castells (2000). This informed analysis will be utilised to understand the proposal for networks within the Maltese educational system in the next sections.

2.4 Maltese School Networks Models

The Reform Document issued by the Ministry of Education in 2005 envisages a school network as:

... ideally to be built around a secondary school that serves as a receiver from primary ‘feeder’ schools. The existing stock of secondary school buildings in Malta makes the application of this ideal school network logically difficult to implement on a national level (Reform Document, 2005, p. 44).

The term ‘College’ in this context thus refers to school networks. The Reform Policy Document (2005) states that although the entire reform will promote holistic benefits to the school learning communities, different models and proposals will be presented to help overcome contextual and individual college problems. Essentially, each school network will provide a wide range of coordinated services, initiatives and resources. The different college network models presented in the networking document will share

a number of common elements. The main principal binding element is that each college will have the same organisational structure as outlined below:

The Principal will provide guidance, direction and support to the schools through their Heads, in pursuit of their aims and functions and will facilitate the coordination and organisation of common activities, programmes, projects and specialisation at the level of the College or each individual school ... All models are based on the premise that each school will have its own Head of School, Assistant Heads, teaching and non-teaching staff, a School Council and a Student Council (Reform Document, 2005, pp. 44-45).

The proposed network organisation for the Maltese education system pictures an organisational chart that puts the leader on top and the subordinates beneath. At the apex of the pictorial models presented in the appendix of the school networking document (Reform Document, 2005) one finds the position of the Principal as the new external leadership to the whole system. In the levels below, each subordinate has a lower level with other subordinates.

On reviewing the variations of the Maltese reform networking model presented in the policy document, it illustrates that we are being presented with a Y network arrangement or as it is sometimes called ‘an inverted tree.’ Ironically, in an era of decentralisation the new reform document for networking Maltese schools is advocating a centralised or hierarchical kind of network model.

Leavitt (1951) explains that a network structure modelled on the image of a tree will have a strong centre of significance. A participant in the Maltese network model, as presented in the document, can receive information only along pre-established paths of communication. In turn, the circulation of this communication can move only upwards and downwards with restricted vertical communication between the schools themselves in the given structures. Such a centralised network grants all power to the centre organ that is to the Principal and the College Board. The network school participant in the models proposed for Maltese schools has only one active neighbour, that is the adjacent school and its hierarchical superior or what is referred to in the document as ‘the receiving school.’ The hierarchical network system is established before the network participant is integrated within the system.

Despite the limitations of communication and power positions within the proposed networks as outlined above, the college network reform document (Reform Document, 2005) proposes distributed leadership as the only style of leadership which would lead to what has been described as ‘successful networks’ (Reform Document, 2005:35). Distributed leadership is described by the Reform Document as that type of leadership that:

... will not come only from senior leaders in schools, but from all those working and learning within the network. Networked learning communities have demonstrated the significance of shared or co-leadership arrangements. Not only does this spread the load and help build leadership succession, it also distributes the leadership function across more than one school location within a given network. Shared leadership creates a capacity for healthy dialogue and debate that will foster a satisfying and fruitful team spirit (Reform Document, 2005, p. 39)

The network policy reform advocates that school networks will promote the effective contribution of all members of staff not only the senior management team members. Organised systems within a college network will encourage all members to participate effectively within the school system as described below:

Successful networks show that leadership may not necessarily come from the places traditionally found in the past. It is important to ensure that all adults within the network take responsibility for creating, validating and spreading knowledge about what works and of what does not. Those networks which report the best progress during the first year or so are generally the ones that will have planned for distributed leadership from the earliest stages (Reform Document, 2005, p. 39).

The Reform Document highlights the importance of the role of Head of School and the senior management team members in providing the vision and the necessary leadership to the entire school community as follows:

Distributed leadership only thrives where there is effective senior leadership. Planning for this distributed leadership only thrives where there is effective senior leadership. Planning for this distributed leadership means giving staff in each school clear roles, providing them with proper and effective support structures. It also means

developing teachers and others into leaders, trainers and enquirers
(Reform Document, 2005, p. 39).

However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, when referring to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the outcome of centralised network models is a controlled style of leading and communicating. This leadership style opposes the traits of distributed leadership and will surely compromise the empowerment of the school head teachers and their staff. The concept of ‘distributed leadership’ as proposed by the college network reform policy document (2005) has to be practised within school network models that place the Head of School in a super ordinate, ‘heroic leadership’ role and this surely militates against distributed leadership. Through research in network models, this study has already illustrated that centralised networks channel all power and authority to the centre organ, leaving all other network members relatively powerless. In the Ministry’s view, the network document underlines the fact that distributed leadership only thrives where there is effective senior leadership:

... the involvement of Head Teachers and senior managers in the schools is in fact crucial to the development of the network, both in terms of priority and the profile network activity that is given in school
(Reform Document, 2005, p. 39).

After reviewing the works of various authors on the subject of networks with special reference to school networks as outlined in the first research question, this study will review in more detail the role of the contemporary school leader in the era of networking. This literature review has attempted to show that educational leadership has been subject to a process of permanent evolution typically characterised by a clear preference for markets and competition; a marked promotion of private sector styles of management and the use of explicit performance measures and standards.

This thesis illustrates that leadership in today’s networked context requires a different type of analysis if we are to uncover the trends and tendencies within everyday practices. The next section will discuss the possible relevance of an Arendtian analysis to leadership in today’s educational context.

2.5 Arendt's Analysis of Totalitarianism

Arendt's analysis of the conditions of totalitarianism, based on labour and action combined with thoughtlessness generates the possibility that the experience of the college network experience might be on one level banal and on another might illuminate the banality of evil. Arendt warned that in such situations, the danger lies not so much in individual perpetrators, but in others who avoid responding due to fear or lack of knowledge (Arendt, 1958b). In this study, such an approach will be analysed in the narratives of the leadership experiences where there might be accounts of thoughtlessness and passive evil in responding to neoliberal and neoconservative education reforms that would enable totalitarian conditions to be visible and to begin to crystallise.

The concluding part of this review will engage in a critical examination of the leadership practice by addressing relevant critical questions from an Arendtian point of view. The proposed college network reform will be examined for any possible dangers that can stem from the implementation of this reform. Central to this examination is the specific concept of 'distributed leadership,' as advocated by the college network reform in the Maltese Islands. This leadership style has been described as the most recommended for the most successful networks by the Reform Document. Distributed leadership has become a non-arguable discourse as it speaks to traditional professional cultures of collegiality, but it can also be used to mimic ways of thinking and doing that is already accepted. By utilising an Arendtian theoretical framework it would be possible to examine how thoughtlessness about distributed leadership might be located in assumptions about how things are done whilst examining the possible failure to think about the reality of how it is being used.

2.5.1 Arendt's Theoretical Framework and the Leadership Concepts

This literature review has presented college networking as a seemingly benign and normal process. Following Arendt's thinking, this study is advocating that the new reform needs to be reviewed to examine to what extent its design and delivery is about 'obliterating spontaneity and plurality.' This can be rooted in the ongoing education/challenges at a time of periodic globalised economic dislocation, where following the work of Arendt (1958b), reforms are designed and enacted through 'seeing like a state.'

Such a critical philosophical outlook highlights the need to examine whether there is any potential enforced crystallisation of totalitarian conditions in the Maltese education emerging ‘distributed leadership’ in networks, which is the main research question of this study. This study aims to examine this through analysing the collected data using Arendt’s four categories of ideology, total terror, relationships and bureaucracy (Arendt, 2009).

As an addendum to the literature review, the theoretical framework of this study discussed in the next chapter, proposes a ‘focused’ deep study approach of college networks in Malta through one chosen theoretical contribution – the works of Hannah Arendt. The application of this theoretical framework to college school networks in Malta will empower the Arendtian process of ‘thinking without banisters’ to problematise any unquestioned issues in the implementation of this reform.

Thinking with, through and against Arendt’s historical/political concepts, as well as referring to her methods, will make a distinctive contribution to understanding and explaining the impact of the literature review of this study on actual lived experiences. This will be carried out through revealing the conditions for totalitarianism, but at the same time by examining events in ways that enable questions to be asked about how the contemporary situation may or may not be crystallising into a totalitarian regime.

This thesis considers it necessary to focus on how interventions into schools through external policy, such as the college network reform in Malta might be about removing the spaces for action leading college participants simply to comply with orders and instructions. At the same time, this thesis acknowledges the challenges and resistance to such processes, and how the job of the researcher is not only to open up to scrutiny the endurance of totalitarian conditions but also the dynamics of (and conservation within) public services education through contemporary networking of schools, notably the destruction of a ‘system’ where bureaucratic structures stabilise and provide spaces for political action. However, the path that has been followed in the implementation of the new reform might not be one of democratic renewal, but a series of regulation and deregulation initiatives and reforms underpinned by a hodge podge of ideas and beliefs legitimised by narrative research and normative exhortations to lead and be led. This thinking within an Arendtian framework will enable the analysis

of the leadership literature focusing on the relationship between the state, reform policy and knowledge to be engaged in ways that show how the newly introduced reform might deny active dialogue within the plurality of theories, methodologies and methods and how reforms such as the college network reform being analysed in this study might lead people to learn to labour and potentially work but not to take action.

Arendt asks human beings to think about the relational threads of what ‘I’ and ‘we’ are doing: the failure to recognise natality and pluralism, particularly evident in the mediocrity of an over-indulgence in metrics and ‘what works’ prescriptions evident in bureaucratic styles of leadership as described at the beginning of this literature review. College and school leaders might not be allowed to be spontaneous and do new things due to excessive administrative and management tasks within the new networked environment.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the main literature contributions in education focusing mainly on leadership and college school networks as the main components of this thesis research inquiry. This literature review has opened a wide perspective on the main themes of this study through research, knowledge from reading and follow-up of critical reflections. This chapter has also provided an important contribution to educational leadership literature in Malta by highlighting major local work and studies in Maltese schools and Colleges.

The literature review has situated the literature on educational leadership and school networks within an Arendtian analysis and thus provided a scaffold to the main research inquiry. The next chapter will provide the reader with a short focused review of the onset of networks in Maltese schools. A brief socio-political analysis will discuss the local evolution of the concept of educational leadership within the Maltese framework the objectives of which are to advocate democracy and decentralisation of power and authority within the local context.

CHAPTER 3 THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE COLLEGE NETWORK REFORM POLICY: AN OVERVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This short chapter presents a brief overview of the socio-historical context which brought about the college network reform in Malta. The objective is to ensure a better understanding of the process that led to this legislation and the eventual implementation of the policy within a particular time of national educational reform.

3.2 The Onset of Networking in Maltese Schools

The policy document *“For All Children To Succeed: A New Network Organisation for Quality Education In Malta”* (Reform Document, 2005) was drawn up to launch a process of change that would bring about the advancement of the Maltese education system by introducing new ways of working in a globalised and networked world. However, this ideology presented a major challenge to our educational system due to its modern complexity and due to the traditional practices which existed within the schools. As mentioned earlier, the school network reform addresses various themes to include issues of autonomy, decentralisation and collaboration. For this to succeed, the development of a new work ethic, in and beyond schools, was urgently required so as to further develop the advocated concept presented by the new network reform.

... the central administration had to truly move away from a command-and-control mindset to a supportive and collaborative mentality while the schools and the teachers had to change their professional approach from one of isolation to that of collaboration and collegiality (Cutajar, 2016, p. 78).

The approach of the new reform document is that schools are no longer conceptualised as being isolated communities working as stand-alone institutions, irrespective of other school institutions which might even be in neighbouring areas. Through this

policy, the concept of networking is advocated within the local context, enabling a set of schools within a set geographical area to work together. This offers students the opportunity to move from one level of the education sector to the next in a smooth manner.

3.3 The Concept of Educational Leadership in the Local Context

The Reform Document proposes a concept of educational leadership based on shared or co-leadership arrangements. This type of leadership as proposed by the document is not only advocating leadership succession within the college network but also the distribution of the leadership function across more than one school location within a given network. The document highlights the fact that shared leadership can create a capacity of healthy dialogue and effective team spirit.

The document acknowledges that shared leadership within a network is the most difficult to plan for. Leadership within this shared perspective empowers all members of the network to contribute and to feel that their contributions are valued. All network participants have to take responsibility for the dissemination of best practices within the College, whilst acknowledging possible challenges and difficulties. Team work within a shared leadership approach can overcome any possible obstacles to networking.

The document suggests that those networks which reported the best progress during their first year or so are generally the ones that will have planned for distributed leadership from the earliest stages. The policy document also acknowledges the vital importance of the involvement of the Head of School in the development of an effective network. It states categorically that distributed leadership only thrives where there is effective senior leadership.

Planning for this distributed leadership means giving staff in each school clear notes, providing them with proper and effective support structures. It also means developing teachers and others into leaders, trainers and enquirers (Reform Document, 2005, p. 39).

The importance of the role of the Head of School has been highlighted primarily in the National Minimum Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999). This recognition

led to the devolution of greater responsibilities to the schools. This was mainly maintained with the introduction of the School Development Plan. Here, the schools were expected to start identifying the critical areas for development and to take a proactive approach to identifying and managing change at the school level.

The Strategic Plan of 2001 (Ministry of Education) clearly spelt out the challenges that schools, and especially the Heads, had to confront as they started to take on more ownership of what and how things happened at the school level. In fact, the Report of the National Steering Committee on the Implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum clearly states that:

Decentralisation means also greater responsibility for the Head of School as the leader of the school community. In this context, the managerial competencies and leadership skills of the Head of School come into play. No amount of goodwill from the central agency will redress the weakness in management at school level. As the process of decentralisation gathers momentum, the Head of School, together with the management team, will be called to make higher order and higher quality decisions ... the Head is the linchpin for successful school-based management.

She/he must be able to forge the school's stakeholders into a community driven by a core authenticity, collegiality, leadership, interest, belonging, trust, empowerment, participation, risk taking, pride, sharing and respect (Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 114).

3.4 Power, Voice and Social Justice in Maltese Educational System

The above statement from the Report of the National Steering Committee on the implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2001) highlighted the local school as a point of reference – it was clearly emphasised that the school should be the place where things actually happen and that school personnel needed to operate differently. It recognised the central role that the Head of School had to play to encourage different stakeholders to take on a more active role in school-based decision making. The Head was described as the ‘linchpin.’

Key principles were also highlighted in this document, namely, values and attributes needed to take our educational system forward. For the first time, the language used helped to emphasise the importance of participation and collegiality. The intention behind this document was to advocate for empowering individuals working within the

educational system to improve the system by working together for a better outcome. Through the process of sharing, it was being argued that people would develop respect for each other, nurture pride and trust within the schools as learning communities.

The document further emphasised the need for a consultative type of management. This, in turn, was meant to help shift from the current top-down model to one which is more bottom-up.

A consultative style of management should be cultivated to ensure the nurturing of decentralisation. Decision-making processes have to ensure whole staff involvement based on effective top-down and bottom-up lines of communication. Within the school community, a culture of self-assessment has to be cultivated and developed to ensure continuous improvement ... (Report of the National Steering Committee on the implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum, Ministry of Education, 2001, p. 114).

As aspects of the National Minimum Curriculum were being introduced in the years following the publication of this document, the government started to address the legal, structural and infrastructural needs of the country, in line with giving more authority to the school site. As mentioned above, this enabled the setting up of the college network system and it was legalised through the Amendment to the Education Act of 2006. This was a period supposed to be characterised by debate and consultation. Naturally, the implementation of the reform was not always an easy one.

The introduction of the reform happened just before the economic downturn of 2008, which heavily impacted European and world economies. Whilst, as a country we fared much better than most, we still had to adjust in the way we managed the financial crisis. Whilst the aims to start introducing the reforms were initially quite successful, the implementation process – envisaged to take eight to ten years – started to encounter problems as direct cuts started to affect various aspects of the reform.

Within such a context, the government introduced an amendment to the 1988 Education Act which was meant to spearhead the envisaged changes. In 2006, the Government presented a Bill, The Education (Amended) Act in parliament to amend the 1988 Education Act to sanction and execute the far-reaching education reform of decentralisation, thus delegating

more autonomy and accountability to the schools and Colleges (Law of Malta, 2006).

The Act made provision for the necessary legal framework for reorganising the existing kindergarten, primary and secondary state schools into Colleges: ‘... there shall be established those Colleges ... which shall network within them - State boys’ and girls’ schools ... (Education [Amendment] Act, 2006).

The legislation of the educational reform of decentralisation therefore made possible the delegation of autonomy and accountability to the schools and the Colleges. As quoted above, the Education Act enabled the reorganisation of kindergarten, primary and secondary schools into one whole entity - the College.

The College would thus be composed of a number of primary schools (the feeder schools) and one or two secondary schools (the receiving schools). Students would move from one level of education to another within the same College. The schools would network in educational activities and College initiatives. The organisational structure within the College and the individual school will be explained in the next section.

3.5 The Organisational Structure

The Education (Amendment) Act, 2006 Part V, Articles 52 – 62 of the Bill also established the governance arrangements and accountability structures of each College. It made provision for:

1. *A consultative College Board;*
2. *A College Principal, as the Chief Executive Officer of the College, who is accountable to the College Board;*
3. *A Council of Heads, formed by the Heads of all Primary and Secondary schools within the College, who is accountable to the Principal;*
4. *A School Council composed of educators and parents whose chairperson is nominated by the Minister of Education and the Head of School will be its secretary;*
5. *A Students’ Council;*

6. *All members of the College involved in the educational journey of their students will be accountable for their actions and teaching.*

The College Principal, who is appointed by the Minister of Education, had to be responsible for the entire College.

This had to be a new post in the hierarchical managerial structure of the Colleges. The role from an advantageous position because the stakeholders can address the identified concerns and attempts to exert their influence in promoting development. The Act stipulated that 'Every College shall have a Principal who shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the College and who shall be responsible to the Directors General (Education Amendment Act, 2006, p. 27).

The Act also made provisions for the constitution of two national directorates, the Directorate for Educational Services (DES) and the Directorate for Quality and Standards (DQSE). The mission of the DES, as laid down in the amended Education Act of 2006 was threefold:

- 1 To provide the necessary resources (human and material), services and facilities required by the colleges and state schools to operate in a decentralised system of education.
- 2 To collaborate with the colleges and schools and reinforce inter-school and inter-college networking, collaboration and collegiality.
- 3 To form partnerships with parents, the wider community and non-State colleges and schools.

The relevant Articles of the Act are quoted below as follows:

Articles 10 and 11 in Part II of the ACT, among other areas, focused on issues of collaboration, decentralisation and autonomy in Maltese schools. The Education (Amendment) Act, 2006 Cap. 327, Part II, Article 10:631 stipulated that the Directorate for Educational Services (DES) is '...to ensure the effective and efficient operation of and delivery of services to the Colleges and State schools within an established framework of decentralisation and autonomy.' This Directorate had to work '... in

constant collaboration with the Colleges and schools ... and to encourage and facilitate their networking and cooperation (Laws of Malta - An Act to Amend the Education Act, 2006, p. 7).

Among its functions and duties, the Directorate for Educational Services (DES), in conjunction with the Colleges and schools, was expected to promote, encourage and monitor the democratic governance of schools through school councils; support Colleges in the organisation of special initiatives and projects; in the preparation of the business plan of the Directorate and to consider and discuss the development plans of Colleges and schools.

On the other hand, the mission of the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) had 'to regulate, establish, monitor and assure standards and quality in the programmes and educational services in the compulsory educational levels.' In particular, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) had to aim to provide a professional service of support, guidance, monitoring, inspection, evaluation and reporting on the process of teaching in schools, on the application of the curriculum, syllabi, pedagogy, assessment and examinations, and on the administration, and on the assurance and auditing of quality in Colleges and schools (Reform Document, 2005, p. xxv)

In the local context, the Directorates for Education had to also devise a new collegial way of working at this directorate level. An important challenge was the synchronisation of the two directorates targeting complementary aims in the policy implementation.

At the meso level there was the establishment of the Educational Leaders Committee (ELC). This was set in 2005 with the introduction of the college system. It had to be chaired by the Director General for Educational Services (DG – DES), the Director for Quality and Standards in Education (DG – DQSE), together with the occasional presence of the Director General for Support Services (DG – DSS) (Government of Malta, 2006).

A focused Committee referred to as the Educational Leaders Committee (ELC) was set up for the first time to ensure that the Directors and the Principals had the opportunity to meet regularly ensuring planning, coordination and shared decision making and problem solving at a strategic level.

The Educational Leaders Committee was envisaged to be made up of all ten Directors within the Ministry for Education and Employment, and the ten College Principals. The Educational Leaders Committee meeting had to be scheduled twice a month, with the possibility of *ad hoc* meetings with any one of the Directors General. The purpose of the Educational Leaders Committee was meant to serve as a consultative body to the Directors General and the Ministry. It was expected to be also a forum where innovations emerging from one of the directorates were to be discussed for action at school level.

The Ministry and the Directorates could also use the Educational Leaders Committee as a launch pad to pass on information to schools through the College Principals. It had to serve the purpose of an open communication channel between the schools and the Directorates and the Ministry through the College Principals. The intention was that school issues and concerns were brought up to this level for national policies to be established and gradually implemented in schools.

At the micro level there was the setup of The Council of Heads (CoH). This body had to be made up of all the Heads of Schools within each respective College and chaired by the College Principal. Meetings were expected to be held once a month (excluding August). The Council of Heads had been established according to the Education Act (2006) (Cap. 327 Part V Para 53 a–j).

The aims of the Council were intended to nurture a spirit of collegiality among schools within the College, but not excluding inter-college collaboration; involving parents as active collaborators; amongst others.

An all-encompassing aim was set to:

... ensure that students entrusted to the schools within the College receive their educational entitlement according to their potential in full, continuous and smooth process of education from an early age to the end of compulsory education in the perspective of lifelong learning and inspired by the highest human values (Ibid.a).

In practice, the purpose of the Council of Heads was to create a forum in which to share good practices at all levels within the school. Another aim was intended to put forward queries or concerns and suggestions to be communicated and discussed at the Educational Leaders Committee level if not within the competence of the Council of Heads. It also held the role of a consultative body where concepts and/or practices are inseminated to be further developed into policies not only at College level, but also at a national level through the Educational Leaders Committee (ELC).

At school level, there were the School Management Teams, led by the Head of School and the Assistant Head. The School Management Team would execute the daily administration of the school. Together, they would develop the School Development Plan (SDP) which would address both issues pertinent to the school itself but would also embrace College/local and potential needs.

It is the SDP that had to serve as a platform to undertake the internal reviews of the school. Teachers were expected to take an active part in the development of Action Plans Committees that are identified for the SDP. In some cases, these Action Plans should also involve students, parents and members of the local community.

The Reform Document (2005) presented seven models to describe the various college set-ups and roles. This study focuses on a college which has been organised according to the first model, as illustrated in Image 3.1.

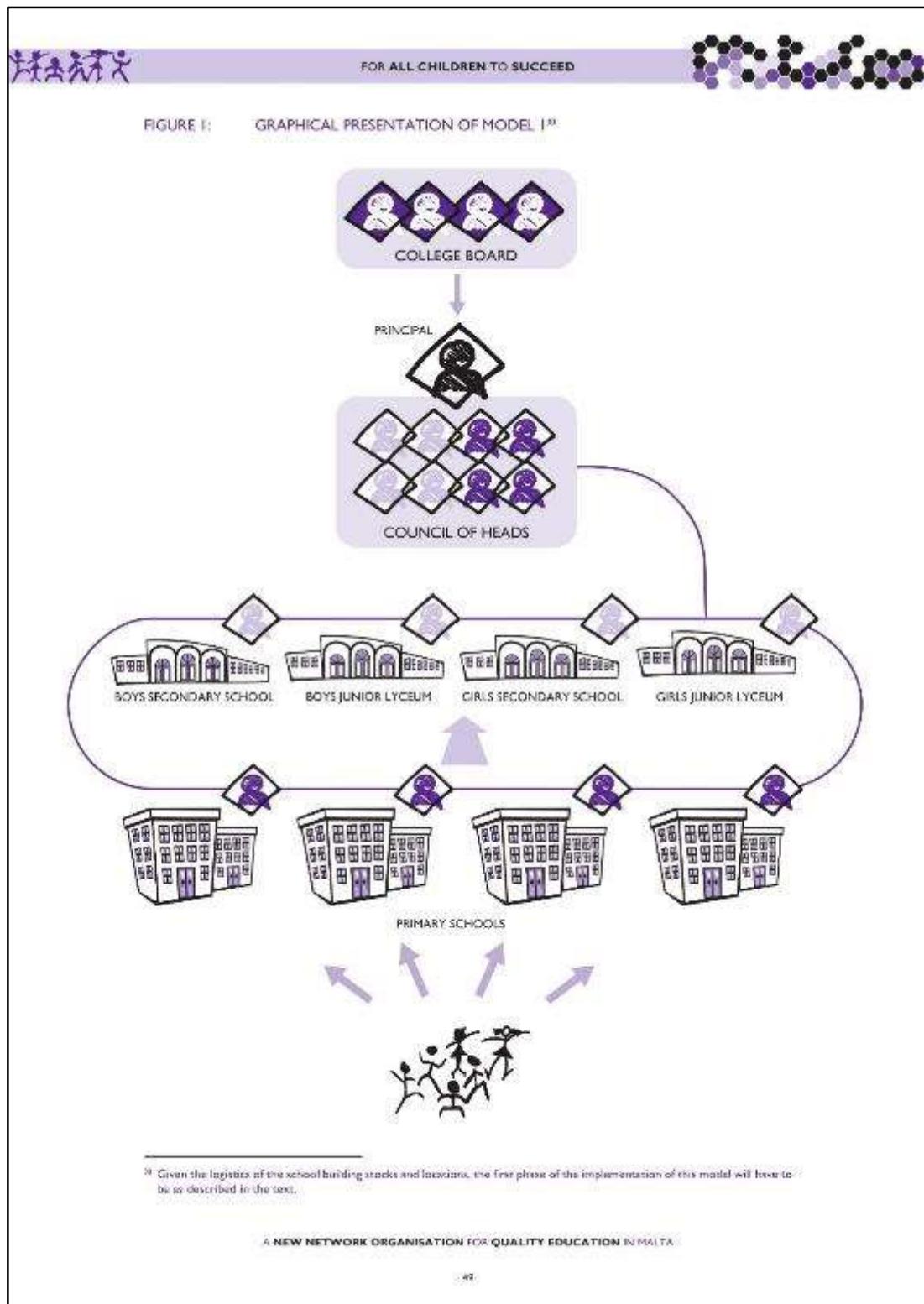


Image 3.1 Graphical Presentation of Model 1.

3.6 The Expectations of the Reform – Transformational Spaces?

The vision of the document proposing networking for Maltese Schools (Reform Document, 2005) sustained that through networking, schools could be in a better position to meet the needs of the students. Schools would be given the space to work in partnership with one another, to share resources, to jointly work on problems and set new ways of collaborating in a networked environment.

The expectation of all those involved in the Maltese education system was that the structures of the networking models proposed in the Reform Policy Document would really implement the ideology of the networking policy that was promising to advocate the spread of knowledge and power, growth and lifelong learning experiences. The college network reform had been claiming that networks are conducive to innovation and change management. It had been envisaged that the school networks could serve as a structural instrument to achieve the ideal of school learning communities, once the realisation of educational objectives commenced to bind network participants together.

The literature review chapter of this thesis illustrated that the proposed network organisation for the Maltese education system pictured an organisational chart that places the leader on top and the subordinates below the leader. However, as has already been indicated, despite the outlined limitations of communication and power positions within the proposed networks, the Reform Document for the Maltese Islands (2005) proposed distributed leadership as the only type of leadership for what was described as ‘successful networks’ (Reform Document, 2005).

Previously, reference was made to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) who explained that the outcome of centralised network models is a ‘controlled’ style of leading and communicating. This leadership style opposes the traits of distributed leadership and will surely work against the empowerment of the Head of School and the staff. Thus, upon reflection on this proposed vision for college networks in the Maltese Islands, one can query whether all networks are conducive to an innovative environment and whether there is any network better than the rest.

The main research question of this study directly investigates whether the concept of networking as advocated by the policy document is congruent to the actual lived experiences of this reform. What was stated in the Education Act and the relevant policies determined our practices and management of the schools. However, there were other issues that militated against the implementation of such envisioned goals. Research and anecdotal evidence shows that moving from a context of isolation to one of collaboration and hence, collaborative endeavour has proven to be more demanding than previously expected.

3.7 Difficulties of College Reform as identified by Local Authors

Studies on the college network in Malta are still few in number. However, the contributions of two main studies by Spiteri (2016) and Cutajar (2017) show the difficulties encountered in many State Colleges as they try to embrace joint working and collaboration. Cutajar insists that:

College and School Leaders need to have collaborative and collegial practices that the new reforms and policies are undertaking. Successful networking depends on whether College and School Leaders can build a sense of trust with their staff so that they will be able to forge and lead others. There is also the need of leadership audacity and vision in sustaining intra and inter school collaboration. School leaders, as emphasised by interviewed teachers will need to adopt a more shared leadership style and this can be manifested through more consultation and collaboration (Cutajar, 2017, p. 82).

This study illustrated that the decentralisation of leadership roles in the new college network reform did not actually materialise:

The new post of College Principal can be considered as another notch in the administrative hierarchy and this is met with disgruntled Heads. These Heads have limited authority because they must refer everything to the Principal for approval. Behind the rhetoric of decentralisation exists an agenda of centralised and traditional hierarchical approach to doing things? Top-down management cannot allow the form of collaboration that requires intra and inter school collaboration to bear function (Cutajar, 2017, p. 82).

Spiteri (2016) also concluded that the new college network reform in Malta was presented in quite contradictory terms: the official discourse of the policy document

did not tally with the actual implementation of the Reform. He continued to explain that:

... In the College scenario, [School] Heads were faced with the dilemma of the College Principal's proximity: greater quality and quantity of presence by the Principal in the life and decision-making process of the school, at the cost of decreased autonomy of action (Spiteri, 2016 p. 54).

Spiteri (2016) emphasised that this discourse did not acknowledge informal autonomy that the Heads were capable of exercising in the pre-college scenario. Spiteri added further factors, such as insufficient preparation and training opportunities and the imperfect handling of the uncertainty, fear and stress generated by the reform and felt by school stakeholders including Heads. The research by Spiteri (2016) concluded that the result was a sense that the college reform was restricting school autonomy.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief description of the onset of networking in Maltese schools. This was carried out through an overview of the legislation that led to the Reform Document (2005) and the decentralisation of Malta's educational system. This chapter helped the reader to understand the organisational structure of the new reform with special reference to new roles and responsibilities. This chapter also highlighted the main goals of the reform focusing mainly on any possibilities of transformational spaces within this new educational scenario in our islands.

The next chapter scaffolds the theoretical framework of this study by placing the local college network reform within the Arendtian framework. This is discussed with particular reference to the main theories underlying Arendt's writings. This next chapter highlights the possible contributions of the Arendtian framework to the analysis of the college network and educational leadership in the local context.

CHAPTER 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a case will be made for the use of an Arendtian theoretical framework as a thinking guide and reflective lens on local issues pertaining to the college network reform in Malta and the corresponding leadership.

As a result of my Masters dissertation, I was already very much aware of the works of leading authors in leadership, especially those who focused on the educational sphere. With this study, I would like to undertake further research to continue to analyse their works and that of other authors, in relation to the educational system in Malta.

Due to its recognised relevance and contributions to the analysis of totalitarianism, ideology, bureaucracy and the exercise of power, the Arendtian perspective (1958 – 1975) has been considered at length and will therefore be referred to throughout this study. Arendtian theory is constantly concerned with critically reflecting on these structures and the discourses that support them in order to determine alternative views for empowerment. Thus, it is interested in revising the institutions' own ways of seeing and knowing.

The Arendtian philosophical lens will be utilised in this study to analyse and investigate the main research question situated in the context of the experience of the contemporary Maltese education networking reform.

The approach provided by Arendt (1958a) can provoke ideas, meanings and understandings for educational leadership by examining the relationships between people generating ideas and people taking action and can illuminate the dangers of substituting “action with activity.” Arendt’s work is particularly interesting and relevant to my study since her work is both theoretical and realistic. It is set within a

social reality and it is very sensitive to political issues. Arendt contributed a lot of theoretical work, both in the form of text publication and in the form of a collection of essays. This thesis will draw upon a framework based on the main concepts derived from a range of her works that will be useful to answer the research questions of this study which focus on educational leadership, lived experience, discourse on voice, power and social justice, as well as transformational spaces for the network participant.

The main Arendtian substantive issues will be identified and discussed to consider Arendt's conceptual framework and its usefulness in relation to the research questions. Arendt constructs conceptual framework systems to study 'human affairs' based on contingency, human action and experience. Her main aim was to set a perspective of thinking that is just, realistic and reliable. In the book *Hannah Arendt and the Search for A New Political Philosophy*, Parekh (1981) describes Arendt's 'hermeneutical approach' as simply the search for meaning. By adopting a hermeneutical approach, Arendt's conceptual framework aims to discover what should be done, what is right to be done, what is acceptable and why. According to Gunter (2013), this approach owes its beginning to two main concepts: the fact that human beings are bound to take decisions, as thinking beings and the corresponding fact that these human beings need to constantly question their decisions.

This chapter will encompass the concept of 'totalitarianism' as the main component of Arendt's theoretical contributions. Utilising Arendtian thinking, this chapter will attempt to demonstrate how elements of totalitarianism can determine the 'human condition.' This theoretical approach will enable this thesis to 'problematis' the lived experiences of a new local reform in the Maltese education system for any evidence of Arendt's totalitarian conditions (ideology, terror, destruction of human bonds and bureaucracy) that might have a direct influence on the social reality within schools.

Within such an Arendtian framework, leadership in a college school network reform will be analysed as **a lived experience**, rather than a formal policy. Arendt's method gives attention to the totality of experience, delivering in-depth analysis for intentions, agendas, interactions and outcomes that might not be easily deciphered at a superficial level.

This Arendtian method is very valid to the main aim of this thesis (as guided by the main research question) which is focused upon examining whether there is congruency between the policy and the actual practice of the college network reform in Malta. In doing this, I agree with Canovan (1995) that:

... the most fruitful way of reading Arendt's political thought is, I believe, to treat her analysis of modernity as a context for the interesting things she has to say about the fact that politics goes on among plural persons with space between them" (Canovan, 1995, p. 28).

This approach to Arendt's theories will help me view human activities in education not as "natural phenomena" but as being driven by thinking individuals that must be understood, both in terms of their set frameworks (objectivity) and actual lived experiences of these activities (subjectivity). An Arendtian critical perspective will enable me to reflect not only on the content of the initiatives in leadership but also on the rationale, values and philosophical concepts which underlie them.

In this chapter, I intend to set the scene by introducing Hannah Arendt as a person, thinker and activist, and to explore how her approach to politics and history is useful when faced with the current challenges for educational leadership in general and more specifically with the demands brought about by the proposed college network leadership in Malta.

The key questions to be addressed from an Arendtian point of view for the field of college networks are to do with giving recognition to a plurality within the college network, theory and professional practices, the type of knowledge that travels from one context to another, how particular ideas are accepted and used, the debates that take place, the existence and quality of theorising and the actual experience of the reform.

4.2 Reading and Thinking with Hannah Arendt

This next section will outline Arendt's essential concepts. As the researcher of this study, I am not only interested in Arendt's concept of leadership and any associated controversies but in utilising her writing to engage critically with the actual **lived experience** of a new reform. Following the example set out in Canovan (1995), the

study will engage critically with the main concepts of this framework to promote reflective thinking through a critical lens.

So, by constructing a theoretical framework, this study will emphasise how Arendt's work on the notion of experience advocated reflective thinking without imposing any limitation. The Arendtian framework will also provide the necessary voice, space and reflective opportunity through which new ideas and perspectives on the college network reform can be brought forward. The necessary support in this process can be given by institutions through a legitimising, durable and stabilising framework in which the initiative and accommodation of the plural person can happen. What is needed is the provision of places where people can work together but still maintain personal space. Arendt (1958a) provides the metaphor of the round table – people 'sitting at a table' are connected but still maintain that relatively small individual space round their chair. According to Arendt, when those individual spaces are removed and people are considered as one mass, then totalitarianism can be experienced.

There are two overarching concepts for Arendt, namely 'totalitarianism' and 'banality.' The next section will first discuss the concept of totalitarianism with special reference to leadership and governance. The concept of banality will be discussed in a later section. Another important concept highlighted by Arendt is that of 'labour, work and action.'

4.2.1 Arendt's First Overarching Concept: Totalitarianism

The first overarching concept for Arendt (1958a) is *totalitarianism*. One of her major works, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt, 1976), afforded Arendt the opportunity to analyse this, and examine claims about plurality and exchange of ideas, and the relationship with freedom. I support the below interpretation of Arendt's definition of the concept of totalitarianism:

... *totalitarianism, a novelty among forms of government, is not, like tyranny, the atrophy of politics; it is the radical elimination of politics brought about by the methodical elimination of the very humanity of first a selected group and eventually any group, by making humans superfluous as human beings. Such is totalitarianism's radical evil* (Young-Bruehl, 1982, p. 351).

Arendt argues that by rendering people superfluous, people are then denied their basic rights. This is core to understanding Arendt's thinking and her work in *On Totalitarianism* enables analysis about the conditions in which it develops and flourishes. This is also very relevant to the analysis of the hierarchical power structure depicted in the network's models for Colleges in Malta.

A hierarchical power structure can radically eliminate the capacity of people to voice their opinion and to be empowered to participate directly in the implementation of the new reform. In this way, participation and possibilities of leadership in new educational reforms can be rendered superfluous. The analysis of the conditions in which totalitarianism develops is thus crucial to the main research question that is inquiring power, voice and social justice in educational leadership in a networked lived experience.

Arendt (1958) identified four features of totalitarianism, namely *ideology, total terror, destruction of human bonds and bureaucracy*. These substantive issues from Arendt's concept of totalitarianism will be explored in relation to leadership in college networks in Malta.

4.2.1.1 Ideology

Arendt (1958a) believes that totalitarianism is based on “*an entirely new and unprecedented concept of power*” (Arendt, 1958a, p. 417); it is not so much about structures and systems, but actions based on an unwavering faith in an ideological fictitious world. Arendt (1958a) argues further that the construction of ideology is through the use of propaganda or “*traditionally accepted mysteries*” (Arendt, 1958a, p. 351) and what is credible is not facts or even made up data but the consistency of this information framework that backs up the system. So, Arendt (1958a) argues that fabrications are crucial to the process of eliminating politics and once in control, there is no need for propaganda:

... *systematic lying to the whole world can be safely carried out only under the conditions of totalitarian rule, where the fictitious quality of everyday reality makes propaganda superfluous* (Arendt, 1958a, p. 417).

In her writings, Arendt (1958b) warns about the dangers of ideology in governance, institutions and relationships. According to Arendt, ideology is maintained through consistency of the system. Arendt argues that, contrary to what is usually believed, ideology is not maintained through conviction or the setup of new ideas or facts but through consistency and unchanged facts. Arendt (1958b) warns that this imposed or fabricated consistency can lead to total error. This Arendtian thinking perspective supports the enquiry of the main research question of this study, that is investigating the lived experience of educational leadership in a new reform with a critical stance and a problematising approach to policy document facts and directions.

4.2.1.2 Total Terror

Arendt (1958b) makes a distinction between violence and terror. According to Arendt (1958b) terror is that form of government that rules when violence has destroyed all order and organisation. In such terms, the government remains in full control. The effectiveness of terror depends on the destruction of every kind of organised opposition. Arendt (1958b) argues that the full force of terror is realised when all kinds of organised opposition are destroyed. Violence is described by Arendt as the means to instil terror in a society. Central to understanding this is how Arendt (1958b) makes a distinction between tyranny and totalitarianism: the former is about controlling opponents through fear and removal; the latter uses terror as a kind of governance to promote the obedient and innocent subordinate:

Terror as we know it today strikes without any preliminary provocation, its victims are innocent even from the point of view of the persecutor ... we are not concerned here with the ultimate consequence of the rule by terror – namely, that nobody, not even the executors, can ever be free of fear, in our context we are dealing merely with the arbitrariness by which victims are chosen, and for this it is decisive that they are objectively innocent, that they are chosen regardless of what they may or may not have done (Arendt, 1958b, p. 6).

Bowring (2011) argues that terror is not about managing change so that people think and do things differently, but to make other thinking seem illogical and preposterous. Bowring (2011) argues that the death camps were not used as a warning to others because “*these people were effectively dead before they were murdered, for all traces and memories of their lives were made to disappear*” (Bowring, 2011, p. 195).

The capacity to think freely without terror or imposition is very crucial to the inquiry of the network participant experience of the new reform. By utilising Arendt's theoretical framework, this study aims to investigate the main components of the educational leadership style being implemented in the new reform and the exploration of any possibilities of transformational spaces within the same experience as outlined in the research question.

4.2.1.3 Destruction of Human Bonds

Arendt (1958a, p.58) argues that terror can permeate into human relationships, even the most intimate and can remove the spaces for pluralism and hence, freedom:

... by using the permanent threat of betrayal to create an atmosphere of paranoid distrust between family members, colleagues and friends, totalitarian regimes sought to destroy all non-political bonds which might have formed a bulwark against the demands of the movement (Bowring, 2011, p. 9).

The aim of this approach is two-fold. On the one hand, people are isolated through a lack of engagement with others. They are also encouraged to believe in the privilege of a unique and powerful position of a particular individual or group of individuals. So, totalitarianism is not a class, or party or government, but it is a mass movement of disconnected individuals who are totally isolated from each other. There is no restriction or any conditional loyalty between individual members. According to Arendt (1958a), totalitarianism happens when people are passive and accept everything without questioning. They are totally unresponsive and fail to resist. This happens because total loyalty can only materialise when fidelity and trust are influenced by any actions or alignments.

This fellowship works in two ways: there is a combination of the active can do 'mob mentality' (Arendt, 1958a, p. 307) with the passivity of the masses who are responsive to capture or at least fail to overtly resist. Arendt (1958a) notes further that passive masses exist in every country and consist of those large number of people who are uninterested and indifferent to politics and hardly ever go to the polls.

Action and movement is what enables totalitarianism to sustain itself, as people collaborate in various forms with activity:

...this impermanence no doubt has something to do with the proverbial fickleness of the masses and the fame that rests on them; more likely, it can be traced to the perpetual motion mania of totalitarianism movements which can remain in power only so long as they keep moving and set everything around them in motion (Arendt, 1958a, p. 314).

The adherents of totalitarian movements not only commit crimes against others, but also against themselves. Arendt (1958a) argues that those individuals who do not take any form of action are formulating their own persecution and verdict. In this scenario, it is very evident that while the state uses institutions to commit violence, it is the internal self that matters more because totalitarianism can destroy human beings from within.

The destruction of human bonds within society leads to individuals who work in isolation at different levels, leading to hierarchical structures and full bureaucracy.

4.2.1.4 Bureaucracy

Arendt (2009) identified that bureaucracy could become a substitute for government. The communication of myths, together with the necessary action to live those myths, could materialise in a totalitarian organisation. Propaganda slogans would be designed to translate the ideological content of an organisation into a reality. In such circumstances, a society acts and reacts to the expectations of a world of illusions, even under totalitarian conditions.

Insiders know about the fabrications, but they are sustained by totalitarian propaganda which is meant to distinguish them from the non-totalitarian conditions. Indeed, Arendt (1958a) argues that through her writings she will challenge the superiority of close groups of people who find power in their bonding even though they know that they are not approved by others. It is the link to the sympathisers and those who do not seemingly engage that requires the propaganda. Different movements have constructed front organisations before they took power, as a means of distinguishing between party members and others, but also to enable communication:

...the front organisations surround the movements' membership with a protective wall which separates them from the outside, normal world; at the same time, they form a bridge back into normalcy, without which the members in the pre-power stage would feel too sharply the differences between their beliefs and those of normal people, between the lying fictitiousness of their own and the reality of the normal world (Arendt, 1958b, p. 366).

Once in power the front organisations are important in relation to the whole population who are now organised as 'sympathisers' (Arendt, 1958b) and indeed, the whole state becomes a front organisation and functions by spreading confidence in citizens through bureaucratic measures. The citizens become sympathisers of bureaucratic systems. The leader has a dual role as chief of state and leader of the movement. A political party may also instil what is considered as 'normality' in such bureaucratic circumstances.

Whereas most systems are a pyramid, a totalitarian regime is in Arendt's (1958b) terms an 'onion,' where the leader is in a centre space and all actions are from within, and not from without or above and so:

All the extraordinary manifold parts of the movement - the front organisations, the various professional societies, the party membership, the party bureaucracy, the elite formations and police groups - are related in such a way that each forms the facade in one direction and the centre in another, that is, plays the role of normal outside world for one layer and the role of radical extremism for another (Arendt, 1958a, p. 99).

Arendt (1958a) warns that bureaucracy in the modern mechanism could lead indirectly to a form of total organisation. Effective bureaucratic structures could replace the traditional methods of instilling ideological content and propaganda slogans in leadership. Arendt warns against the possibility of fabrications, such as unnecessary bureaucratic structures that might be conducive to totalitarian circumstances that set up a society whose members act and react under totalitarian leadership.

4.2.1.5 Overview of the Concept of Totalitarianism

This section has so far defined Arendtian **totalitarianism** as 'integrated isolationism': the persons are isolated but feel (at the same time) that they belong. It has also been

discussed how governance in the form of totalitarian domination does not only target leadership in society, but people's life as well. Totalitarianism propagates loneliness and detachment from the world as the worst and the most desperate experiences of human being.

Arendt's ideas on the main constituents of totalitarianism, most particularly ideology, terror, destruction of human bonds and bureaucracy provoke the following questions on the local reform:

- How totalitarian is the college network school policy in Malta?
- How ideological is it?
- What discourses and practices does it promote?
- What doxa / propaganda does it circulate?

This problematising approach will be supported by two other Arendtian concepts to be discussed in the next part of the chapter: The concept of Banality of Evil and the Analysis of Catastrophe.

As mentioned above, Arendt's work addresses quite bold and controversial issues in leadership, such as terror and destruction of human bonds, that are rarely elaborated upon in mainstream literature on educational leadership. The Arendtian framework will sustain the enquiry of the main research question in a critical way by providing a challenging perspective to issues in educational leadership and the corresponding lived experience of new reforms, such as the college network reform, that are usually believed to be beneficial in an outright way and are implemented without any problematising approach.

4.2.2 Arendt's Second Concept: Banality

This next section discusses a second overarching concept from Arendt: the issue of banality. This is a very innovative concept to the application of leadership studies. Arendt highlights the problem of the decision-making process in governance and provides a conceptual framework to assist with the comprehension of strategic decisions and corresponding courses of action.

Gunter (2012) argues that the Arendtian concept of ‘banality of evil’ is very relevant to decision-making in educational leadership and proves to be very worthwhile to be explored and analysed, especially with the onset of new reforms.

Arendt (1963) coined the concept of banality from her attendance at and subsequent reporting of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem where, as a journalist, she sought to understand the processes that enabled totalitarianism tendencies to become a reality. Notably, Arendt did not disregard Eichmann’s actions arguing that they were not based on any particular rationale but on a “deficit of thought” or what she called his “banality.” Arendt paid attention to Eichmann’s careerism and how he justified his actions on the basis of ‘*following orders*.’ Of interest to issues discussed in this thesis is the development of a clearer understanding of how networking works, in relation to those who practise it and how engagement with reforms that can possibly do damage to education and professionals might be characterised as ‘*following orders*.’

4.2.3 Arendt’s Third Concept: Labour, Work and Action

The third concept is taken from the *Human Condition* (Arendt, 1958a) where she distinguishes between and analyses the concepts of labour, work and action.

Labour is necessary to produce what a human needs to survive; work produces goods that are more durable and hence stabilises the social. Humans produce, and their products can outlast the processes that produced them and the objective for which they were produced. Humans therefore live amongst and with each other, and action with others requires the presentation and understanding of who the person is” (Arendt, 1958a, p. 9).

4.2.3.1 Labour

According to Arendt, labour constitutes those duties, such as working in a restaurant or working in a field, that produce services or products that last for a short period of time and can be easily replaced.

On the other hand, work may also constitute those duties, such as carpentry, that produce items such as a classic wooden chest of drawers, that usually last for decades and can serve a specific purpose over a long period of time.

Of interest to issues discussed in this thesis is to develop an understanding of school networking involving labour, work and action to be able to enquire whether the school networking leadership experience is congruent with the proposed concept of shared leadership in the Reform Document. In the following section, I intend to examine Arendt's (1953) contention whether labour has come to dominate through 'activity,' rather than 'action' in the implementation of the school networking reform in the Maltese context.

4.2.3.2 Action and Activity

Arendt (1958a) differentiates between action and activity. Action is what happens between people. In more depth, Arendt defines 'action' as that which conditions humans and states that conditioning is enacted through action: "*human existence is conditioned existence*" (Arendt, 1958a, p. 188) but she maintains that the conditions of human existence, such as life itself, birth, morality, worldliness, plurality and other processes can never define or dictate our identity because they can never condition us absolutely. So there always remains the potential for spontaneity. Arendt (1958a) argues against pre-determined results to action. She believes in spontaneity that can generate different results from action. Action involves thinking, talking and doing things that stimulate the human mind. According to Arendt (1958a), activity includes considering tasks, such as filling in a form, writing a mission statement or answering a parent's query electronically, as 'activities.' She argues further that such activities are all forms of labour with some potential for work, but taking action implies intentionality. Taking action is engaging in an activity.

Action, as distinguished from fabrication, is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act. Action and speech need the surrounding presence of others no less than fabrication needs the surrounding presence of nature for its material, and of a world in which to place the finished product. Fabrication is surrounded by and in constant contact with the world: action and speech are surrounded by and in constant contact with the web of acts and words of other men (Arendt, 1958a, p. 188).

In Arendt's view, human activities are totally different from natural phenomena. Human activities are carried out by thinking individuals according to their experiences

and situations. As such, human activities cannot be interpreted objectively but must be put in a perspective of experiences.

4.3 College Network Leadership in Malta: A Critical Analysis

I now intend moving on to use this analysis to think about college network leadership in Malta as a means of not only contributing to this national field but also of generating analysis that speaks to other systems. In this thesis, I will be utilising Arendt's theoretical framework to carry out a critical analysis of a lived experience of a college network in Malta. This reflective thinking on local college leadership can contribute to overseas experiences, as well. Arendt (1958a) argues that a philosopher must be interested in social life and human experiences and create an appropriate body of knowledge incorporating actual lived experiences.

The author presents this theory as follows: The Arendtian *vita contemplativa* has to be sustained along with the *vita activa* where the conditions for action and freedom or for totalitarianism and banality can emerge. This means that the lived experience of a reform has to be sustained with reflective and critical thinking in order to be able to problematise any difficulties or challenging conditions that might hinder the actual implementation of the reform. The following sections will discuss why it is necessary for the lived experience (*vita activa*) to be sustained by reflective thinking (*vita contemplativa*).

4.3.1 The Lived Experiences - *Vita Activa*

As discussed above, drawing on Arendt's (1958a) text, *The Human Condition*, this thesis will use narrative data to examine the nature of labour, work and action in the Maltese school networking context, and it will consider the rhetorical construction of leadership as action and juxtapose it with the realities of labour and work. In doing so, this thesis will be conceptualised within a framework that reconfirms Arendt's argument that lived experiences are important and this will be used to generate questions about the composition of the college/school work force, the nature of professional practice and the interplay between agency and structure in the experience of leadership in school networks when investigating the lived experiences of a college network in Malta, as the main research task of this study.

According to Arendt (1958a), labour, work and action are linked to both birth and death, but action is what makes inhabiting the earth matter. In Arendtian terms, labour is needed for the assurance of individual survival and overall life species. On the other hand, work is required to create permanent and durable artefacts and products. Arendt (1958a) argues that action is required to preserve the remembrance of work throughout history.

Bowring (2011) further states that work is needed to sustain labour, whilst action is required to bring value to work. Kohn, Gowdy and Straaten (2001) maintain that three components (labour, work and action) are hierarchical and sustain human beings in different, but related ways. However, action does not grow out of labour and work, it is based on humans who, through their birth right, have freedom through action:

... action interrupts ongoing processes of labour and work and initiate new processes, which in turn are subject to interruption by further actions. The plurality of beings capable of action is the sole condition from which the realm of politics arises, not from a contract mode in a primordial state of nature to establish some measure of human freedom, but from the election of those who are already free to live together with some measure of stability (Arendt, 1958a, pp. 10-11).

Therefore, central to Arendt's analysis of the world is the importance of action located in politics as the space to share and exchange views to debate and deliberate. However, as argued by Gunter, educational leadership in today's world continues to be threatened through the construction and implementation of neoliberal and neoconservative modernisation reforms and, embedded within such reforms, is the elevation of labour and work (Gunter, 2012).

Social science research has identified a number of features of this, where, for example, the nature and vitality of the public domain is recognised as being under severe threat (Sennett, 2002). Examples can show the extent that a person's character is experiencing 'corrosion' in the workplace (Sennett, 1999) and in social relations particular groups are 'scape-goated' in the name of what is supposed to be a work ethics policy (Squires, 2008). Such examples include migrant children in the Maltese education system who need to 'fit' in the local education system that is paradoxically meant to support 'inclusive' structures.

Arendt's take on this was to raise questions about the rise of the social realm and the damage this has done to the public realm. In Arendt's work, the social realm refers to the societal evolution and related events, while the private realm refers to the experience of the individual within that society. The public realm in this Arendtian context refers to the sharing of ideas with others.

For Arendt, action is located not in the claims for social equity, but in political processes. Utilising this Arendtian framework, freedom from inequality implies liberation from ruling and being ruled. Such freedom, according to Arendt (1958a) could lead to growth.

What Arendt identifies is the provision of functions that generate control from totalitarianism and are dependent on predictability of social events, and the possible blurring of the private and the public. Arendt (1958a) noted that the rise of the social realm coincided historically with acknowledgement of the private as a public concern. Consequently, government is constituted as being about the protection of wealth and so private possessions, rather than the sharing of ideas, is what the public realm has become:

... the rather uncomfortable truth of the matter is that the triumph the modern world has achieved over necessity is due to the emancipation of labour, that is, to the fact that the animal laborans were permitted to occupy the public realm; and yet, as long as the animal laborans remain in possession of it, there can be no true public realm, but only private activities displayed in the open (Arendt, 1958a, p. 69).

In a consumer society, labour is meant to produce goods that generate happiness and yet, this is also a changing society that labour cannot constantly deliver, and so produces unhappiness. So a futile 'waste economy' has grown, where products 'must be almost as quickly devoured and discarded as they appeared in the world' (Arendt, 1958a, p. 134). Furthermore, such labouring may no longer have the status of labour because the last stage of the labouring society demands sheer functioning in a way that the individual will behave passively whilst abandoning his individuality and typical behaviour. This is very evident in jobs that involve repeated production – the

individual simply works on a routine basis in a passive way, without any thinking or creative initiative.

Arendt (1958b) highlights the behaviour constraints outlined by modern theories of behaviour that might determine trends in modern society. Arendt further argues that the energy and activity that dominate in the modern world could end up transforming our age as the most passive and deadliest period ever known. An era dominated by lack of thinking possibility or empowerment might end up in a totalitarian era that controls all ideas, initiatives and actions. This passivity is part of rendering action and politics as a form of survival (labour) and making (work) and this has been based on the need for security. In such a circumstance, utilising Arendtian terminology, action is rendered an activity.

According to Gunter (2012), in Arendt's day security issues focused on the dangers of nuclear war. Nowadays, insecurity is the threat to capital accumulation in a globalised economy. Arendt (1958b) proposed the concept of political security to ensure the possibility of human plurality. It is acknowledged that political security in Arendtian terms is both fragile and rare. This has to be handled with the greatest possible care.

The passivity identified by Arendt can be prevalent in colleges and schools and might be generated by the formulation and practice of reforms, such as labour and action. Whenever reforms in education are implemented without the possibility of critical discussion or creative thinking, there is a great risk of passivity on the part of the reform participants. This merits inquiry and ongoing reflection.

4.3.2 The Lived Experiences - *Vita Contemplativa*

Drawing mainly on Arendt's text, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Arendt, 1963): *A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Arendt's concept of 'vita contemplativa' will help us consider the predicaments when professional practice is determined externally and in ways that are distinctive to professionalism and the caring imperative. In doing so, we are mindful of the disagreements over Arendt's analysis of the 'banality of evil' and which make it 'one of the most disputed books ever written' (Kohn, 2011, p. xvi).

However, as already examined, her analysis of the human within totalitarian conditions directs attention to matters of collaboration and resistance, particularly in relation to radical neoliberal and neoconservative educational reform projects, such as distributed leadership.

4.3.2.1 The Banality of Evil

In a reflective way, Arendt has deepened the concept of ‘banality’ discussed earlier in this chapter, by proposing another interesting and corresponding concept with regards to leadership and governance – ‘the concept of banality of evil.’ There are three main themes from this concept that this study will consider, namely:

- the ‘following orders’ defence by Eichmann and Arendt’s analysis of his ‘thoughtlessness’;
- the careerism used by Eichmann to position himself;
- the context in which the holocaust happened, with particular reference to Arendt’s identification of collaboration and resistance.

What Arendt did was to give recognition to how evil was carried out by ordinary people doing ordinary things in extraordinary times. Notably, she identified that Eichmann had ‘an almost total inability ever to look at anything from the other fellow’s point of view’ (Arendt 1963, p. 18) and so ‘it was not stupidity but *thoughtlessness* (Arendt, 1978, p. 4) that mattered.’ Young-Bruehl (2006) notes that by using the word ‘thoughtlessness’ Arendt actually meant ‘*a mental condition reflecting remoteness from reality, inability to grasp a reality that stares you in the face – a failure of imagination and judgement*’ (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 100). Arendt (1963) provides a fuller explanation:

...for when I speak of the banality of evil, I do so only on the strictly factual level, pointing to a phenomenon which stared one in the face at the trial ... Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out of his personal advancement, he had no motives at all. And this diligence in itself was in no way criminal; he certainly would never have murdered his superior in order to inherit his post. He merely, put the matter colloquially, never realised what he was doing (Arendt, 1963, p. 20).

What this leads to is the idea that making the system work in an efficient and effective way is a reasonable defence for:

... really he had done nothing. He had only carried out orders and since when has it been a crime to carry out orders? Since when has it been a virtue to rebel? Since when could one only be decent by welcoming death? What then had he done? (Arendt, 1963, p. 127).

Arendt (1963) identifies the contextual issues in which Eichmann and people in a similar situation to him were located. In designing and undertaking his labour and work, there are two important issues: first, that genocide does not need violent murderers and second, this labour and work was a duty to be performed.

For Arendt, the question to be pursued is about how thinking is not only a political process but is also solitary, where people need to withdraw (Duarte, 2001) because thinking, according to Arendt (1978, p. 197) is the sensation of being alive. The relationship with action is clear. Arendt (1958b) argues that thinking is not part of action because thinking interrupts all activities. It is being argued that carrying out orders (action) can prohibit the interruption of thinking. In addition to this, Arendt asks about the power of this thinking as central to moral issues. Thinking can be considered as a moral activity through the habit of examining happenings.

Arendt (1958a) argues that thinking can help individuals refrain from evil doing. In this sense, it is the *vita contemplativa*, along with the *vita activa* where the conditions for action and freedom, or for totalitarianism and banality, can emerge. The amalgamation of the '*vita contemplativa*' with the '*vita activa*' formulates an Arendtian methodology that makes understanding possible, both from reflection and thinking processes but also from lessons learnt directly from actual lived experiences that can shed light on such lived paradoxes as collaboration and resistance discussed earlier in this chapter.

4.3.2.2 The Importance of Debate

Arendt was interested in how ideas and writing could generate understandings that could be debated in public: she wrote about the plurality of people and ideas, and operated on the basis that this was worth acting for:

... what is important for me is to understand. For me, writing is a matter of seeking this understanding, part of the process of understanding ... what is important for me is the thought process itself. As long as I have succeeded in thinking something through, I am personally quite satisfied. If I then succeed in expressing my thought processes adequately in writing that satisfies me also" (Arendt, 1958a, p. 3).

Three main approaches to generating understanding have been identified by Arendt. In the first, Arendt examined the meaning of words and conditions to which they were applied and in her publication, *The Human Condition* (1958a), she makes a distinction between labour, work and action. This focus on the meaning of words is very important when reading policy documents and generating understanding of their interpretation.

With the second approach and following Walter Benjamin, Arendt used what Benhabib (2000) calls a '*fragmentary historiography*,' where '*one treats the past by acting either as a collector or as a pearl diver, digging down for those treasures that lie now disjointed and disconnected*' (Benhabib, 2000, p. 173). This inquiry for a comprehensive data collection exercise is an important drive towards the generation of a valid attempt at understanding facts and events. This is certainly applicable to educational reforms that are generated within a socio-political reality over a long period of years.

With the third approach, Arendt rejects causality and the inevitability of events and instead, presents a 'crystallisation' of historical factors as a means of explaining totalitarianism. The concept of 'crystallisation' gives a full picture of events, taking into consideration all facts and details (even disregarded ones) to explore any factors that might lead to totalitarianism. This concept would require a thorough analysis of all the document reform details for the college network reform in Malta and the corresponding lived facts to more effectively sustain the inquiry of the main research question of this study. The process of crystallisation will be further analysed through the discussion of another Arendtian concept 'the analysis of catastrophe.'

4.4 Arendt's Fourth Concept: The Analysis of Catastrophe

According to Arendt as the ‘analysis of catastrophe’ is the temporary condition from which events develop, she challenges us to think, to question and to understand and totally rejects the inevitability of events. Arendt argues that there is always a need to understand the precarious situation in which the human condition is located. This approach was referred to by Arendt as the ‘analysis of catastrophe.’

According to Young-Bruehl (2006), Arendt referred to herself as a ‘practical minded person’ who reflected continuously on experiences while taking into consideration all facts, events and related details. This was not only a personal preference based on how she wanted to think and write, but also recognition that totalitarian regimes had challenged the human condition in such a way that the traditional categorical ways of thinking were no longer applicable for a thorough analysis of a situation in today’s complex world. Utilising the ‘analysis of catastrophe,’ she not only presented scholarly analysis but also told stories for analysis purpose “... *she, I think, thought that the well-chosen anecdote was worth a thousand statistics or citations or evidences*” (Young-Bruehl & Kohn, 2001, p. 228). In our challenging times, the reality of life in educational institutions is complex. Unfortunately, as commented by Gunter (2012), the paths of reform in education have not always been processes of democratic renewal but a series of regulation and deregulation projects underpinned by a hodge podge of ideas and beliefs legitimised by functional research and normative exhortations to lead and be led.

Thinking with, through and against Arendt’s historical and political concepts and methods makes a distinctive contribution to understanding and explaining this, by revealing the conditions for totalitarianism, but at the same time, by examining events in ways that enable questions to be asked about how the contemporary situation may or may not be crystallising into a totalitarian regime. Totalitarianism can remove any possibility of transformational spaces whilst silencing voices and implementing total power and control. It is very essential to this study to enquire whether there is any onset of totalitarian conditions within the implementation of the new educational reform that are affecting the potential of transformational spaces that might impinge on voice, power and social justice in the lived experience of the reform.

This thesis aims to use Arendt's 'analysis of catastrophe' as a tool to support the investigation of this study. More specifically, this study will take up Arendt's theoretical challenge that provokes thinking and understanding of the college network reform in Malta as a 'temporary condition' (utilising Arendtian terms). This thesis totally rejects the 'inevitability of events' within the new reform.

The main investigation of the thesis is based on Arendt's main argument that there is always a need to understand the precarious situation in which the human condition is located (the reform experience in this thesis). Arendt's ideas will provide the parameters on which I will be evaluating the lived experiences of this reform for any conditions that might lead to the removal of spaces of actions and the possibility of the onset of a totalitarian leadership behaviour. In addition, Arendt's theoretical framework would help me further investigate how educational leadership can develop the skill of critical thinking after so many years of top down control.

4.5 Philosophy and Quest for Meaning as an Investigative Ontology

Arendt's work offers an investigative ontology for this study. She contended that our tradition of philosophy is not well-trained to examine social reality. In line with several philosophers over the centuries, Arendt (1958a) maintained that when she started her thinking experience, she usually focused solely on nature rather than on human beings as the centre of her thinking and reasoning. These enquiry methods were mainly naturalistic and positivistic. Such reflection was aimed to create a conceptual system (relevant to both human and non-human beings) and developed such distinctions and dichotomies as essence and appearance, reason and the senses, the subject and the object, appearance and reality, and Being and Un-being but in Arendt's view, a philosophy that is entirely focused on nature is not applicable to study real life experiences where many of its questions, distinctions and modes of inquiry simply do not apply. Arendt's main aim was to develop a perspective of philosophy that recognises human reality and distinguishes it from other intellectual inquiries, especially science. This is the emerging view of hermeneutic enquiry, based on an Arendtian perspective. It is natural that humans ask questions both about themselves and the world.

4.5.1 Quest for Meaning

According to Arendt (1958a), some questions that humans ask are empirical in nature. They inquire about different aspects of the world, focusing mainly on their origin, development and so on. Curiosity is the main drive for such questioning leading eventually to knowledge that might be verified according to certain criteria. Arendt (1958a) calls such a verified knowledge as ‘truth.’ However, Arendt (1958a) argues that some questions that humans ask about themselves and the world are hermeneutic. Therefore, for Arendt, the significance of an activity, object, experience, institution or a form of life lies in the inquiry of the value, experience and associated reality.

Arendt (1958a) argues that our daily living experience incorporates decisions, socialising, taking part in activities and so on. Arendt adds further the fact that people need to determine the truth of an institution, policy, event or law and this can be done solely on their judgement of the relative worth of the available alternatives. The search for meaning is finally an urge to know what is worth pursuing, what form of life is worth living and what kind of manners are worthy of a human being and why.

Arendt (1958a) highlights the fact that although these questions differ in their depth and complexity, they share several basic elements which discern them from those concerning truth. First, they are non-empirical in nature. No amount of empirical information can reveal the specific meaning of either an event in life or explain why human life has greater worth than that of non-humans.

In Arendt’s view, hermeneutic questions do not require knowledge but what she calls judgement and therefore, nor empirical investigations but what she calls reflection, meditation or simply thinking” (Gunter, 2013, p. 25).

Secondly, Arendt (1958a) argues that hermeneutic questions develop not out of curiosity or questioning but because of existential perplexity. Human beings undergo several experiences and events without being conscious of what is happening. As thinking beings, they feel the need to explain accounts and events in order that they can respond in an intelligent way.

Although Arendt is not clear in her arguments, she seems to emphasise that, unlike empirical questions that arise out of a contingent ‘urge to know,’ hermeneutic questions arise from human beings’ thinking nature and are actually inevitable.

Thirdly, the non-empirical nature of hermeneutic questions does not enable the judging of these questions with regards to validity, truth and significance. For Arendt then, to determine the meaning of something is to determine its significance. From this perspective, philosophy can be considered to be a hermeneutic inquiry, focused on the meanings of events, institutions, forms of life and so on. It reaches its hermeneutic objectives by undergoing a systematic inquiry into human life experience, as well as developing a comprehensive inquiry.

Arendt (1958a) argued in further detail that it was in the course of observing, studying and reflecting on the political experiences of others, as well as her own, that such concepts as public space, freedom and action suggested themselves to her. Arendt shares some interesting facts concerning an ontological inquiry into human life existence. Although she derives them from Heideggerian philosophy, she modifies them in several ways. Arendt (1958a) argues that if the conceptual world is not to become an ‘independent realm’ where the human mind works solely, it must retain its principles in real experience.

This study will follow Arendt’s approach to philosophy as a hermeneutic inquiry. As argued by (Parekh, 1981) this approach resides in the human inquiry for meaning and is supported by the love for knowledge, whilst aiming to answer questions concerning meaning. In order to achieve these hermeneutic objectives, philosophy creates a narrative of human experiences. In this framework, Parekh (1981) views hermeneutic inquiry as having a phenomenological ontology.

The advantages of seeing Arendt’s hermeneutic inquiry as a phenomenological method are numerous. Parekh (1981) explains that any event is a complex experience whose different elements are all to be integrated. The meaning of these elements must be understood within the whole society. They do not make sense when separated from the entire activity. Arendt’s method emphasises structures and experiences as part of wholes. Arendt’s methodology is in line with the phenomenological method that

stresses the unity of form and content as one whole complex. The form and the content cannot be separated. The phenomenological method focuses on the content of an activity and meticulously traces out its form. Again, the focus of Arendt's phenomenology lies in its emphasis on human experience.

Within this framework, Parekh (1981) argues that by utilising the phenomenological method, Arendt (1958b) can analyse not merely the structures of moral and political activities but also the thinking and the related emotions that sustain them. Further to this, Arendt's places all her thinking and writing in a context located within real life experiences. She views her arguments from the standpoint of human beings and gives a realistic account of experiences. Grounded in social reality, Arendt believes in the possibility of 'action' and new beginnings. She totally rejects what she refers to as the 'banal generalisations of the positivist sociology that presents generalised data, findings and conclusions.' Arendt (1958b) argues that such approaches serve only the purposes of restoring the status quo and reinforcing bureaucratic systems. She highlights that such generalisations on institutions and social realities by sociology and positivist methods lead to normalise happenings and thus, lead to acceptance and adherence. In response to such approaches, Arendt (1958b) forwards the 'concept of natality' that enables people to see things in their perspective and to be strong enough to put that which is too close at a certain distance so that it can be seen and understood without bias and prejudice. This is considered in the next section.

4.5.2 Concept of Natality

Following Arendt's concept of natality, seeing things within a perspective could be empowering to educational leadership studies in the sense that it supports an objective view. Fully supporting the feminist interpretations of such writers as Nancy Hartsock (1983), this study considers the Arendtian concept of natality as a nascent feminism in Arendt's work. This is a very interesting turning point in this study - correlating political action with natality. In my opinion, by utilising this empowering concept, Arendt (1958b) manages to replace the male or patriarchal view of power as the ability to impose policies and to achieve targets with a more feminine perspective. This perspective advocates a critical stance, based on issues of power, voice and social justice. This study views Arendt's concept of natality as a practice-oriented vision of power focused on action and direct involvement.

In relation to the local educational reforms, it can be argued that the concept of natality effectively positions the viewer for inevitable change implied in the reform policy. There is the possibility of taking a new perspective on educational leadership in the course of implementing the vision of the new local reform in favour of encouraging all children to succeed. Arendt (1958b) fully supports this perspective in her book, *On Revolution* which considers the political foundations and the human capacity to achieve them, in the profoundly eighteenth century American sense of a *novus ordo saeclorum*, ‘an absolutely new beginning.’

In presenting her theoretical perspectives, Arendt stressed that such beginnings are not brought about by violence or force but ‘*arise from the common deliberations and mutual promises whereby citizens bind themselves to each other, and to a set of shared principles*’ (Arendt, 1958b, p. 25).

Within an Arendtian framework, action is based on natality or the endless capacity to do something new and spontaneous:

... *the miracle that saves the world, the realm of public affairs from its normal, ‘natural’ ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born* (Arendt, 1958b, p. 247).

Therefore, there always remains the potential for spontaneity:

... *the presumption that the results of action can be known in advance, like the results of natural and productive processes, so that the main problems of politics becomes finding the means to achieve those results is what Arendt ... rejects* (Kohn, 2006, p. ix).

Spontaneity, as presented by Arendt, requires liberation from imposed frameworks, ideology or actions. People need to think freely, critically and creatively in order to be able to see and understand without bias and prejudice. Unconditioned thinking can lead to new visions, new solutions and new possibilities. Arendt (1958b, p.7) describes the liberated thinking through the metaphor of ‘thinking without a banister.’

4.5.3 Thinking without a Banister

This concept can be the result of utilising the phenomenological approach based on the concept of natality. Arendt (1958a) encourages educational leaders to think laterally and reflect more on their work and to think deeply about its purposes, processes, its effect and outcomes. This thesis takes the view that what is needed in education is more than thinking through academic achievements and prescribed policies – ‘*the banister*’ in Arendt’s metaphor. Arendt (1958a) argues further:

... that prescribing a set of steps that governments and leaders can take, regardless of wherever and whoever they are, eliminates one of the most significant educational resources that we have – our capacity to understand, analyse and imagine within our local contexts (Arendt, 1958a, p. 32).

This thesis uses Arendt’s concept of ‘*thinking without a banister*’ to consider college school networks in Malta and any educational institution. This way of thinking would offer educational leaders the ability not simply to follow policy prescriptions but to enable them to critically analyse the policy directions and assess their impacts on institutions, both on a national and on an international level. Using such a perspective, educational leaders might become aware of why certain issues are given more prominence while others are side-lined. It would also empower them to be able to communicate their thinking with others. Among other things, this perspective offers a set of critical thinking tools that could lead the educational leader to what Arendt (1958a) refers to as ‘*thinking without a banister*’.

Within this theoretical approach, the main aim of this thesis is to seek understanding, rather than just gather evidence:

... understanding, as distinguished from having correct information and scientific knowledge, is a complicated process which never produces unequivocal results. It is an unending activity, by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality, that is, try to be at home in the world (Arendt, 1958a, p. 307).

Arendt’s approach is helpful because she argues against distinctions, and so false ones with regard to school networking, leadership and collegiality can be revealed. Using

Arendt's ideas can help me investigate the concepts/understanding of networking, leadership and collegiality on which the local reform policy has been developed. Much of the college network work on leadership and associated processes such as distributed leadership in the local context is based on what Arendt (1958a) calls 'preliminary understanding' or a basic grasp of a situation, and what is needed is what she calls a 'true understanding' based on getting underneath the judgements and policy discourse which preceded and guided the actual implementation. In this thesis, I aim to examine the starting assumptions of both reform and practice, and following Arendt, I should engage in' *thinking without a banister*' (Arendt, 1958a, p. vii). According to Arendt, climbing the stairs of thinking and understanding 'without a banister' signifies that there is nothing to hold on to, as all previous steps need to be scrutinised:

... when she sets off, then, to think 'without a banister' to hold on to, reflecting freely upon events, and writing in a way that records trains of thought instead of presenting a theory, her readers are naturally led to expect that her thoughts will not be particularly consistent, and will certainly not in any way resemble a system (Canovan, 1995, p. 6).

This offers a liberating and empowering framework through which to think, analyse and understand without any impositions or preconceptions about reform and implementation in our Maltese educational system. The task of this thesis is to gather, record, talk and analyse freely through narratives, within an Arendtian theoretical framework the issues arising from the research questions which will be discussed further in the following chapters.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how Arendt's concept of totalitarianism offers the local educational field a lens to critically analyse the implementation of the new educational reforms for any possible evidence of bureaucratic practices, destructive human bonds, elements of terror or mitigation of ideological practices. This is a very valid contribution towards ensuring socially just educational reforms that effectively sustain educational goals in our society. This chapter has reviewed Arendt's concept of banality of evil to empower educational leaders to think about their practices and to self-examine whether they are 'simply following orders' and prescribed policies or whether they are empowering others through liberating actions.

A further contribution of Arendt's' theoretical framework to the educational field is the bridging of the daily lived experiences in schools and colleges with reflection upon practices – the concept of the reflective practitioner. The discussion of the Arendtian concepts of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* illustrated the required methodology to achieve this Arendtian milestone through the 'analysis of catastrophe,' as a method of reflection utilising philosophical analysis. Arendt's literacy contributions also offer the educational leader with an empowering notion of becoming, through the concept of natality. It has been discussed in quite some detail how this can be achieved through the skills of thinking without Arendtian banisters.

The next chapter analyses the narratives of a lived experience of the college network reform through the identification of the core themes of this experience. The narrative inquiry process investigates these themes in relation to these reforms in the Maltese Islands by critically reflecting on the daily narratives of the lived experiences of a college network in Malta, in light of the policy reform discourse. The gap analysis between the lived experiences and the policy document themes are subjected to a rigorous analysis situated within the concepts of the theoretical framework and the literature review of this study.

CHAPTER 5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework proposes a focused study approach of a college network in Malta through the amalgamation of the Arendtian concepts of the '*vita activa*' (the lived experience) and the '*vita contemplativa*' (the reflective approach). The application of this theoretical framework to the lived experiences of a local college school network will provide this study with the Arendtian process of 'thinking without banisters' to attempt to answer the main research question of this study aimed at problematising the lived leadership conditions and networking issues of the new reform, from my perspective as a Head of School.

The vision of the document proposing networking for Maltese schools (Reform Document, 2005) sustains that through networking, schools could be in a better position to work in partnership with one another, to share resources, to communicate freely with one another, to jointly solve problems and to create new practices in a networked way. However, the literature review chapter of this thesis illustrates that the proposed network models for the Maltese islands illustrate an organisational chart that positions the leader at the top and the subordinates at lower levels.

In a previous chapter and drawing on Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I showed that the outcomes of such a centralised network model are a controlled style of leading and communicating. There seems to be an apparent contradiction between the rationale of the reform and the recommended models for the implementation of the reform within the same document. This creates doubts about whether the Maltese reform can be viewed as a management model for change and reduces the expectations of its success to bring about such change.

Utilising Arendtian theory, the study proposes a narrative research methodology to investigate whether the concept of leadership as proposed by the vision of the Network Reform Policy document is congruent to the lived experiences of a Head of School. This thesis considers it necessary to inquire whether the lived experiences, as a result of external policies such as the college network reform in Malta, implicate any tendencies that might remove any spaces of action-leading educational leadership simply to comply to orders and instructions, rather than an exercise of democratic renewal.

5.2 The Inquiry Approach

In this chapter, I discuss my qualitative research study and present a model of reflexivity and self-awareness. A rigorous approach to qualitative research was utilised, using systematic procedures within the qualitative framework. The narrative inquiry was the chosen approach with the qualitative research tradition aimed at tackling the main tenants of the study's research question by:

- Logging life experiences that capture details of everyday living experiences;
- Eliciting main themes from documented experiences;
- Striving to address issues of power, voice and social justice;
- Being self-reflexive about what I, as a researcher, experienced as I conducted the research study.

The methodological inquiry was positioned within an inquiry framework that highlighted issues that were inextricably linked to the above procedures. In the methodological discussion of this chapter, these issues would be in the foreground, rather than in the background, reflecting the narrative inquiry orientation of this study.

Emphasis has been placed on terms used by authors in the qualitative tradition, the use of encoding texts and terms to make a study, a distinct illustration of the tradition. The common elements that characterised qualitative research were analysed in depth whilst several definitions supported the identification of core characteristics that were eventually established.

Agger (1991) argued that a qualitative methodology is usually written in less complicated ways and thus, it can be shared and understood by a greater number of people. According to this author, this readable reporting approach makes research accessible to more people across all fields. Hence, my approach to this chapter will not be to present a prescriptive procedure but rather, to offer a reflexive account of the research design process which will be explained by ‘visualising’ the phases of data collection within the selected research tradition.

A detailed description of interrelated activities will be provided by displaying the data collection process, recording of data, identifying themes and storing of information. I seek to explain these research activities, to highlight the core characteristics advocated by this study and to conclude with feedback about the main features of the data collection positioned within the chosen research tradition.

In this process, I address four main issues in the realisation of the study, regardless of tradition, namely: audience, encoding, quotes and authorial representation. These issues will be discussed within the overall structure (i.e. overall organisation of the chapter) and the built-in method (i.e. the specific narrative devices and techniques that will be used in this study). The research design will be explained at length taking into consideration all the multiple perspectives.

In this chapter, I also provide opportunities for reflection that serve to promote the ‘understanding’ of the primary data in an attempt to obtain detailed meanings. A related consideration will be given to multivocal discourses, such as constructivists and interpretivists to link the methodology chapter to the main concepts of the study research question (Lather, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Kvale, 1996). Having established the research approach and the investigative methodology, I will explore issues of validity and reliability.

The next section will outline the phases of the research design within the narrative inquiry tradition. Thus, as previously explained, the initial phase of design will be to analyse not only the suitability of the qualitative study of the research problem but also to locate the study within the philosophical and theoretical perspectives.

5.3 Philosophical and Theoretical Frameworks

The qualitative approach was guided by the following criteria adopted from the ‘axiomatic’ concepts as advocated by Guba and Lincoln (1988): the multiple interpretations of the lived experiences, the narrative enquiry approach, the subjective perspective to writing the narrative and the emerging inductive methodology of the process of research. A rhetorical assumption could be added to these issues, namely, recognising the importance of language in a qualitative inquiry.

Briefly, the ontological issues addressed the qualitative research methodology, knowledge that was developed as a result of my lived experiences in this subject. Thus, the perspectives that guided the study included my experiences as a researcher, my reflections on the context being focused upon and those of the reader making sense of the data. As a researcher in a qualitative study, I could express these experiences as I advocated my voice and my points of view. Through this study, I have developed and presented various concepts, based on my personal experiences which have guided me to propose different perspectives of each experience. A focused analysis of the multiple perspectives within each theme was carried out in the reporting stage. As a researcher, I was also a participant in this study. This primary experience was in the form of living the experience under study over a prolonged period of time. In this way, I worked hard to lessen the “distance or the objective separateness” (Guba & Lincoln, 1988) since I was part of this study.

In this thesis, I focused on my own experience and thus, my role has shifted from that of being an ‘outsider’ to that of being an ‘insider’ during the research period. My lived experiences of this study facilitated understanding, engagement and meaning.

Words such as understanding, discover and meaning will form the glossary of this study writing report. The overall language of the study will be based on definitions that will evolve during the study, rather than being defined by the researcher at the beginning of the study. The terms as defined by the informants will be greatly valued (Lincoln & Guba, 1995, p. 35).

In the initial chapters of this study, I outlined the context of this subject and described its settings within the local context.

... the initial inductive logic of generating open coding and generating a theory will evolve into the deductive process of examining the theory against existing and new databases (Lincoln & Guba, 1995, p. 35).

As an outcome of the data review, I ‘unfolded’ the analyses and presented numerous themes, followed by cluster grouping into broader and more abstract categories at a later stage. This process was one of induction built on an emerging design. The main research question of this study inquiring whether the notion of leadership of the Maltese Education Reform Document corresponds to my lived experiences as a school administrator serving in a school college network environment. This experience has been reflected and carefully documented throughout the data collection process and reviewed when this was analysed.

5.4 Ideological Perspectives

The ideological assumptions set out in the first two chapters of this study scaffolded this qualitative study in a critical analysis of the implications of the research question. This was a mode of reflection about the following aspects:

1. A socially responsive research;
2. An Arendtian critical theory orientation toward action;
3. A feminist leadership approach to investigate concepts of power, voice and social justice.

These three perspectives were highlighted in different aspects of the study, namely in the data collection methods, in self-disclosing comments throughout the qualitative narrative and in issues chosen for further analysis. The application of these three ideological perspectives reflected my personal perspective, based on a real need to promote social action and they gave space to my critical voice, in an attempt to explore issues of power as set out in establishing the philosophical and conceptual framework.

5.5 The Distinctive Approach Adopted for this Methodology

A unique element of this study is the utilisation of the various perspectives it adopted. As the researcher of this study, I was particularly interested in designing a study that could examine the main tenets of the research question to challenge conventional

thinking and to encourage people to problematise issues, whilst forming networks and helping individuals reflect on their realities. In designing the research process of this study, I followed these various steps:

1. I looked for critical guidance from my research on leadership and networks, utilising the perspective of an Arendtian theoretical framework.
2. I utilised the Deweyan educational theory, as the conceptual basis of the main methodology of the study: the narrative enquiry approach.
3. I exposed the assumptions of the policy being studied, I researched available research and considered them by critical theorising and understanding the ongoing implications.
4. I then analysed my ‘actual lived experiences’ of the reform and documented them. These written experiences served to provide me with themes for reflection, analysis and critical examination.
5. I then employed a variety of research analysis strategies methods so that this would assist me in understanding the issues at hand and to support me in data collection.
6. Finally, data analysis was possible through a critical lens and this offered a broadened perspective of the subject at hand.

This study, therefore, involved a pedagogy of transformation, based on the Arendtian concept of natality. The chosen tradition of inquiry for this study was explained and a justification was drawn which was based on relevant research literature and study design models. This study’s methodology is based on the narrative inquiry process.

5.6 Theory Use and Time Traditions

As defined by Bold (2011), a qualitative tradition could be an enquiry process of research, based on a methodological tradition of inquiry that would explore a social or human problem. In this type of research, I built a complex and holistic picture of my personal experiences, analysed words, understood meaning and elicited themes from a real-life setting. This study narrowed the dimensions of this tradition of enquiry that guided me with focused elements of inquiry and specific research procedures.

5.6.1 Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design

Creswell (1998) designed a model of research design, based on the tradition of qualitative inquiry that was utilised to situate the thesis study methodology within the field of research. This model is based on five different traditions of qualitative inquiry, namely; biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. Creswell (1998) compares these traditions by focusing on the six phases of research design. The design is defined by Creswell, utilising Yin's (2009) definition, as the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusion. The six phases of design focused upon by Creswell (1998) are philosophical or theoretical perspectives; the introduction to a study, including the formation of the purpose and research questions; data collection; data analysis; report writing; and standards of quality and verification. Creswell (1998) places the five selected traditions in a linear continuum with the 'biography' research design at the far left and the 'case study' approach at the far right of the continuum. The other three research traditions, namely phenomenology, grounded theory and ethnography are placed between the two opposing poles of the continuum.

This chosen comparative model of tradition enquiry enabled me to carry out an informed choice about what qualitative approach to use in my study and to support this choice by a well-drawn justification. Furthermore, Creswell's comparative model enlarged my research scope of inquiry method and proposed alternative procedures of her research derived from different designs of inquiry. It also provided me with a structured opportunity to properly situate the study research design, within the tradition of qualitative inquiry making clear the design elements, structure and exploring approach.

This study is an ethnography on Creswell's qualitative traditions of inquiry model. My direct involvement in the study qualified the thesis research design more specifically, as an autoethnography. This study analysed my interpretation of my lived experiences of the first years of the reform. The focus was my experiences, my thinking, my voice and my perspectives. The research process was designed on an ethnography inquiry in which I was immersed into the real-life experiences of the reform under study. I was particularly interested not only in the actual narrative (as in the case study approach) but in eliciting a deep understanding and eventual meaning

of my experience, my behaviour, my discourses and my perspectives of the lived reality.

The traditions of inquiry continuum model justified the noted similarities of this study design based on ethnography with the grounded theory approach. Creswell (1998) placed both approaches adjacent to each other toward the right of the continuum with further similarities to the case study tradition of inquiry. The main shared focus of this chosen qualitative research approach was to study my lived experiences through primary data. This thesis utilised some aspects of the grounded theory approach to analyse the narrative entries. The analytical process of this study utilised open coding for the initial categories of data, axial coding for assembling data and selective coding for the eventual identification of the main categories or themes derived from the primary data. In this thesis, these will be explained in further detail in the section below.

As highlighted by Creswell (1994) in the research process continuum, my role in the ethnography approach was quite challenging when compared to the other traditions of inquiry because I was participating directly by living the actual experiences of the new reform. The time to collect data was thus extensive and involved five years of research experience. As many ethnographies, the narrative in this study was written in a literary approach in the form of daily journal entries. This will be discussed further in the next section.

5.6.2 The Narrative Inquiry Methodology Approach

Various narrative research projects by Geertz (1983), Bruner (1986), McAdams (1993), Polkinghorne (1998), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), as well as Thayer-Bacon (2003) embrace narrative as a research method.

Some researchers compared the process of narrative inquiry to the metaphor of the water stream advocated by Foucault (1976). Water flows in different ways at different speeds and in different paths according to the context, conditions and topological requirements. Similarly, a narrative inquiry approach begins at different stages of experiences, in different contexts and in different realities. The narrative inquiry journey resembles the river flow that if left abandoned will still leave traces of residue

on the river bed. This is similar to experiences in the person's memory that will enable another meaningful experience to take place.

Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007) argue that a narrative inquiry approach requires a change of attitude and perspective in research methods. Rather than a change of method, narrative inquiry advocates a change in the position of the researcher and the researched. The narrative inquiry proposes a method-based perspective which is focused on the interpretation and reflection of the message. It does not hold a position of objectivity defined from the positivistic. This stand point requires that narrative inquirers are fully aware of the total experience within the field of enquiry.

The ethnography research design of this study was carried out through a narrative inquiry methodology approach. This thesis adopted the narrative inquiry approach as presented by Clandinin and Connnelly (2000) as a way of understanding experience.

Clandinin and Connnelly (2000) argue that the transition from narrative to research involves various terms in thinking and action. This change includes a different perspective of both the researcher and the researched; a more descriptive use of detail rather than measurable items; more focus on the local and specific rather than the general and universal and finally a widening of alternative research methods.

With this approach, narrative is defined as a point of reference and an established ground for understanding the deep meaning of experience. Experience is viewed entirely as the stories people live.

People live stories, and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others, including the young and those such as researchers who are new to their communities (Clandinin & Connnelly, 2000, p. 16).

Narrative inquiry is both a source of information and a method of inquiry. The process of collecting data (through stories), analysing the data and interpreting the main trends and results qualify narrative inquiry as a research process. Clandinin and Connnelly (2000) show how a narrative episode serves as a starting point that is then backed up

by a theoretical framework and analysed through an appropriate research methodology designed for understanding that experience.

Qualitative studies often use narratives in different contexts and they often analyse realities of different experiences. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) strongly promote the narrative as an essential aspect that reflects human experience. The researchers argue that what can be considered as stories, the kind of stories chosen and the inquiry methods used for studies vary. It can be argued that within the paradigm of narrative research, researchers use many research opportunities, techniques and methods.

Some advocates of narrative methods utilise sociolinguistic analytic methods to analyse field data. For example, Brock, Strange and Green (2002) use quantitative methods to analyse and represent the effect of narratives. Their study was designed on a narrative approach that incorporated a whole process of coding, translating, analysing and predicting experience and possible further events and implications. This process will be illustrated in detail in the next chapter.

This research utilised the daily memoirs of a lived experience to articulate themes for exploring realities, points of view and perspectives. Narrative inquiry concepts such as characterisation, theme, role and other literacy terms were utilised to reflect and to understand the idea behind the experience. An inquiry approach by Schank (1990) was utilised to explore narrative as basic to understanding.

In attempting to position the narrative approach within the broader spectrum of research, this study began by demarking the parameters of this methodology. This interpretation of narrative inquiry territory was not done at its outer framework but at its intersections with other methodologies of inquiry. This study did not consider ‘narrative inquiry’ as just another cadre of qualitative research.

The next section situates this narrative inquiry methodology within the Deweyan Theory of Experience acknowledging the individual experiences within a setting or context.

5.6.3 The Deweyan Theory of Experience

Pragmatic philosophy provides an interpretation of reality that situates the philosophical foundation of the narrative inquiry within the living experience of the person (Dewey, 1938). This perspective acknowledges an individual's experiences within the social, cultural and institutional settings. Dewey (1981) proposed that the concept of 'experience' as the ultimate 'status' of all that is lived, expressed and interpreted.

Building on the Deweyan Theory of Experience, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) claim that narrative inquirers are interested in individual experiences that are lived, told and examined by listening, writing and interpreting texts. This Deweyan version of experience points out to the aspects of pragmatism that makes it suitable to study narrative inquiry. Dewey (1981) says experience is a 'notation of an inexpressible.' The methodology of this study approach presents such conditions as immediate period of study, undifferentiated immediate experience and a corresponding reflection.

Dewey emphasized strongly on the importance of experience in teaching and learning. He advocated the generation of experience to consolidate reality and its relevance to the environment, life, community and the world – one that:

... makes possible a new way of dealing with them and thus eventually creates a new kind of experienced objects, not more real than those which preceded but more significant, and less overwhelming and oppressive (Dewey, 2008).

In this view of knowledge, our interpretation of reality arises from experience and must be validated by that experience. The narrative inquiry approach features several aspects of experience, most prominently the temporality of knowledge generation, representation of experience and the interpretation of that experience.

Dewey (1981) differentiated the empirical method from the narrative one. He stated that while the former method consolidates this concept on reliability and validity, the latter focuses on what is logical, epistemological and intrinsic. Dewey (1981) advocated the notion of experience through the narrative approach as immediate knowledge, real, self-evident and self-sufficient.

Within this Deweyan framework, this study defines ‘narratives’ as the form of representation (in a wider perspective) that names human reality as it unfolds through time. This definition thus proposes the narrative inquiry approach as important. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue further that experiences lead to further experiences in the development process and that each experience grows out of another experience. Accordingly, the present, past and future are all built on an experiential basis.

Dewey (1981) emphasises on the importance of reflection within the parameters of experiential inquiry. Reflection, according to Dewey, has a wider scope than inquiry and observation. Within a Deweyan framework, reflection is described as specific in origin and unique as it has always something ‘special’ to cope with. This argument is sustained by the fact that problematic issues are always very concrete and specific.

Dewey (1981) argues further that thinking and reflection are never an end-all process but lead to the development of some experiences of various types, whether they are technological, social and/or other realities. This elicits another important aspect of a description of experience that renders narrative inquiries as crucial for understanding. These stories are the result of social influences on a person’s inner life, social/cultural influences and their personal experience. They can be described as interpretations of realities and not realities themselves. Dewey (1981) highlights the prejudice that transcends the narrow experience as a source of knowledge.

In the performative mentality, importance is only given to what is measured. Validity is only accredited to accountability based on reality. In such a situation, Dewey argued that ordinary experience is simply ‘masked’ or discredited. Dewey (1981) warned that not placing enough importance on everyday experience, action, affection and social relationships would mislead important analysis, directions and decisions. Dewey’s argument effectively describes the present situation in many professions – teaching, healthcare, social work and so on. In this aspect, experience is viewed as knowledge for testimonial/record purposes only.

In contrast, narrative inquiry acknowledges life experience as a very important means of knowledge and application. Narrative inquiry is also concerned about standards of

evidence, but these are inclusive and within a wider dimension than the positivist approach.

... narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20).

Narrative inquiry does not only promote important consideration for ordinary lived experiences but also places emphasis on the social, cultural and institutional contexts. Narrative inquirers are also interested in changing the life experience for themselves and others. In such a way, a pragmatic approach of experience is not only fit for a theoretical framework for narrative inquirers, but also for a research framework that includes many, if not all, of the main principles and concepts of the Deweyan theory. This Deweyan view of experience allows for the study of real-life experience that acknowledges the central role of the person living that experience.

5.7 Mapping the Methodology using Narrative Inquiry

The phases of the methodology process were amalgamated within the process of data collection whilst displaying the whole process of engaging in data collection activities. In this study, the 'methodology' was visualised as a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering relevant and useful information which were necessary to answer the research questions of this study.

The phases of the research are as follows:

Phase 1: Introducing and focusing the study.

Phase 2: Dual experience of study as participant and researcher.

Phase 3: Access and report.

Phase 4: Purposeful sampling strategies.

Phase 5: Data collection.

Phase 6: Data analysis and representation.

Phase 7: Writing the report.

5.7.1 Phase 1: Introducing and focusing the study

The first chapter situated the study within a specific juncture of educational reform within the Maltese Education system – the college school network reform. The research question was clearly stated and supported by a set of minor research questions exploring whether the lived experiences of leadership within the new college school network structure correspond to the vision of the Reform Document.

5.7.2 Phase 2: Dual experience of study as participant and researcher

In this study, I had a dual role – that of participant and researcher. I was experiencing the first years of leadership within a college network in Malta and logging my daily narratives in a personal diary (the participant). I explored these narratives of educational leadership within a college school network (the researcher) and reflected upon these narratives through the theoretical perspectives of Arendt (1958a), feminist writers as Blackmore (2007), Benhabib (2000) and Heckman (1992) and other critical contributors from the educational leadership field, including Gunter (2013), Bottery (2004) and Gronn (2003).

5.7.3 Phase 3: Access and report

This study focused on my documented experiences. Thus, I was the ‘gatekeeper’ of the study as an individual with an insider status within this focused study. My own experiences provided the ‘primary data’ for the research study. However, the emphasis of the study was based on the analysis of this data when classified as themes. The primary data was only required to elicit an in-depth analysis of the main themes, concepts and related reflections that emerged from the primary data.

5.7.4 Phase 4: Purposeful sampling strategies

As advocated by Miles and Huberman (1994) for Qualitative Inquiry, this study applied different types of sampling strategies. The first type was ‘Intensity Sampling’ that focused on journal/diary entries that manifested the phenomenon very intensely. This sampling referred to real life experiences. These cases were taken from my narrative journals. ‘Combination or mixed’ strategies led to triangulation and flexibility in the reflection stage. This strategy met multiple interests and was required for the stages of deeper reflection. Finally, the ‘case sampling’ permitted analytical generalisation, maximum application of themes and concepts for a wider analysis.

5.7.5 Phase 5: Data collection

In this study, the diary entries were the main data collection approach in this qualitative research. This approach followed the following procedures:

1. Keeping a journal during the research study which consisted of a period of five consecutive years (from 2008 until 2012).
2. Incorporating personal notes from public documents (e.g. official memos, minutes, records, archival material).
3. Examining personal notes and adding personal reflections.
4. Eliciting issues, main themes and concepts from personal journals and notes.

I collected descriptions of my own experience through personal observations, documents and personal writings in the daily journal (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). My personal observations offered me possibilities for research.

... on a continuum from being a complete outsider to being a complete insider (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 24).

The approach of changing roles from that of an outsider to an insider for this particular study offered me the opportunity to engage better with the main research question.

5.7.6 Phase 6: Data analysis and representation

Data management was the first step in the process. At an early stage in the analysis process, the journal entries were converted into text paragraphs for analysis which was first carried out manually and then with the use of technology.

The organisation and conversion of the data was carried out following Agar's (1986) analysis method. The transcripts were read in their entirety several times. I immersed in the details to elicit the main idea of the text before analysing it in different parts. Writing notes in the margins of journal texts helped me in this initial process of data interpretation. These notes were short sentences, ideas or key concepts.

Initial categories were then formed from these key concepts. These categories were few (about sixty) supported by multiple forms of evidence. Evidence also portrayed multiple perspectives about each category. An example of such a category might be ‘School Leadership.’ This dimension will surely highlight different perspectives, probably both positive and negative which when discussed, will give depth to the perspective.

By utilising this method, category formation represented the fulcrum of qualitative data analysis. Following this step, classifying involved reading the text well, identifying themes and information. The number of chosen themes was kept to a minimum so as to narrow data as much as possible for a focused analysis. More specifically, ‘Classification’ in this thesis involved the identification of ten general themes. These themes, in turn, were further subdivided in sub-themes represented by different portions of data. The process involved narrowing the data and reducing them to a small, manageable set of themes (not more than ten) for the final narrative.

As explained by Strauss and Corbin (1990), open coding was followed by axial coding. Axial coding is the plotting of the main themes in a visual way to establish the connections of categories and subcategories. This is done by placing the elicited categories from the themes on one side and the elicited subcategories on another side. This establishes the connections between categories and subcategories. This process of axial coding was followed by utilising an exercise of selective coding which can be defined as:

The integrative process of ‘selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships (by searching for confirming and disconfirming examples) and filling in categories that need further refinement and development (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116).

Codes and strategies were analysed in detail – that is, until analysis produces no new codes or categories and when all data was accounted for.

Strauss (1991) explained that criteria for core status was based on the following principles that included:

- The presentation of data results which took place in text, tabular and figure form.
- A comparison table as presented by Spradley (1980) or a matrix. For example, in the study presented by Miles and Huberman (1994) a 2 x 2 table that compared themes or categories provided a visual image of the information.

These hypotheses were discussed within the interpretation of the data. Interpretation included eliciting the themes, the ‘lessons learned’ as described by Lincoln and Guba (1995). The ‘themes,’ as opposed to the actual narrative writing, were discussed in this study. The focus was entirely on seeking the interrelationships of all themes that would result in the emergence of theory.

5.7.7 Phase 7: Writing the report

The writing of the study report took a highly structured approach, very close to the writing of a phenomenological study. The diary entries were analysed by reflections on the descriptions, clustering of themes and in-depth analysis of each theme within the overall experience and the reform policy document. This reflective and structured narrative inquiry procedure was followed when it came to organising the written report.

5.8 Rhetorical Issues

The following sub-sections discuss two main debatable criteria/issues in any narrative inquiry, namely authorial representation and truthfulness (Denzin, 2003). These criteria are discussed in relation to the validity and reliability of this study.

5.8.1 Authorial Representation

In this study, authorial representation in this study is defined by how much of the ‘self’ (the researcher in the case of this study) is present in the narrative of this thesis. This is an important consideration in determining the authenticity and reliability of this thesis focused on the voice and the authorial stance of the writer as the main protagonist of the same study.

This sub-section therefore attempts to answer three salient questions on this subject as follows:

- How much of the ‘self’ or the researcher, is present in the narrative?
- What is the authorial stance of the writer, as seen by Richardson (1994)?
- How does the study give ‘voice’ to the researcher or what Derrida calls the ‘metaphysics of presence?’ (Derrida, 1981).

Influenced by the critiques of post-structuralism, postmodernism and feminist writers, this study turned to narrative as a mode of inquiry. I was interested to achieve:

... a more personal, collaborative, and reflective relationship, one that centres on the question of how human experience is endowed with meaning and on the moral and ethical choices we face as human beings who live in an uncertain and changing world (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 57).

My voice formed part of the narrative inquiry in the form of journal memoirs that related lived memories, life’s study and experiences. I referred to my personal stories as evocative narratives.

The word ‘evocative’ contrasts the expressive and dialogic goals of this work with the more traditional orientations of mainstream, representational social science. The author [myself in this case] of the study’s evocative narrative will write in the first person, making herself the object of research and thus breaching the conventional separation of researcher and subjects; the story will focus on a single case and thus breaches the traditional concerns of research from generalisation across cases to generalisation within a case; the mode for storytelling in the form of journal writing (Bochner, Ellis & Tillmann-Healy, 1997, p. 24).

My research approach is supported by Geertz’s (1983) argument that positioning journalistic writing in line with the novel or biography, in aspects of readability and accessibility, provides the necessary details that highlight emotional aspects. On this subject, Denzin (2003) also highlighted the following:

Evocative stories activate subjectivity and compel emotional response. They long to be used rather than analysed; to be told and retold rather than theorised and settled; to offer lessons for further conversations rather than undebatable conclusions; and to substitute the companionship of intimate detail for the loneliness of abstracted facts (Denzin, 2003, p. 218).

In this context, the question that is usually put forward is:

To what kind of truth this question is asked is a one that expresses scepticism, doubt and even hostility. Some critics argue that stories give life a structure it does not have, and thus, stories fictionalise life. Since the experiences on which narratives are based may be vague and uncertain, the stories they arouse can never be determinate or complete. Given the distortions of memory and the mediation of language, narrative is always a story about the past and not the past itself (Denzin, 2003, p. 12).

Atkinson (1997) argued that raw narrative episodes could be simply therapeutic rather than analytical. This author believed that narrative text could not be considered as an academic one. Stories and narrative writing texts that were not analysed could not be considered as social science. In her words, narrative should be used analytically to achieve social analysis.

5.8.2 Truthfulness: The Question of Narrative Truth

When analysing the validity of a narrative study, a crucial question is the extent to which the study accurately represents the storied life, referred to as truthfulness in this section. I will discuss this by first exploring the importance of a storied life by asking the question “*What is the point of storied life?*”

Narrative truth seeks to help the past come to life in the present. Some might argue that stories give us incomplete, revisable and distorted versions of the past. The subjective element of stories is not to be denied. After all, stories rearrange, re-describe, invent, retell and revise. There can be various distortions in the given account – tone, details, substance. One might argue whether these distortions threaten the scope of personal narrative.

Denzin argues that this is not the case:

... because a story is not a neutral attempt to mirror the facts of one's life; it does not seek to recover already constituted meanings. Only within the memoir-politics surrounding the accuracy of recovered memories, which emerged within the context of positivist psychology, would such a criticism be threatening (Denzin, 2003, p. 200).

In my opinion, our personal identities are built on a series of experiences over time. I believe that the purpose of self-narration is to ensure this sense of continuity. Self-narration gives a holistic view to fragmented stories by retelling and sharing. The narrative is important to me because it captures the dilemma of my experience. I consider a narrative attempt as an encounter with the self through a life journey. So, the question is not, '*Does my story reflect my past accurately?*' as if I were holding a mirror to my past. Rather, I must ask the following questions:

- *What are the aftermaths of the stories?*
- *Do the stories change my personality?*
- *What new ventures will form part of my life?*

The main focus is on the function of the narratives, the consequences and their uses. I believe that our concern should not be whether the story creates a perfect past, but our attention should be whether there is a thorough analysis of the consequences and aftermaths of the stories. The main focus of the narrative should be the consequences and their uses. Rich (1978:33) has argued that the story of our lives becomes our lives. This is similar to how Ellis (2003) commented on this subject as follows:

I get impatient with writers who belittle or diminish the therapeutic consequences of stories. They tend to draw a hard and fast distinction between therapy and social research, implying that narratives are useful only insofar as they advance sociological, anthropological or psychological theory. For these critics, narrative threatens the whole project of science. What they oppose is what they equate with the therapeutic: the sentimental, the popular ... Thus, they engage surreptitiously in what feminist critic Jane Tompkins (1989) calls 'the trashing of emotion, a war waged ceaselessly by academic intellectuals 'against feeling, against women, against what is personal' (Ellis, 2003, p. 23).

In my opinion, the above citation by Ellis strongly highlights the importance of promoting deep meaning of people's experiences in today's research and academic

work. We are driven by a mentality that values what is measurable, performed and tested. Focus is put on quantifiable results and numerical projections.

The performative mentality disregards real human elements especially experiences, dilemmas, injustices, opinions and desires. I believe that the use of information technology and tools in research has promoted further data-based studies that consider ‘people’ as subject variables that can be counted and controlled through data manipulation. This research supports Ellis’ perspective in focusing directly on people’s narratives as a means of promoting research that can make a real difference in people’s lives through authenticity and relevance. (Ellis, 2003)

Denzin and Lincoln argue further that it is a mistake to undermine the value of a particular text simply because it is not formal and impersonal. While there is no doubt that written text can be questioned, arguments challenged and feelings revealed, informal text should be given its dues. Also, sophisticated jargon should not be considered as ‘superior’ to accessible prose. Denzin and Lincoln emphasise that we should not undervalue our work if it has a therapeutic or personal value. (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003).

Atkinson argues that:

... when the narrator is the investigator, to a certain extent, she is always asking what it is right to do and good to be. At the most extreme, those who want ‘to put narrative in its place seem to think there is only one right place to put it.’ They seek to preserve what already has been lost. They think that if these personal voices can be silenced, then perhaps they can return to business as usual in the social sciences, protected against the exigencies of human experience (Atkinson, 1997, p. 343).

Atkinson’s perspective and corresponding arguments is important because research studies based on narrative authenticity can promote real life experiences, voice and actual life challenges. Such research studies shed light on human issues that have a direct effect on peoples’ quality of life because they offer the chance to expose actual lived experiences and to problematise them through inquiry-based research. Masking people’s lives through scientific experiments, variables and control might not reflect social reality, as experienced by real people in everyday life. Therefore, this study

seeks to clearly understand what is happening in actual life experience in a qualitative way, utilising a narrative inquiry approach.

5.9 Limitations of the Study

The college network reform in our country is proposing a policy directed towards open communication streams, autonomy and decentralisation. However, recent studies on our education system by Spiteri (2016) and Cutajar (2017) illustrate that these reforms are being implemented within a culture that is still based on top-decisions and several hierarchical strata. Educators are still working in isolation with one-way communication channels. Although we have witnessed the legislation of decentralisation in education, directions and orders are still being imposed from top to bottom.

This study attempts to analyse a superimposed structure in an unchanged culture. One might argue that the interpretation of this analysis is a superficial one since the fundamentals of culture and society have not yet changed or aligned themselves to the new legislation. Although the reform was introduced in 2005, we are still in the stages of building up the necessary structures on an organisational level. Utilising narrative inquiry, this study can only tentatively inquire through narrative interpretation whether the actual practice in one college is in line with the vision and mission of the new educational reform.

There is also a lack of historical evidence and lessons learnt by experience about college networks due to its on-going implementation. The relatively short-lived experience tends to create a situation whereby all initiatives are still relatively new and no stability has yet been found. In an ideal situation, stable environments would have yielded better insights since the learning curve would have been converted into a learning plateau. This is not the case for the lived experience of this College.

My narratives that will be used to analyse the critical interactions of voice, power and social justice will emerge from a limited web of intra college activities. My world is my school and my galaxy is my College. I can peer outside the galaxy with telescopes but can only guess what is happening. This can twist reality if seen from ‘outside.’

This is surely a limitation that must be considered in my study. This study does not intend to produce generalisations as conclusions but deep reflections on a grounded experience that focuses on meaning, lived inquiry and personal insights.

Given the short duration of the narrative (five years' experience), all members of the affected teams remained relatively stable with relatively very few changes in deployment. This strengthened stability but limited breadth of the study. In studying real life situations, usually there is no control on external factors, such as participant configuration.

5.10 Ethical Issues: The Reflective Dimension

The main research question is focused on how I experienced and interpreted my lived story of the new educational reform, of how temporality (placing things in the context of time) connected with my story/line experience of how institutions framed my life. As explained in the first section of this chapter, this study would not publish the whole anthology of raw data (the full version of the diary entries). This thesis focuses on my voice and not the voice of others. Thus, the discussion of the findings includes solely those excerpts from the diary entries that focus on my voice, my thoughts and my experiences.

Influenced by the rich philosophical literature on personal knowledge in classical work by Polanyi (1958) and Johnson (1989), I am particularly interested in understanding 'personal knowledge.' I use these studies to position my own understanding of leadership knowledge as personal practical knowledge amid the array of other streams of thought. This position is necessary for narrative inquiry to contribute to the questions of social significance in the local context.

Recording my own stories is not enough for my research design. My aim is to embark on a narrative inquiry journey to help me explore my own stories. It is reflexivity, not narrative, that is driving my research. I embark on narrative inquiry to study experience. For me, narrative is the closest I can come to communicating experience. However, journal entries will not, for the most part, be worked into my research texts. Most of the journal entries will not be made public or published. I am aiming to extract

meaning from experience recorded in journal entry forms. My inquiry task framed with an Arendtian theoretical approach is to analyse, interpret and reflect on issues of power, voice and social justice from my own recorded stories by asking questions of meaning and social significance.

The inquiry analysis provides me with a space through which to carry forward my narrative inquiries. The purpose of the analysis retelling, such as retelling in any aspect of the narratives of our lives, will offer possibilities for reliving, for new directions and new ways of doing things. My hope is that this study offers work at the boundaries, to stretch college network reform participants into new ways of thinking as they try to come closer to understanding experience.

Locally, there have been similar engagements in self-study research on different aspects of leadership. Attard (2006, 2007) published a ‘self-study’ where the participant researcher acted as a leader within a structured learning community of teachers operating in one secondary school in Malta. Data gathering was through logging diary entries in a reflective journal. A similar reflective journal was logged by Pace (2009) in another study on leadership. Pace (2009) claimed that the reflective journal gave him the opportunity to articulate his thoughts, feelings and emotions. This also included the follow up opportunity that addressed any inconsistencies between implemented actions and related educational philosophy. Inevitably, this has left a marked impact not just on the research and study development process, but also on the researcher’s professional and personal life. Self-reflection gives an opportunity to the leader to engage with oneself in both personal and professional growth.

Nowadays, this reflective tool is not only used in research but also in day-to-day teaching and learning. The practice of keeping a self-reflective journal has been introduced in the teacher mentoring process. In fact, it is being recommended to newly qualified teachers as one of the requirements of their Induction Programme (Art 24 (2)e of the Education Act of 2006).

5.11 Permissions Granted from Ethics Research Committees

The methodology of this study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of the Education and the Ethics Committee of the Senate of the University of Malta. Research permission for colleges and schools has been given by the Ministry of Education of Malta (Appendix 2).

5.12 Conclusion

The methodology of the study discussed in this chapter does not evoke generalisable abstractions and unified knowledge. It does not lead to the presentation of scientific knowledge that is cumulative and linear. This chapter has illustrated that the methodology proposed in this study is intended to forward subjectivity and personal accountability.

Based on an Arendtian conceptual framework, the proposed narrative inquiry methodology promotes the unique and marginalised standpoints and particularities of network leadership. The research tool is the diary entries advocating the use of narrative texts. It has been explained that the ultimate purpose is to note and record all details of personal life experiences in a college network setup as an important way of exploring this issue. It has been discussed how this has given me the opportunity (as the participant and researcher of the study) to express my feelings, emotions and personal thoughts. The narrative inquiry is the chosen methodology for reflection and discussion aimed not only to ‘unmask’ experience, stories and events but to also discover the ‘face under the mask’ through the inquiry for meaning.

The journal entries will be reviewed in the next chapter focusing on data analysis and reporting. The next stage in this thesis will give me the opportunity to highlight the timeline for data collection with special focus on when the reflections were recorded. Furthermore, I will share how I analysed the data and how I selected the chosen themes.

CHAPTER 6 DATA REPORTING AND ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

The data collection utilised in this study covered a total of five years spanning from scholastic year 2008/2009, 2010/2011 and 2012/2013.

The narrative methodology was the chosen approach. This was carried out using the process of maintaining a record of my life experiences by logging them in journal entries. These entries captured details of my personal life experiences as an administrator in one of the college networks within the local context.

6.2 Diary Entries: Analysis Process

Analysing these diary entries followed a thematic methodology. ‘Intensity sampling’ was the first sampling strategy used to log the frequency of occurrence of issues in the data. Initial categories were then formed from the most frequently mentioned issues. This was followed by the classification of categories into themes. The themes were then classified into ten main problematising themes/areas using selective coding that established relationships between categories and sub-categories, validating these relationships by generating first level, second level and third level themes.

6.2.1 Diary Entries: Generation of First Level Themes

During the first screening of the diary entries, 973 occurrences of themes were recorded and a screening was carried out to categorise all these events into various themes. As can be seen in Table 6.1, this first screening resulted in 27 themes. Clearly some themes were the focus of occurrences which took place during the first five years of the network reform in Malta. Themes, such as College Leadership, had a tally of 222 events and the theme School Leadership had a tally of 123 occasions.

Table 6.1 Generated List of First Level Themes

No.	First Level Themes	Frequency of Occurrences
1.	College Leadership	222
2.	School Leadership	123
3.	Motivation	80
4.	Administrative Load	77
5.	Support Structures	65
6.	Conflicts	49
7.	Voice	46
8.	Power	39
9.	Communication	31
10.	Professional Development	30
11.	Control	31
12.	Bureaucracy	25
13.	Empowerment	24
14.	Authority	16
15.	Mentoring	15
16.	Change Management	16
17.	Quality Education	12
18.	Distribution of Leadership Roles	11
19.	Cultural Changes	10
20.	Power	9
21.	Resources	8
22.	Team Work	8
23.	Parental Involvement	7
24.	Autonomy	5
25.	Control	5
26.	Uniformity	5
27.	Decision Making	4
Grand Total		973

6.2.2 Diary Entries: Generation of Second Level Themes

A second screening was carried out and a second level of themes was generated from the integration of themes with less than five events each. The frequency of occurrences determined the selected themes. As can be seen in Table 6.2, a short list of 20 themes with a frequency occurrence range between 248 and 7 was generated.

Table 6.2 Generated List of Second Level Themes

No.	Second Level Themes	Frequency of Occurrences
1.	College Leadership	248
2.	School Leadership	135
3.	Motivation	90
4.	Administrative Load	77
5.	Support Structures	65
6.	Conflicts	49
7.	Voice	46
8.	Power	39
9.	Communication	31
10.	Control	31
11.	Professional Development	30
12.	Bureaucracy	25
13.	Empowerment	24
14.	Authority	16
15.	Change Management	16
16.	Mentoring	15
17.	Distribution of Leadership Roles	11
18.	Cultural Changes	10
19.	Team Work	8
20.	Parental Involvement	7
	Grand Total	973

6.2.3 Diary Entries: Generation of Third Level (Macro) Themes

A third screening was carried out with themes having less than 25 events. A subsequent analysis of the 20 themes from the second screening highlighted the possibility of clustering certain themes. As can be seen from Table 6.3, this resulted in a narrowed down list of ten final themes which are extensively analysed throughout the next chapters of this study.

Table 6.3 Generated List of Third Level (Macro) Themes

No.	Third Level (Macro) Themes	Frequency of Occurrences
1.	College Leadership	258
2.	Power	144
3.	School Leadership	135
4.	Motivation	105
5.	Voice/Communication	85
6.	Administrative Load	77
7.	Support Structures	65
8.	Conflicts	49
9.	Professional Development	30
10.	Bureaucracy	25
Grand Total		973

This theme clustering exercise included reviewing all the macro themes and, wherever possible, various themes with similar perspectives were banded together into the most prominent theme. The theme 'Cultural Changes' was incorporated with the largest number of frequency occurrences, namely 'College Leadership,' as both themes covered similar topics. The theme, 'Power' banded together the six themes namely 'Distribution of Leadership Roles,' 'Change Management,' 'Empowerment,' 'Control,' 'Authority' and 'Parent Involvement.' In addition to this, the theme 'Mentoring' was integrated with 'Motivation,' while the theme entitled 'Teamwork' was incorporated into the theme 'Voice/Communication.' All the other themes remained as stand-alone themes.

6.3 More Detailed Analysis of the Macro Themes

Table 6.4 focuses on the ten final themes, adopting the classification structure used by Spiteri Gingell in the report, *Analysis of National Consultation to the Draft National Curriculum Framework* (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012). This analysis was subdivided by chronological years to identify anomalies which might have been time-based.

- A Negative Comment (C-);
- A Positive Comment (C+);
- An Issue (I);
- A Recommendation (R)
- A Strength (S).

Table 6.4 Analysis of Themes by Category and Year

Macro Themes and Yearly Distribution	C-	C+	I	R	S	Grand Total
College Leadership						
2008	8	7	8	7	4	34
2009	31	17	30	5	11	94
2010	15	20	12	-	-	47
2011	26	21	9	1	-	57
2012	7	13	6	-	-	26
College Leadership Total	87	78	65	13	15	258
Power						
2008	6	5	4	1	1	17
2009	23	-	17	4	2	46
2010	17	6	4	-	-	27
2011	19	3	8	1	-	31
2012	13	4	6	-	-	23
Power Total	78	18	39	6	3	144
Page Total						402

Table 6.4 Analysis of Themes by Category and Year (cont.)

Macro Themes and Yearly Distribution	C-	C+	I	R	S	Grand Total
School Leadership						
2008	7	5	5	3	3	23
2009	11	11	26	2	3	53
2010	13	10	7	-	-	30
2011	9	6	2	-	-	17
2012	4	3	5	-	-	12
School Leadership Total	44	35	45	5	6	135
Motivation						
2008	5	-	2	-	2	9
2009	16	8	3	1	-	28
2010	12	7	4	-	-	23
2011	19	9	-	-	-	28
2012	7	10	-	-	-	17
Motivation Total	59	34	9	1	2	105
Voice/Communication						
2008	4	1	-	1	-	6
2009	26	7	4	1	1	39
2010	13	3	2	-	-	18
2011	9	2	2	-	-	13
2012	4	4	1	-	-	9
Voice/Communication Total	56	17	9	2	1	85
Page Total						325

Table 6.4 Analysis of Themes by Category and Year (cont.)

Macro Themes and Yearly Distribution	C-	C+	I	R	S	Grand Total
Administrative Load						
2008	-	-	-	-	-	-
2009	10	-	6	-	-	16
2010	23	1	6	-	-	30
2011	20	-	5	-	-	25
2012	5	-	1	-	-	6
Administrative Load Total	58	1	18			77
Support Structures						
2008	1	-	-	2	1	4
2009	8	4	7	1	1	21
2010	8	9	4	-	-	21
2011	4	4	2	-	-	10
2012	8	-	1	-	-	9
Support Structures Total	29	17	14	3	2	65
Conflicts						
2008	7	-	5	-	-	12
2009	9	-	7	2	-	18
2010	3	4	5	-	-	12
2011	1	-	5	-	-	6
2012	-	-	1	-	-	1
Conflicts Total	20	4	23	2	-	49
Page Total						191

Table 6.4 Analysis of Themes by Category and Year (cont.)

Macro Themes and Yearly Distribution	C-	C+	I	R	S	Grand Total
Professional Development						
2008	-	-	-	-	-	-
2009	-	5	1	-	-	6
2010	-	8	1	-	-	9
2011	7	2	3	-	-	12
2012	1	2	-	-	-	3
Professional Development Total	8	17	5	-	-	30
Bureaucracy						
2008	4	1	2	-	-	7
2009	7	-	4	-	-	11
2010	3	-	-	-	-	3
2011	-	-	-	-	-	-
2012	2	1	1	-	-	4
Bureaucracy Total	16	2	7	-	-	25
				Page Total		55
Grand Total for each classification	455	223	234	32	29	973

The classification adopted above will also be used at a later stage for the gap analysis of the ‘*vita contemplativa*’ (thinking on the policy reform) and the ‘*vita activa*’ (the implementation of the policy).

This analysis, as presented in Table 6.4, provides a rich amount of data which will be analysed in greater detail in the following sections.

6.4 Data Analysis of the Macro Themes

As explained earlier, after the listing of 27 themes from 973 diary entries, these identified themes were eventually batched into ten macro themes incorporating all sub data derived from the narratives and analysed according to the described procedures in the methodology chapter. The analysis stage only includes the diary extracts that focus solely on the researcher's voice and her own experience. The other diary extracts were not quoted due to ethical reasons. The size of my College and subsequently the size of the network makes it impractical and difficult to ensure anonymity. Therefore, the methodology adopted for this study focuses on emphasising themes from the diary, rather than the actual diary entries. In this analysis, the themes that featured prominently over the period of five years have been identified. They will now be analysed and discussed in various stages as follows:

1. **Voice from the Policy Document:** Relevant excerpts from the Reform Document are quoted for each macro theme.
2. **My Lived Experience as the Researcher:** The analysis of the lived experience for each theme is discussed, highlighting main features, episodes and reflections. This is then compared to the proposals presented in the Policy Reform Document.
3. **Gap Analysis:** This Gap Analysis compares policy proposals and expectations with the actual lived experiences.
4. **Reflection:** Each macro theme is interpreted by myself, as the researcher using the writings and theories of Hannah Arendt and other authors from the field of leadership, including feminist writers and critics from educational leadership. Each theme was analysed by referring to prominent analytical points and challenging perspectives.
5. **Summary of Analysis:** The final subsection offers an overview of the analysis for each theme and outlines salient points for the discussion chapter.

The analysis of each final theme will be discussed in the next sections and any possibility of a gap analysis thoroughly explained. Narrative inquiry might involve recurrent themes within each identified theme for analysis that will then be used as the framework for discussion. The Arendtian reflection sections will offer an examination of the social reality of the College Network Reform implementation in Malta, beyond given frameworks and pre-set boundaries (beyond the ‘Arendtian banisters’).

6.4.1 Macro Theme: College Leadership

In this thesis, the macro theme College Leadership refers to the top leadership role of a cluster of schools as structured by the Reform Document (2005). The College Principal holds this leadership role. This entails the overall responsibility of a number of primary schools and one or two secondary schools.

6.4.1.1 College Leadership: A Voice from the Policy Document

The Reform Document for the setup of School Colleges in Malta introduces the role of the College Principal as the main leader of the College. In the previous chapters of this study, it was highlighted that the person in this role is directly appointed by the Minister of Education, following a public call and a selection process by an appointed selection board, composed of College Board members and a representative from the Ministry of Education, the Malta Education Directorate (MED) and the Education Services Directorate (ESD) respectively.

It has also been discussed that each College in Malta has the same managerial structure within the new reform document. The document puts emphasis on the role of the person appointed as Principal for the effective management of the College. The College Principal is expected to coordinate and to effectively manage the schools within the College by utilising the necessary professional educational leadership and management skills.

The Principal will provide guidance, direction, and support to the schools, through their Heads, in pursuit of their aims and functions and will facilitate the coordination and organisation of common activities, programmes, projects and specialisation at the level of the College on each individual school. The Principal is expected to communicate the national policies or those of the College Board to the Council of Heads and ensures that these are carried across the College. The College,

through the Principal, will procure, with the necessary assistance, a team of educators, administrative, technical and maintenance personnel as may be necessary to support the Heads of Schools in a timely and effective manner (Reform Document, 2005, p. 44).

The document recommends that the College Principal utilises student services and other service providers within the Ministry to meet the needs and requests of the College. With this, the document ensures that the rights of personnel serving within the Education Division, other public educational institutions or other departments as well as public entities are safeguarded by legally binding measures and have been since the onset of the reform.

6.4.1.2 College Leadership: My Lived Experience as the Researcher

My narrative inquiry shares some specific examples from my positive experiences of College Leadership within the new reform. The most evident benefit is the coordinated effort in bringing together isolated attempts at setting and organising initiatives within and between schools. The College Principal functioning within the structures of the new reform has the opportunity to coordinate and to synergise tasks from schools within the College into one task, embracing isolated effort into one coordinated task.

The vision of the Principal [of this particular College] is far-reaching. She has a taste for sports and music, even though she is a mathematical person. The Principal also managed to scaffold the set up for these initiatives to be implemented successfully. The children are being given unique opportunities that are not found in other Colleges (Journal entry: 11th May, 2010).

Such collegial experiences within the College highlight the possibility of teamwork opportunities, joint initiatives and inter-schools collaboration. Specific examples of newly introduced initiatives within the College Reform include the Council of Heads Meeting, College Committee for the setup of the Half Yearly Exams, Professional Development Sessions involving schools within the College as well as the setup of committees working upon College joint initiatives (sports, environment and art programmes). These newly set initiatives give an opportunity to the college participants to work in teams, to coordinate tasks and to collaborate on common tasks shared between different schools, coordinated at a college level.

At the moment, I am chairing a College Committee that was set up for the preparations for the half yearly examination papers. I have been working on this committee since the summer holidays. A timescale has been devised, work has been assigned and consultants identified and contacted (Journal entry: 30th October, 2009).

It is very encouraging to note that these coordinated tasks driven at a college level do not solely cater for extra-curricular initiatives but also focus on teaching and learning tasks, such as assessment and good quality planning for teaching and learning. These professional meetings are often facilitated by the setup of the College School Development Plan Committee, chaired by the College Principal as the educational leader of the College. The leadership of the College supports individual schools by providing them with such opportunities of working together enhanced and supported by the College structure and human resources.

I feel that I am learning a lot from my participation in these subcommittees. The Principal is giving me the necessary trust and motivation through leadership of these subcommittees. I must admit that somehow although I know that I am being burdened with more work, I find myself in an enriching learning environment (Journal entry: 21st April, 2010).

My experience also highlights another highly recommended positive benefit of the College Network Reform - the annual transitional exercise for students and their parents as they proceed from the primary level to the secondary sector.

We had a College activity today. It is entitled 'Moving on Together' and targeted Year 6 pupils as a farewell and a transitional activity. The new system of clustering gives an opportunity to the children to prepare themselves for the following scholastic year. They have the opportunity to get to know each other as colleagues, to get acquainted with their teachers and to relate to the new Heads of Schools (Journal entry: 22nd May 2009).

This transitional exercise comprises many initiatives (meetings, school tours and interactive displays) that prepare students and their parents for the transitional change between one sector of the education system and the other. These exercises are coordinated by the College support staff and sustained across all schools and the College. The new organisational structure of the College provides the necessary structures for a smoother educational journey within our local education system.

The transitional programme went smoothly according to plan and the pupils and the parents really enjoyed the brief welcome and the school familiarisation tours. All the support staff was present ... This was another staff transition challenge that started as a red-hot potato with animation and concern way back in February 2003 and ended up in an imperceptible success to the satisfaction of all (Journal entry 17th June 2012).

Notwithstanding these attempted positive initiatives, my documented experience of College Leadership is replete with many other evidences of my perception of a top-down College Leadership style with imposed decisions and practices. My lived experiences have led me to describe the College Leader as a “Big Brother” with a command/control style of management.

Everything is monitored and recorded in the College. Every month we are being asked to send the agenda of our teacher’s curriculum slot. At the end of the month, I have to return this data to the Office of the Principal (Journal entry: 14th April, 2010).

My College school network participation is characterised by top down decision-taking and one-way communication channels. I have documented that College activities are constantly given priority over school activities. My experiences of College Leadership are dominated by imposed priorities by the Office of the Principal. I would like to emphasise again that these reflections are taken from my diary entries and represent my own voice. These entries do not reflect external input.

It was very difficult to return to normal school life after many days of preparation for the College Activity. We were strongly expected to give total support and full input to these College calendar events ... It has been quite a long time since I managed to spend a whole day at school. Planning a school day without outside meetings was almost a luxury that I have longed for during the past days (Journal entry: 26th January, 2009).

My experience of the College Leadership is characterised by conflicts, power struggles, tension and fear. I have remarked that voices are frequently silenced and there is no tolerance for divergent ideas.

It was not the first time that I received a ‘no reply answer.’ Controversial issues were simply left unanswered. This strategy was utilised very often as an escapism to disputable situations. The ‘no reply’ answer made me feel very sick. I felt very irritated and anxious. I considered it very unfair

not to tackle controversial issues and to leave me without guidance
(Journal entry: 10th December, 2009).

In my opinion, there is a strong feeling of lack of trust, lack of collegiality and lack of leadership support. My experience of the general ethos of the College is quite a demotivating one. Communication is restricted and directed towards college-taken decisions. My experience highlights an appreciation deficit from the College Administration towards school-based decisions, needs and achievements. My reflections are constantly overwhelmed by a feeling of helplessness and disappointment caused by an inconsistent College leadership. Rivalry, insularity and competition are repetitively mentioned elements in my documented lived experience of the College. I feel more 'controlled' by the College Principal, rather than by the school management team that is closer to my immediate reality.

I was feeling totally detached from school life. It seemed as if I had left my small home to live in a bigger village, now termed the College. To my amazement, nobody could understand the pressure and the stress that we were feeling by the added college work. It seemed that the other colleges were quite 'dormant' with very few hassles. No mention was made of any massive celebration or activity. They even said that they would meet the Principal on a very rare occasion at their school, such as Prize Day or a Special Assembly occasion (Journal entry: 20th January, 2009).

I can feel a strong sense of detachment and a significant dichotomy between the role of College Principal and the role of Head of School. In my opinion, this is mainly generated by feelings of injustice and unfair treatment enforced by unfair distribution of resources.

I had to take a lot of paperwork with me at home. Focusing on a College Activity forced me to lag behind in requisition forms, formulating confirmation reports, filling in children's application forms for the Statementing Board, working out the Quarterly Returns and many other routine paperwork (Journal entry: 26th January, 2009).

I find little support and lack of mentoring in the college school network setup. The role of the College Leader is described by the anecdotes of my lived experiences as 'an external watcher' rather than as an insider to the system.

Although I have experienced several advantages from the networking reform, such as collaboration, sharing of resources, dissemination of best practices and professional training opportunities, I can also share negative experiences. In my opinion, the implementation of a restricted definition of 'networking' that is limited to the school parameters within the College geographical network tends to create an insular mentality that leads up to 'them' and 'us' feelings. (Journal entry: 8th May, 2012).

My narratives compare the operation of the College Administration to the navigation of a 'big solitary ship.' My lived experience highlights repeated experiences of isolation, lack of cooperation and lack of collegiality. In my opinion, the College leadership style in my lived experience exhibits traces of induced pressure, intolerance and arrogance.

We arrived at the Principal's Office at half past three. We have already offered our services for one whole hour beyond our normal time schedule. The Principal's office hours were till 17.00. It seemed that there was no hassle or urge to start the meeting. I felt really burdened with such College meetings and related work (Journal entry: 8th June, 2010).

I have experienced burnt out feelings during college-based meetings. Disillusion, disappointment and demotivation dominate my overall narrative inquiry of my lived experience and outweigh all possible benefits from this new experience.

6.4.1.3 College Leadership: Gap Analysis

In an era of decentralisation and diffusion of power, the college network reform policy for Malta established the role of the College Principal as the Chief Executive Officer of the College. The Education Amendment Act (2006) described this role as a new post in the hierarchical managerial structure of the College. This post has been delineated by the same Education Act to have an advantageous position because the stakeholders could address the identified problems and formulate possible solutions to promote progress within the College and the respective schools. However, the literature review analysis of this thesis illustrated that the proposed management structure for the college network reform in Malta has an organisational chart that places the leader at the top and the subordinates beneath. It has been argued with reference to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) that the outcome of a centralised network management structure is a controlled style of leading and communicating. The

established organisational chart with a pyramid hierarchical structure is quite contradictory to the recommended distributed leadership style by the same reform.

My lived experiences of the college leadership in the new reform illustrate some specific examples of good practices that were coordinated by the Principal, as leader of the College. The nature of these experiences ranges from academic to pastoral initiatives. During these sporadic events, the School Heads and their staff collaborate fully with the Office of the Principal to organise events using a collegial approach to reach all students across all levels. This has rendered great benefits to the students as preparatory transition from one level of the education sector to the other. However, my lived experiences illustrate that these positive initiatives are stand-alone College calendar events. The collaborative ethos and group dynamics are not constantly sustained on a day to day level. On the contrary, my daily narrative experiences give evidence of imposed top down leadership practices that are surely not consultative nor democratic.

The document's proposed 'distributed leadership' is experienced in exactly the opposite way with the managerial position of an overall controlling 'leader' on top of the college network. This has been noted to create a sense of 'detachment' between the college leader (the superior) and the rest of the network participants (the subordinates).

My daily experiences document feelings of external control, subordination, constant external monitoring, imposition and absolute power. This creates a wide gap between the recommended distributed style of leadership by the Reform Document and the experienced patriarchal college leadership in actual practice.

6.4.1.4 College Leadership: Reflection

Arendt's (1958a, 1958b) critical approach guides us to view College Leadership in education not as 'natural phenomena' but driven by 'thinking individuals' that must be understood both in terms of set frameworks but also in terms of the actual lived experiences of these activities. Arendt's method stresses attention to very valid points highlighted in the narrative experiences with special attention to the totality of experience and an in-depth analysis of intentions, agendas, interactions and outcomes

that might not be easily deciphered at a superficial level. It is the analysis of the College Leadership that contributes to a deep perspective of the main tenets of the college network reform.

By utilising the phenomenological method, Arendt (1958a) argues that educational leaders, as the College Principal in this study, need to reflect on their work and to think deeply about its purposes, processes, its effects and outcomes. In this study, the lived narratives of the college network reform highlights four features mainly ‘absolute control,’ ‘terror,’ ‘imposition’ and ‘top-down communication’ that resonate quite well with Arendt’s major work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that emphasises on bureaucracy, ideology, destruction of human relationships and terror. Arendt (1958a) warns that such features enable analysis about the conditions in which totalitarianism develops and flourishes.

The analysis of the narratives of this College Leadership experience, highlights the lack of space or opportunity for bottom-up approaches and personal initiatives within the network leadership. Arendt’s claims that when spaces are removed and people are essentialised into a type, totalitarianism can be experienced. We need to reflect whether the narratives are indicating signs of what Arendt’s refers to as ‘totalitarianism’s radical evil’ – the radical elimination of a democratic form of leadership. In such a situation, people are rendered voiceless, powerless and helpless.

Arendt (1958a) suggests an action-oriented approach to those experiencing a leadership situation. She recommends that participants engage critically with the actual lived experiences of the new reform. This will provide the necessary voice, space and opportunity, and new empowering ideas can be brought forward. Arendt emphasises that what is needed is a ‘common space’ in the leadership experience, where people can work together but still maintain personal space. This is what, according to Arendt, can eliminate the dangers of the onset of totalitarian conditions within the College Leadership experience.

Whilst Arendt’s theoretical framework exposes the dangers of totalitarianism, critical feminist writers, most prominently Blackmore (2014) exposes the dangers of having leadership based on the performances of a prominent role, such as the responsibility of the newly appointed College Principal in the local context. Blackmore (2014) notes

quite ironically how contemporary reforms, such as the college network reform, in Malta targeted to advocate teamwork, collaboration and collegiality promote the setup of the ‘individual leader’ (the ‘heroic leader’ promoting the cult of the individual leader) focused on organisational objectives, rather than people management and relationships. The awaited college paradigm in the local scenario is framed on a leadership organisation chart that depends on the final decision-making of the isolated leader at the very top of the organisation chart.

6.4.1.5 College Leadership: Summary of the Analysis

The lived experiences confirm Arendt’s and the critical feminist’s observations – leadership discourses when based upon pyramid organisations demand alignment between the college leader and the schools with a particular focus on college goals, targets and initiatives. Teachers and students must fit the college system and not the other way round. Leadership is again limited to organisational objectives of the College, as if isolated from the wider education system and society in general. The focus is still on the College rather than the students. The college network lived experiences show that the new reform paradigm still treats leadership possibilities as framed by policy and resources “*with a restricted understanding of what education is for*” (Gorard, 2010, p. 759).

6.4.2 Macro Theme: School Leadership

In this study, the macro theme ‘School Leadership’ refers to the management and administration of a school. In our Maltese context, this role is occupied by a Head of School who is responsible for either a primary or a secondary school.

6.4.2.1 School Leadership: Voice from the Policy Document

The document states very clearly that successful school networking requires effective and efficient leadership. The eventual development of the network is being specifically attributed to leadership and management by the local document. The document highlights that such leadership requires planning and proper management.

The success of a network (particularly in its early stages) is almost uniquely dependent on the vision, energy and effort of those who take on leadership roles. All organisational structures require tending and networks are no different. As network structures are more fluid, the

leadership of the network will start and shape the activity, guide reflection and adaptation and help refocus (Reform Document, 2005, p. 38).

The document gives clear information on the new organisational chart for the education system. It also states that each College in Malta is to be administered by the same managerial structures. The set-up of a College Board is introduced on an executive level and the role of the Principal is set up to serve as the Leader for each College. The Principal is designated to chair a Council of Heads managing the schools within the College. The document highlights that each school in the college network is still to be managed by a Head of School.

Each school within the College will be managed and led by a Head of School. All models are based on the premise that each school will have its own Head of School, Assistant Head, teaching and non-teaching staff, a School Council and a Student Council (Reform Document, 2005, p. 40).

The local document recommends shared or co-leadership for the eventual development of networked learning communities. It is noted that such leadership style is not only crucial for load distribution but should also support the distribution of leadership functions across the schools of the College. It is being recommended that shared leadership will promote dialogue, collaboration and team spirit.

The document acknowledges that this recommended shared or co-leadership is the most difficult to plan for. The effective participation of all network participants is considered as a very important asset for the generation of effective network activity. The document requires that systems within networks must generate knowledge through the contribution of all participants.

Opportunities for participation and contribution to the College are considered as necessary for communication, generation of knowledge and effective delivery. This recommendation by the local document for college networks in Malta is based on a statement from the document, stating that those networks which report the best progress during their initial stages are generally the ones that would have planned for distributed leadership from the earliest stages.

The local document categorically states that college networks are to be administered utilising a distributed leadership style. However, this leadership practice must not eliminate, in any way, the role of Head Teachers and Senior Management Team.

Distributed leadership only thrives where there is effective senior leadership. Planning for this distributed leadership means giving staff in each school clear roles, providing them with proper and effective support structures (Reform Document, 2005, p. 39).

The involvement of the Senior Management Team is considered as crucial to the development of the networks, in order to provide vision and to encourage the necessary implementation of this vision within schools. The document recommends that such leadership should mean developing teachers and others into leaders, trainers and enquirers.

6.4.2.2 School Leadership: My Lived Experience as the Researcher

The narrative inquiry of my lived experiences of a local college network case-study clearly shows that school leaders find great motivation in planning, discussing and implementing initiatives with their colleagues within the same College, whenever possible. The college setup has facilitated such experiences of shared leadership for school leaders from an organisational point of view.

A twinning initiative has been set between my school and another primary school within the same College. The partner school has been designated as a 'Writing School.' All the teachers of this school have received full professional training in the writing process methodology. Our idea is to invite the trained staff of this school within our College to share their expertise with my staff. 'Teachers training teachers' is a professional initiative that has proven to be very effective wherever it is implemented (Journal entry: 1st December, 2008).

There are specific examples of tangible collegial support to school leaders in difficult cases and challenging school life episodes. These episodes of collegial support provision are presented as recommended factors for the possibility of the successful development of networked learning communities. This support has sustained individual schools within the College to overcome internal problems through Collegial

teamwork and intra-school support which has strengthened individual school work on the School Development Plan and related tasks.

Reflection on my lived experiences shows the possibility of the creation of a learning community that can take place through the promotion of learning experiences, educational work and school success. I can note that the college network system can provide the necessary set up of community opportunities to be further developed and enhanced.

The College Student Council was meeting on a regular basis. As an administrator, I tried to work on their suggestions as much as possible. The students owned this College Council participation and were very keen to forward their ideas on behalf of their colleagues (Journal entry: 21st January, 2009).

Whilst acknowledging the possibilities of collaboration, my lived experiences also highlight some difficulties of distributed leadership within the new network organisation that stem from the fact that this leadership style must be implemented within a ‘middle management’ structure.

As a school administrator, we are being required to have a different kind of knowledge – accountancy, law, diplomacy and even medical knowledge. For example, managing the school finance requires a full-time accounts clerk to plan, report and balance out the school accounts. We have only attended a diploma course in administration. Most of our lectures were mainly focused on educational leadership. However, in actual practice, we are required to act as ‘managers’ directing finance, school refurbishment and other managerial tasks and functions. Our course theory does not specifically address such managerial issues (Journal entry: 3rd December, 2009).

The documented administrative work load and the accompanying increase in bureaucratic structures do not support the implementation of distributed leadership. My lived experiences show that there is a lack of delegation coupled with an increase in external monitoring and verification.

I am being left all alone in a new school trying to make ends meet. I am laterally isolated in a big ‘valley’ with very little communication or human activities. I have big problems with communication lines, internet provision, facilities for accessibility and no personnel to help me with maintenance and school resources. I am still without the provision of a

clerk, a receptionist and a school maintenance person (Journal entry: 9th October, 2012).

In my opinion, this lack of leadership mentoring and isolation reflects elements of mistrust, pressure and fear of team work. Co-leadership cannot be implemented as promised by the reform. My lived experiences show that school leaders are faced with human resource constraints, physical maintenance problems and too many administrative tasks. Little or no time is left for curricular school tasks.

My experience shows that, as a school leader in this college school network, I have suffered uncertainty due to conflicting directions. I am constantly ‘sandwiched’ between my immediate superior (i.e. the College Principal) and the school.

I am already feeling burnt out at the beginning of the scholastic year. To make matters worse, I am always burdened with college initiatives and paper work. At 11pm, I had to start typing the minutes of the previous college meeting (Journal entry: 22nd October, 2009).

To complicate matters further, there is the Malta Union of Teachers which closely monitors the college system and issues several directives. These directives concern both academic and administrative work and thus have a direct effect on the success or otherwise of the reform. The intention of this is the effective vigilance of the reform implementation.

The dynamics between the Head of School in a college set up are quite limited. During the Council of Heads meetings, we mainly discuss ‘individual’ schools’ administrative matters or sectorial (primary/secondary) issues. School life seems more on the periphery rather than a front case notion in such meetings (Journal entry: 19th October, 2009).

Despite the promised priority to school leadership tasks by the new reform structures, prescribed college calendar initiatives are given prominence over the individual school events and initiatives in this particular lived experience study. My reflections show that schools must constantly align their plans to accommodate the college initiatives.

It was the first day of the second term. Although I should have felt fresh after a Christmas break, I went into the second term already tired and

stressed. I had spent all the Christmas holidays working on the College half yearly examinations. I have been coordinating the College Committee for the set-up of the half yearly examinations for the second consecutive year (Journal entry: 7th January, 2011).

In my opinion, this tension puts school leaders in a very difficult position. In my reflections, this has been summed up in the metaphor of the dilemma of the ‘piggy in the middle’ referring to the dilemma of the middle manager in the organisation chart.

It seems that there is no time for learning since things are rushing so quickly and I have to somewhat adapt and adopt to the fast-moving change and top-down orders. I have never been consulted about the decisions that are taken daily. I get to know through the media ... and sometimes a quick telephone call is made before a press conference to inform me at the very last minute (Journal entry: 7th May, 2012).

My lived experiences of school leadership within the analysed college network setup is defined mainly by unexpected feelings of loneliness and isolation. As a matter of fact, I have experienced stress, fear, anxiety, feelings of guilt, lack of support, lack of coordination and lack of empathy.

My diary narratives utilise the term ‘administration fear’ to describe my lived school leadership experience within a College to highlight tension, demotivation, uncertainty, stress, pressure and even ‘suffering.’

In my opinion, the implementation of a restricted definition of ‘networking’ that is limited to the school parameters that form the college network tend to create an insular mentality that leads up to the ‘them’ and ‘us’ feeling. We are still finding it very difficult to collaborate between one college and another. The inter-networking is not leading to intra-networking between colleges and schools. We are ending up working within a small group of dynamic schools (that form part of our College), totally isolated from the other schools and colleges (Journal entry: 8th May, 2012).

It is quite interesting how ironically the anecdotes of my lived experiences of a college network environment highlight the imposed need on School leaders to learn to work ‘remotely’ despite the recommended shared leadership approach by the document. As a school leader, I feel isolated and unconnected very frequently. I even experienced a

sense of rivalry and competition within the college network environment. Such negative experiences keep demotivating me. I complain very often that there is a lack of respect and not enough recognition. In a particular case, a vulnerable student was being transferred to another college simply because of geographical considerations. No attention was given to the vulnerability and emotional needs of the particular child, even though these were supported by my recommendations as Head of School.

To make the situation worse, we are encountering situations leading to a lack of outreach towards the other schools of the 'neighbouring' College. A case in point is a request for the transfer of a student at risk. The student has a very difficult background with an ongoing court case. I could sense that great lobbying was done so that this student would be transferred to another College school just because of out-of-school locality issues. As a Head of School, I felt strong feelings of injustice towards the child and our school (Journal entry: 14th November, 2012).

I try to seek alternative channels of motivation through school-related tasks. In my case, satisfaction is constantly being derived from curricular leadership within my school. It is 'school life' that keeps me fully immersed in my work. My motivational experiences are derived from school-based initiatives and working with students, staff and parents from my particular school.

It was quite a positive day at school today. We had the World Book Day activity with our children. The curricular aspect – an important role in my work – really made me feel motivated and engaged. However, the administrative burden is so intensive and heavily loaded that I rarely find time for curricular issues (Journal entry: 12th November, 2009).

Overall, my only motivation is attributed to school leadership and related work. It is school life that gives me the overall strength to carry on in educational leadership. I must say that school problems and challenges are transformed into opportunities for me as a school leader, as I constantly strive to promote successful leadership experiences within my school.

6.4.2.3 *School Leadership: Gap Analysis*

The Reform Document presents the view that the success of the college network reform depends almost uniquely upon leadership effectiveness (Reform Document, 2005). It attributes effective networks to planning, dedicated leadership and

management of the network. However, the lived experience of the network reform does not correspond to such a vision. The school leader in this experience is experiencing isolation, fear, anxiety, lack of trust, lack of cooperation and above all, lack of network opportunities.

It was envisaged that the leadership in the network structure will guide and shape the activity, guide reflection and adaptation and help refocus. However, school leadership in the lived experience turns out to be a middle management task with the school leader having to contend with opposing decisions and objectives between the school, the College and the Directorates.

The administrative tasks have not decreased because of the networking experience but have increased due to college-related activities and data requested. The lived anecdotes show that the administrative burden, lack of appreciation and lack of support are creating a demotivated school leadership ethos that is reflecting badly on the newly developed school ethos.

The pyramid organisational structure has not changed in the new college reform. The lived experiences show that top-down decisions still dominate the Council of Heads meeting. As a school leader, I am not given an opportunity to voice my opinions, suggestions or recommendations. In this case, the agenda is a pre-determined one and school leaders must adhere to pre-set decisions and ideas. This completely contradicts the vision of the college network reform that propagate collegiality, collaboration and mutual support.

6.4.2.4 School Leadership: Reflection

Arendt's (1958a) critical approach is very relevant to this study as it highlights the importance of critical thinking and so unclear reform directions regarding school networking, leadership and collegiality can be revealed and inquired. Her 1958a innovative concept of 'thinking without a banister' is relevant here. To support critical reflection about school leadership within a college setup, Arendt argues that policy text prescribing a set of steps that leaders must take, regardless of wherever and whoever the recipient is, are restrictive and they eliminate a very important resource – the capacity to understand, analyse and imagine within the local context.

The narrative experience of school leadership within a college setup has shown that school leaders in the local context simply follow top down instructions and policy prescriptions. They opt for a compliant approach and align themselves with given decisions. In this case, school leaders do not dare to deviate from the ‘norm.’ They do not feel safe to debate and to act differently from the rest. In this case, school leaders do not have their ‘space’ to work together. Moreover, they do not have the ‘individual’ space to think without restrictions.

According to Arendtian theory, to do the work of leading and leadership, educational leaders are expected to critically analyse policy directions and assess their impacts on institutions, both on a national and international level. Educational leaders must, in an Arendtian view, be able to not simply follow policy prescriptions.

Arendt (1958a) claims that leaders need to be aware why certain issues are given more prominence, while others are side-lined. They need to be able to communicate their thinking with others as well. This entails the use of a set of critical thinking tools referred to as ‘thinking without a banister.’

Arendt (1958a) stresses the fact that understanding the lived experiences of leadership (as distinguished from having correct information and scientific knowledge) is a very complicated process. Arendt (1958b) describes this exercise as ‘unending activity’ in a changing and unstable world. Reflecting on the lived experiences is not merely gathering evidence but seeking understanding.

Despite the onset of the reform, the unchanging aspects of school leadership revealed through the narratives of the experience highlight the need to examine the starting assumptions of both reform and practice to reflect freely upon leaders’ experiences and events and to write in a way that records trains of thought instead of presenting a theory.

In line with Arendtian thinking, the literature review illustrates that contemporary critical feminist theory is also sceptical of the widespread uncontested benefits of distributed leadership.

6.4.2.5 School Leadership: Summary of the Analysis

The lived experience of the recommended shared leadership within the local college network context confirms the feminist theorists' argument that the focus is still on the school. The analysis of the anecdotes of the school leaders shows that when the discourse of the distributed leadership suggested by reform policies has to be implemented within institutions that are governed by management discourse of efficiency, outcomes and effectiveness, the schools and the students have to align themselves to the needs of the system rather than the other way around. Blackmore (2012a) argues that in such circumstances, teachers and students must fit school and system needs and not that schools should adapt to student needs. The lived experience confirms the feminist argument that an undemocratic environment limits leadership to the organisational objectives rather than to the needs of the students.

This study highlights the observations of critical feminist theory that notes that when distributed leadership is not supported by democratic practices, it will be associated with a narrow understanding of what education is for. We should be careful of policy contradictions that recommend rhetoric of distributed leadership within a lived context that is still derived by traditions of standardisations and formalisation so dominant in the educational environment.

6.4.3 Macro Theme: Motivation

In this study, the macro theme 'Motivation' refers to those satisfying reasons that compel people (in this case, educators) to give their best effort in their school or college. Motivation is taken to be induced by positive factors that maintain fulfilment and happiness in one's experience of school life.

6.4.3.1 Motivation: Voice from the Policy Document

The local document advocates a very positive and empowering approach to the setup of college networks in Malta. It is specifically promised that schools will be empowered to take decisions that best fit their students. Moreover, the document states that schools will become more autonomous within a parameter of a legal framework and accountability. These long-awaited promises proposed by the new reform document are very motivating factors for the local community. The document acknowledges the need of a motivating environment for all children to succeed.

The reform will create an environment where children and students will benefit from increased self-confidence, increased encouragement and opportunities and the ongoing support they need to acquire to further their knowledge, competencies and attitudes that help develop their personalities. This will make them grow into active citizens capable of contributing towards their own well-being, their families and society (Reform Document, 2005, p. xxi).

The same motivating environment is being promised for teachers by the local document. It states that this will enhance greater job satisfaction. Teachers are also to be given the required support that should help them acquire the space and opportunity to work flexibly, according to the needs of the school. The document also acknowledges that parents/carers will benefit from the setup of a motivating ambience through the positive effects of networking. Parents, as important stakeholders in the school community will find the right conditions that motivate them to engage in their child's educational process. In return, schools will enhance their role as community learning and cultural centres.

The document emphasizes strongly the importance of a motivated attitude towards a networked environment.

It augurs that networks of schools, together with other service providers, will respond creatively and collaboratively to the needs of each 'whole' learner. The document concludes that no single school can hope to provide the diversity, flexibility or an economy of service that the creation of network involves (Reform Document, 2005: xxi).

6.4.3.2 Motivation: My Lived Experience as the Researcher

The narrative enquiry of the lived experience highlights specific examples of positive and motivating moments in the college network case study, such as staff collaboration and collegial support in these experiences. Teacher meetings, college initiatives, joint professional development sessions and committee meetings on various school related issues as assessment and transition are all aspects of my lived experiences that, in my opinion, proved to be very motivating to me. Such collegial support promotes trust, support, participation and collaboration in the new college network set up.

A Head of School, a colleague of mine, phoned me at school early in the morning. He wanted to ask me how I was feeling the day after the Council of Heads meeting. He could realise that the day before I was looking very disappointed and demotivated (Journal entry: 11th November, 2009).

It is evident that college support stimulates the necessary energy and motivation in promoting school and college activities. Tokens of appreciation and thanksgiving from the Principal following such initiatives create a very positive energy within the College. Such motivating experiences are only meaningful when experienced in an ethos of respect, collaboration and total support. The setup of a positive atmosphere can augur well for a positive development of the college network reform.

We have carried out an evaluation report on the INSET Professional Development Course carried out on a college basis at the beginning of the scholastic year. The report said that teachers worked well together in a collegial way. One Teacher reported the following statement to the course organisation “issa naf li qegħda f’kullegġ” – [English translation of the Maltese wording] “It is only now that I can appreciate that I belong to the College (Journal entry: 16th October, 2008).

Despite these positive experiences, the lived experience of the college reform network also illustrates a considerable number of anecdotes that reflect a different scenario from the projected one by the Reform Document.

The idea of motivation and school entrepreneurship in new reforms might sound very motivating. However, there are great challenges associated to it as well which might represent quite an ordeal for the least experienced in the venture (Journal entry: 22nd October 2012).

Feelings of frustration, isolation, despair, uncertainty, fear and disillusion dominate my main lived anecdotes of the college reform network experience. I can appreciate that motivation, in this case, is mainly being hindered by lack of support, lack of mentoring opportunities, lack of appreciation and lack of voice and genuine participation.

I was not prepared for change. I realised that I was so immersed in my College to the extent that I could not survive outside the parameters of the College buildings. I took change very badly. I felt literally miserable, hopeless and weak (Journal entry: 8th October 2012).

My diary entries highlight personal motivation problems due to an excessive administrative load and related managerial tasks. I have expressed my burnt-out feelings in my diary entries. I have also experienced fatigue syndrome because of the added tasks by the college reform. I am quite aware that this vicious cycle is causing me disillusion, frustration, despair and helplessness. I am experiencing a negative atmosphere that is creating a setup of resistance and detachment from college initiatives. In my opinion, the elements of collaboration and synergy in this college school network environment are being replaced by detachment, lack of involvement, lack of positivity, lack of space and the necessary freedom to work creatively and collaboratively in a productive environment.

As a school leader in this new network environment, I experienced a manipulated feeling like an operated ‘machine’ being driven by external factors without any possibility for self-control. This made me react as a ‘technician’ rather than an intellectual. My diary entries highlight a lack of autonomy, as well as a lack of opportunities for initiatives and empowerment for teacher-driven tasks. I could feel that the underlying objectives of the College is to propagate uniformity and strict control over all college activities. There is domination and absolute power over all aspects of college and school-related activities.

College Principals sitting in the front rows, Head Teachers behind and already taken decisions being dished out from the front to the back rows ... The overall reaction showed that it seems that there is a total alienation of the teachers' workloads and levels of stress ... all present felt that there will be a very low turnout for this call of expression of interest. The renumeration is very low and the time left for such work is more limited
(Journal entry: 26th November, 2012).

In my leadership experience within a new college school network environment, I used to consider the School Development Plan as the only tool available to plan and to implement school-based decisions. However, I must admit that I still need to work on changing the staff’s ‘isolated’ mentality to a collaborative one, in line with the Reform Document.

I feel like a juggler trying to safely juggle my position and situation. On my first mistake, I will shatter all that I have built till now. The feeling of loneliness is overwhelming (Journal entry: 1st October, 2009).

Although I find the college network experience to be a very challenging one, I persist in believing that this new reform can offer us the desired ethos to work as a team and in collaboration with one another. I hope to explore the benefits of networking within an opportunity of working together in a networked way. I am convinced that such an atmosphere must be based on trust, motivation and support – elements that are still missing from my narratives of daily living experiences.

6.4.3.3 Motivation: Gap Analysis

The expectations derived from the Reform Document, lead to the setup of a learning environment that is autonomous and replete with opportunities and ongoing support. However, the lived experiences of this college reform implementation highlight quite a contradictory scenario.

Motivation is stifled by feelings of frustration, helplessness, fear, suspicion and isolation. Whilst the reform document promises a revamp of the education system that was meant to provide teachers with greater job satisfaction, the actual lived experience is witnessing a degraded scenario dominated by low-level job satisfaction, controlled by an authoritarian style of College Leadership.

The objective of the Reform Document is that through networking, schools will respond creatively and collaboratively to the needs of the ‘whole’ learner. However, the lived experiences still highlight many instances of isolation dominated by detachment, lack of involvement, lack of positivity, lack of space and the required autonomy to work creatively and collaboratively in a networked environment.

The Reform Document envisages that school networks will use the community resources in ways that step up the involvement of the community at large. In return, the Reform Document proposes that schools increase their role input as community learning and cultural centres. Unfortunately, the lived experience under study has shown that college participants work in a totally isolated way. I have described my

experience as ‘mechanical’ operated solely by external factors without any possibility of autonomous control. I felt rather like a ‘technician’ rather than an ‘educator’ within the setup of the college reform. In fact, in this case, the College is shrouded with uniformity, strict control and top-down decisions.

On a positive note, as a school leader, I still found the space and the opportunity to work on my individual School Development Plan. I have highlighted that I gain a great deal of satisfaction from working within my school environment, in collaboration with senior management teams and teachers. Also, the Reform Document has affirmed that the college network reform consolidates the work carried out within the individual schools. School leaders can still manage their schools, whilst working within a greater college framework.

These anecdotes of the lived experience show that, despite the reported feelings of demotivation and disillusion, I still believe that I can hope for the setup of a collaborative environment based on trust, synergy and support by resorting to a team-based approach to overcome challenges. I still possess a kindled dream within this specific college to explore the expectations of the college network reform and the accompanying benefits of networking and collaborating.

6.4.3.4 Motivation: Reflection

Critical feminist theory provides us with a critical perspective on emotions within the organisational context that can help us to reinterpret human relation’s notions of poor morale and stress as adequate explanations for school leaders and teachers’ behaviour. The literature review illustrated how feminist theorists as Blackmore (2012a) have argued that teacher anger and despair (well-illustrated in the narrative analysis of the anecdotes of the lived experience in this study and through informal conversations with other college participants) are not merely about stress arising from work intensification but also arise from feelings of powerlessness.

Critical feminist theory, such as that represented by Blackmore (2012a), Weedon (1999) and Yeatman (1998), insists that these feelings are derived from a sense of a lack of individual and collective agency, due to teachers’ and leaders’ inability to address the inequality arising from the performative mentality in schools.

The literature review in this study has shown that the leadership continuum in today's context has shifted away from cooperation and care to gaining competitive advantage. The concept of mainstream educational leadership (Bottery, 2004; Gunter, 2013) illustrates that such collective feelings of low morale are not restricted to the field of education but broadly echo the value shift in society in general.

Utilising a deeper perspective lens on leadership, Arendtian theory (1958b) argues that while policy makers claim to work hard to make changes in institutions such as schools, this can be all about tactics and pragmatism. Change is substituted by cosmetic alternatives or staged up actions. In reality, nothing changes essentially. Arendt (1958b) argues further that the workforce has learned to labour and in some cases, to do hard labour and some have been able to carve out a way of handling this that is productive for them and has a sense of durability about it.

I believe that Arendt's reflections can significantly help me understand the reality of a possible gap between the networking Reform Document statements on motivation within a college setup organisation and the actual experienced motivation. Policy makers are able to present well-written reports which describe desired experiences for their readers. As Arendt (1958b) warned, this is often carried out in a very tactful and pragmatic way. The reader of the policy can engage with the promised experiences with high expectations. This creates an ambitious positive expectation that supports and is in favour of such reforms as a way to bring about positive change. This hope was experienced by the participants whilst awaiting the onset of the new network reform. A paradigm shift in working conditions and corresponding job satisfaction was greatly desired as a result of the implementation of the network reform. Educators longed for motivating opportunities of collaboration, cooperation and engagement.

The gap analysis showed that this promised job satisfaction did not materialise in the studied narrative. However, despite the disillusion, the college participants still strived on and continued with their work in the individual school as before. As already pointed out, Arendt (1958b) warned that the workforce can adopt a subservient attitude and somehow can carve out a way of handling such situation with a sense of an unconditioned obedience. She highlights that there is an 'acceptance' that the power

to determine what is to be done lies away from the citizen and is in the hands of the policy makers and institutions.

In an Arendtian view, accepting the principle of sovereignty for superiors as a replacement for that of ‘free action’ citizenship, can only result in either the arbitrary domination of a people or else their historical withdrawal from the sphere of public life. Interestingly, it was also noted through informal conversations with colleagues, that college participants still believe that this motivation will be somehow achieved in the new network setup. Arendt (1958b) is very helpful in assisting us understand such a contradiction and explains that there is a sense of active agency within human beings. This lifts them from the Arendtian concept of labour and the solitary crafting of work that renders the outcome of all activities a temporary one without a long-lasting value. In the narrative alone, there is a sense of doing things that are worthwhile and enduring for the schools and the College. Arendt (1958b) believes in the potential of thinking, talking and doing things.

6.4.3.5 Motivation: Summary of the Analysis

Reflecting on the concept of motivation, this personal experience and subsequent analysis have shown that there is quite a gap between the expectations of the Reform Document and the actual lived experiences of the college network reform. It was argued through Arendtian theory and feminist influences that disillusion and disappointment are experienced when a reform document does not meet the expected goals and desired outcomes.

6.4.4 Macro Theme: Support Structures

In this study, the macro theme ‘Support Structures’ refers to all those factors (human and physical) that give assistance to the school and the College. This support is considered crucial to the smooth running of the organisation.

6.4.4.1 Support Structures: Voice from the Policy Document

The local document proposes the setup of support structures in order to implement the principles of the reform. New roles were introduced to support the new organisational chart of the College. Such roles include that of the Precincts Officer to support the maintenance work in schools and the strengthening of the social pastoral services

through the set up of a newly introduced psycho-social team composed of a college counsellor, a career advisor, a social worker and a youth worker in each College. The discipline aspect within the College is to be monitored by the College Prefect of Discipline.

In this way, through networking, schools will be in a better mind and stronger position to meet the needs of the students. They will work in partnership with one another, share resources, will jointly solve problems and create new practices within the specific context of a group of schools forming one whole school unit. Networks will ensure a smoother flow from one level of education to another, as well as provide schools with the required space to develop their curriculum as laid down by the National Curriculum, and according to the needs of their students (Reform Document, 2005, p. 2).

The document envisages that the deployment of these new roles and designated personnel will be in a better position to effectively cater for the needs of the students. The services of these personnel are to be shared with all schools within the College. The support for the schools will no longer be solely provided by the Centre (The Education Division Administration Buildings) but will be located within the College premises. Thus, support services will be college-based and thus closer to the schools. The functioning of such a system requires the development of networking based on partnership so that the necessary collaboration and sharing can take place in a smooth and efficient way.

6.4.4.2 Support Structures: My Lived Experience as the Researcher

The narrative analysis of the lived experiences gives concrete evidence of the new roles and responsibilities set up by the college network reform in Malta. In concrete terms, schools in Malta are witnessing the provision of new posts (such as the Service Manager and the Precincts Officer) to support ongoing works and maintenance responsibilities in schools.

The College Principal visited both schools today to launch the idea of primary schools' partnership as Writing Process Schools with the school administration and explained the reasons behind the initiative. The logistics of the initiative was left up to the respective schools. The College Principals promised their support (Journal entry: 1st December, 2008).

Other supportive roles in the pastoral aspect designated by the Reform Document are being implemented to support individual schools in the social and emotional aspects. The lived anecdotes show how the newly introduced support roles are meant to strengthen the role of the Principal as a reference point, especially in challenging situations.

We have been informed that four new persons were deployed in our College. This deployment was meant to improve the support services we offer to pupils and students. We were instructed to refrain from contacting these new personnel until a formal introduction by the College Principal has been carried out (Journal entry: 4th March, 2010).

The new organisational chart also provides some specific support structures to teaching and learning within the College. An example of such support is the opportunity of participation in a College sub-committee team that was set up to administer the half yearly examination papers for the College. Through informal conversations with committee members, I became aware that participants shared positive experiences of these committee meetings and strongly approved of the College work carried out through the structures of the new reform in our educational system.

The new college network reform is assisting the educational system to provide a smooth transition to students as they progress from the primary to the secondary sector. The narrative analysis shows that this is proving to be a very fruitful exercise benefitting the students in the College.

The Prefect of Discipline visited me at school and helped me greatly with the parents. The latter asked me for the presence of the Principal, but the Prefect of Discipline informed me that he had been delegated this responsibility. At least, I got this 'support' as a result of the college network reform (Journal entry: 2nd June, 2011).

Students (from the feeder schools) are being given the opportunity to visit the receiving school (the Secondary School) on at least three different occasions during the scholastic year. The College support staff provides support through professional transitional talks, open school days and team buildings activities. The parents of these

children are supported and given the necessary information and guidance to help their children cope with transition and change.

Despite these very positive and innovative attempts at introducing the adequate support structures to the new reform, the narrative analysis shows that the principles of the network reform are poorly supported by the necessary framework structures that can ensure effective implementation in actual practice.

Nowadays we are receiving a number of visits by support staff personnel. Today, the School Counsellor, the Inclusion Coordinator, the Occupational Therapists, the Nurse and the Guidance Teacher visited our school ... Too many at the same time. Lack of coordination is posing severe problems to school administrators. Nobody can give an explanation to what is actually happening (Journal entry: 13th January, 2010).

The narrative inquiry shows that schools within the College are still lacking the necessary human and physical resources to function independently in a self-contained manner. Although personnel with new roles have been introduced with the onset of the network reform, these professionals cannot function effectively. They lack proper in-house training, resources and the set of support mechanisms that allow them to function properly. The narrative analysis shows that schools are still working in isolation and, in fact, they do not share resources or personnel, let alone within the specific context of the group of schools forming the whole unit.

The feelings of loneliness and the awareness of insufficient structures of support when needed really disarm the school leader in difficult times (Journal entry: 29th October, 2009).

The overall analysis of the narrative enquiry shows that while there has been the addition of certain roles, the newly introduced college support structures has not brought about any specific improvements in teachers' conditions and performances.

The introduction of the College set up did not actually facilitate managerial issues for schools. We had experienced the introduction of a new role – the Precincts Officer. The Officer had to support the schools in maintenance issues. However, I must say that although our College

was one of the first pioneers to have the services of such an Officer, we did not witness any radical changes (Journal entry: 3rd December, 2009).

Teachers are still working in isolation within the confined spaces of their schools and classrooms. Teachers report that they do not find the required support to help them acquire the space and the opportunity to work flexibly in a task-oriented and needs-oriented manner. Professionals working within the College describe the newly introduced opportunities of collaboration and professional development with College colleagues as sporadic initiatives.

I am trying to manage the situation on my own. It is unbelievable how difficult it is to find some sort of support or advice in difficult situations. Everybody tends to keep a distance from you and tries as much as possible not to have anything to do with you (Journal entry: 8th June, 2009).

There is no follow-up or sustainable mechanism that ensures maintenance of initiatives. In general, professionals working within the parameters of the new reform are not yet benefitting from network partnership, sharing of resources and the setup of new practices that were supposed to be provided by the network reform.

There is never a shoulder of support for the Head of School. The only situation that I can decipher is to do all the work by myself with no support or guidance. Unfortunately, I cannot resort to the support of the Network structure. The idea of sharing resources – clerical help and ancillary support – has not yet infiltrated within our College (Journal entry: 11th July, 2011).

6.4.4.3 Support Structures: Gap Analysis

The networking reform document advocates the premise that networked schools will be in a better and stronger position to meet the needs of the students. The document sustains this claim by stating that whilst schools are being built, refurbished and extended, different forms of school networks will be introduced to demonstrate the benefits networking provides. However, the lived experiences show that these ideals of networking lack the necessary support structures to ensure effective implementation. Whilst the document advocates different forms of school networks sustained by buildings and the necessary infrastructure, physical and human resources, the network system is still not functioning in a self-contained manner.

The Reform Document introduces new roles and responsibilities to support the college organisational chart. These personnel are appointed for each College. However, their effect and input are minimal due to various constraints. They lack proper training, resources and assistance to function properly. As a result, Colleges and schools still depend on the Directorates for services and support. They are still working in isolation and dependent upon the Centre to function as required.

The Reform Document promises the necessary support provisions to teachers to work together. This has been promised to the teaching staff for a very long time. Many have the expectation that the implementation of the Reform Document will create and strengthen this need to work together. However, the lived experience demonstrates that the reform brought few changes to the work conditions of the teachers. They still work in isolation within the confined spaces of their classrooms. The Reform Document therefore does not provide the necessary structures for the teachers to work collaboratively. Teachers are not benefitting from the necessary opportunities to work as a team in conjunction with their colleagues from the other schools of the College.

In addition to this, the Reform Document proposes that school networks will facilitate the transition of students from one sector to another. The College is meant to enable the coordination of transitional meetings and activities to assist students prepare for the new schools. On a student level, the college network reform has had a different impact than on a staff level. The lived experience shows that the college network has succeeded in assisting students and parents to experience a smoother transition from one sector to another and were better prepared for this.

The College has a well-equipped team composed of a counsellor, a career advisor, a social worker and a team of guidance teachers. The team collaborates to sustain the students in their educational journey and progression. This is done through many initiatives that include preparatory meetings, school visits, seminars and team building activities. The activities target both the students and their parents. The receiving school (the secondary school) works in collaboration with the feeder schools (the primary schools) to hold these initiatives that target a smooth progression from one sector the education system to the other. This exercise has been facilitated and greatly improved within the college setup.

6.4.4.4 Support Structures: Reflection

Arendt's (1958a) view of totalitarianism is useful here. Arendt sees that totalitarianism is based on a concept of power that deskills people from any possible action or initiative. According to Arendt, support structures can be totally aligned and fabricated to render people 'superfluous.' This exercise is imposed on people in a very discrete way without letting them realise what is happening.

Therefore, Arendt (1958a) argues that by rendering people 'superfluous,' people are denied the right to have rights. This is core to understanding Arendt's thinking and her work in *On Totalitarianism* enables analysis of such real-life conditions in which totalitarianism develops and flourishes. Although the Reform Document proposed the use of structures to support and assist the new reform, the lived experience shows that these structures are not actually serving their original purpose. Arendt warns that the setup of such support structures may be based on an entirely new and unprecedented concept of power. She further explains that this is not so much about structures and systems but actions based on unwavering faith in an ideological and fictitious world.

The setup of structures can serve to maintain consistency of a system. Arendt warns that ideology rather than structures convinces masses. This ideology is obtained using propaganda or 'traditionally' accepted mysteries. Structures that maintain the consistency of a system of which they are presumably part of are crucial to the reinforcement of an ideology whilst eliminating politics and any possibility of action. Arendt notes that in such a case, the conditions of a totalitarian rule overcome institutions and practices. In view of these Arendtian reflections, the college network participants are invited to consider whether the network reform is managing change and helping people think and do things differently or whether they are just accepting new conditions and everyday reality that is rendering the new reform as superfluous.

Feminist theory also challenges the fundamental assumptions of the leadership continuum, as presented by the mainstream literature on leadership. Feminist pedagogical work in schools, question the provided support structures that are predetermined to implement the tenets of leadership within the reforms. At the same time, critical theorists Luke and Gore (1992) and Morley and Walsh (1995) quoted in

the literature review of this study challenge knowledge hierarchies and what gets valued through the provision of support structures.

Blackmore (2012b) has fully associated the value of knowledge brought from life experiences. This study contributes to this knowledge and encourages political activism and social change (in line with feminist theory) in the leadership field.

This critical reflection can be fully supported with an Arendtian approach that guides us to view human activities in education not as given phenomena but as undertaken by conscious human beings, which must be comprehended both subjectively and objectively, that is both in terms of their objective structures and human experiences of them. Arendt challenges us to analyse not merely the structures of leadership and initiatives in new reforms but also the form of consciousness and human passions and emotions that underpin and sustain them.

6.4.4.5 Support Structures: Summary of the Analysis

This analysis has helped the reader to problematise the theme of Support Structures in schools and Colleges the aim of which are to give the necessary assistance and support to their respective communities.

Following Arendtian theory and feminist influences, it was argued how the set up of structure can simply serve to maintain consistency of a system. Arendt (1958b) warns that structures that ensure consistency might lead to the conditions of totalitarianism.

6.4.5 Macro Theme: Power

In this study, the concept of power refers to the potential or ability of the leader to act in a particular way. It also refers to the faculty which has been entrusted with directing and/or influencing other people's ideas, decisions and actions.

6.4.5.1 Power: A Voice from the Document

The local reform document envisages a paradigm shift in power channels and relations, supported by the local legislation of decentralisation. The document states that:

... the present proposed way forward is the expected result of what has been taking place during the last years. This is not an invitation to work harder but one to work smarter. The change from a Department to a Division in 1994 was the first cultural facelift required to get education out of the twentieth century into the modern age. The audit of the present situation has shown that a reform was due, to bring the central structure in line with present day requirements and realities (Reform Document, 2005, p. 25)

Through the Reform Document, the authorities in education have encouraged the diversification of school ownership and leadership and have considered it to be both an achievement and a challenge. The document highlights the need for a new kind of governance and integration to support the new reform. It proposes drastic restructuring of the Education Division after quite a long period of time. The main aim of this restructuring is to distribute power and to lessen the concentration of power and control from one designated authority.

A clear distinction must evolve between two different emerging bodies fulfilling complementary roles. The first body, the policy maker and regulator, will generally cater for policy development and coordination, standard setting and the monitoring of the whole system to assure quality. The second body will be the operator and will coordinate and supply pedagogical, managerial and ancillary services to be effectively and economically rendered centrally to all state-run schools (Reform Document, 2005, p. 25).

Another targeted achievement by the document is autonomy. It is being proposed that there will be a correlative increase in autonomy, identity and style by individual schools. The Education Division has always fully controlled the governance and decisions of the individual schools. The document argues that:

... except for sporadic instances, schools have had limited horizontal connections with schools at their level and hardly any vertical connections with schools operating at a lower or higher level. For decisions to be decentralised and schools to be better empowered, the forging of properly networked connections is necessary (Reform Document, 2005, p. 25).

The document highlights that in the context of the network (as opposed to a hierarchical pyramid), decisions must be taken in places where the most relevant information is available and its implementation needed.

6.4.5.2 Power: My Lived Experience as the Researcher

The narrative inquiry shows that whenever roles are properly distributed and adequate space is provided for action and follow-up, ‘power’ benefits the particular organisation and social justice is promoted. It is also clearly evident from the narrative inquiry that effective communication helps to effectively restore democratic power among the participants concerned. Participation, delegation, teamwork and collaboration are the main ingredients in a democratic setup propagating equal power roles. The lived experience gives witness to instances of such practices that support the possibility of a democratic governance in the new college reform.

One of the Secondary Schools forming part of our network cluster organised a talent show for charity. The Head of School launched the event during one of the Council of Heads Meetings. The Principal supported networking to promote the success of this event and invited the school communities to contribute financially towards the logistics and the related expenses (Journal entry: 4th December, 2008).

The possibility of power distribution through the setup of various College sub-committees is an important initial drive towards decentralisation and autonomy. School leaders and teacher participants in this experience were given the opportunity to enrol within a College committee to give their direct input in one of the key areas of development for the College. These key areas developed through the College Committees included Assessment, Creativity, Transition and Sports.

The participants reported that these College committee initiatives reinforced group dynamics, team work and coordinated effort in the development of the college network reform. Analysis of the lived experience of this study shows that the opportunity to work in these College committees supports empowerment and ensures networking in a participative way.

Despite the positive and innovative attempts at effectively introducing elements of decentralisation within the College, the narrative enquiry of the lived experiences of the college reform is fully inundated with experiences dominated by total control and power over all related college issues. Although there are attempts for effective college

participation, it is reported that there is total control over all data, information and communication by the Office of the Principal.

The feeling of a middle manager sandwiched between my subordinates and my superiors is almost unbearable (Journal entry: 11th March, 2009).

Such dominance and bureaucratic control hinder the growth of autonomy and the possibility of decentralisation.

Despite the recent efforts of curricular framework revision, it seems that the structures are still not in place. We tend to formulate 'idealistic' visions that are not supported by the required framework. This causes situations of frustration and demotivation of school administrators and class teachers (Journal entry: 14th June, 2010).

The anecdotes show that important decisions in such committees are taken without full consent and proper consultation. School leaders argue that although there is a forum for discussions within the newly set up Council of Heads, it is very often noted that decisions are already taken before the meeting by the College Principal. The Council of Heads is thus rendered futile since it is based on already-taken decisions.

Thus, we are indulging in this experience of the new curriculum reform with this anti-climax attitude. We all share an almost 'stated' fear that all that is going to be said and discussed will fall on deaf ears. The ideals that we discuss will never be implemented. Thus, it can be a sheer waste of time. This feeling is shrouding us. It seems that this will be a top-down consultation opportunity ... We are sharing a feeling that all these meetings are being set for 'transparency' sake only. One of my colleagues described them as 'theatrical.' We really augur that tomorrow will end up with a completely different version of events (Journal entry: 1st December, 2011).

Power is experienced in quite a forceful and totalitarian way. The anecdotes of some of the lived experiences give evidence of control, domination and imposed control. There is also specific narrative evidence of power abuse between members occupying different roles within the College.

I was actually asked to share my experiences of networking with their notions of power, voice and social justice. It was not easy for me. These experiences were full of contradictions, dilemmas, critical questioning

and changing perspectives. Could I actually present myself in front of an audience and put on a mask to be able to showcase the work of the College in a very golden way? (Journal entry: 23rd April, 2009).

This experience supports the view that power is concentrated at the Office of the Principal. Everything is managed from this Office. The College Principal monitors all ongoing initiatives, including school initiatives. Surveillance, tight deadlines, strict monitoring and reporting dominate the tight relationship between the school and the College. It is also noted that very detailed minutes are taken during the Council of Heads meetings. These detailed minutes resemble court proceedings. No-one dares query formal College directives. Fear and negative feelings dominate most of the college participants during this experience. One-way communication channels dominate this College experience.

The actualisation of 'empowerment' (one of the main pillars of the college network reform) in actual practice turned out to be very difficult at my school. Teachers seemed to be happy to be given rules and responsibilities on paper [that is to work according to a prescribed way of working due to a prescribed curricula and syllabi]. However, this motivational notion seemed to stop at that level. In actual practice, one could feel a sense of apathy and a lack of initiative on their part. As the teachers themselves argued, they lacked the higher order incentive that would make them work and give their very best. Worse, those teachers who put their best effort to implement the school projects (despite all difficulties) were looked down upon and regarded unfavourably by their colleagues (Journal entry: 13th June, 2010).

The principle experiences of this style of leadership in this College are namely: lack of communication, fear of authority, lack of trust, imposed control and controlled authority.

On asking for an evaluation of the morning event, I was simply given the following reply 'There is always room for improvement'... my legs were hurting but my disappointment was hurting me much more (Journal entry: 22nd May, 2009).

Imposition of change without change management of that process, general insecurity and lack of support are creating an environment where power is not distributed and autonomy has disappeared, as a result of strict control of imposed decisions.

I have a broken window pane in a Kindergarten class. The excessive bureaucracy that has been built up in our college network set up is making a simple maintenance exercise an unsurmountable task (Journal entry: 23rd February, 2010).

However, despite the patriarchal leadership style, I have to admit that hopes for the development for collaborative ways in a networked environment are still alive. It is evident that delegated and improved communication can help to restore distributed power and democracy in a college network environment. There is still hope among the college participants that the College will provide opportunities for teamwork and opportunities.

Our College has been established for four years now. The cycle of these years has bonded the College members as a tighter group in their dynamics ... and thus, certain work and responsibility seem be taken now on board with more ease and tolerance. This augurs well for the possibility of more positive experiences (Journal entry: 20th January, 2009).

6.4.5.3 Power: Gap Analysis

The network reform proposed a total reshuffle of previous practices. An overhaul of the central structure was promised in line with the requirements of the needs of the reform. The first proposed change was a shift from the long-established single Department to a Division composed of two Directorates that can focus specifically on one main comprehensive area respectively – the Directorate for Students’ Services and the Directorate for Curriculum Management.

The actual lived experience has, however, shown that despite the reforms, schools are still dominated by total control and absolute power. This time, the centre of power has shifted from the Centre to the Office of the Principal. In this scenario, the proposed overhaul has not changed power channels or ways of working within the school. It only created a shift from a centre of power to more localised power that intensified power channels rather than democratised the administration of schools.

The networking reform proposes that individual schools would not lose their individual identity, mission and ethos due to networking. The document goes a step further and promises that networking would strengthen school initiatives. However,

the analysis of the lived experience shows quite a different scenario from that proposed by the Reform Document. In fact, distribution of power has not materialised. The evidence of induced pressure, domination and imposed control showed that power is still concentrated at the Office of the Principal. No-one dares to question college directives. Fear and negative feelings overcome the college participants' performance whilst on duty. Distributed power is replaced by domination and top-down communication channels.

The Reform Document augured that there would be the required commitment that would ensure that progress is achieved and that the sharing of ideas, talents and efforts would result in better achievements for the learner. This desired commitment by the Reform Document would in fact be stifled by different factors including the individual personality of the College Principal and the related leadership style. The diary entries illustrate that the Reform Document has not lead to implemented changes towards more distributive power and democratic processes. Although the main tenets of the Reform Document have not materialised into more equitable practices in this experience, the lived anecdotes highlight that there is still desire and hope for the implementation of the document ideals. It has been noted that college participants desire collaborative ways as a model of working in a networked environment. The desire to implement the networking reform in actual practice seems to be still ingrained within the college participation. This reflects a ray of hope for the eventual implementation of this important reform within our education system.

6.4.5.4 Power: Reflection

Not surprisingly, the notion of distributed leadership was legalised in our context through the college network reform in an era of managerialism that is influencing all societal institutions including schools. The performative decisions of choice, self-management, outcomes, standards, efficiency and efficacy have penetrated all leadership practice. Using Gewirtz's (1998) critical theory cited in the literature review of this study, we can suggest that this is evidence of how totalitarian leadership styles in education have shifted the position of collective to individual good - from cooperation to competition and from process to product. Within this framework, the distributed leadership concept is impaired by the anecdotes of the lived experiences

highlighting managerial leadership styles where School Head Teachers have to execute, to deliver and to achieve pre-determined goals.

Arendt (1958a) challenges the superiority of closed groups of people who find power in their bonding even though they know that they are not approved by others. This critical lens has allowed me to analyse the extent to which new leadership positions set-up by the college network reform lead to ‘close groups of people’ who find power in what Arendt (1958a) refers to as ‘bonding.’ Such a close-knit relationship between people in positions of power can lead to a total detachment from the other people in positions of less authority. Arendt (1958a) warns that such a situation can lead to totalitarian conditions that impose unquestioned power, control and isolation.

Furthermore, according to Arendt, unchallenged leaders can organise the whole population as ‘sympathisers’ even though they might not approve of such a situation. Arendt warns that sympathising bureaucrats can spread confidence among the masses and instil belief in what seems a promising reform. The leader, according to Arendt (1958a) can also spearhead such a totalitarian condition by using his power to instil both ruthlessness and confidence at the same time ensuring normality.

Arendt (1958a) notes that whereas most systems are pyramidal in structure, a totalitarian regime in Arendt’s (1958a) view is seen as an ‘onion’ where the leader is in a centre space and all actions are from within, rather than from without or above. In a courageous way, Arendt challenges us to question whether the people in power in the new organisational chart are related in such a way that each form what Arendt describes as a ‘façade’ in one direction while the subordinates are in another direction.

Arendt (1958a) asks whether the overall leader in the organisation is playing ‘the role of normal outside world for one layer’ and the ‘role of radical extremism for another.’ In the local contemporary educational context, this Arendtian distinction helps us to reflect on the extent to which the College Leader in a school network has conflicting roles and certain salient questions, are raised as follows:

- Is the College leadership role more associated with the agenda of superiors in higher positions or is it in a supporting role for participants who are the subordinates of the reform?
- Are the proposed power roles in the document creating a totalitarianism leading to what she refers to as ‘integrated isolationism?’

This is a situation (which has been described and deciphered in the narrative of this study) in which people are isolated but still feel that they belong. A college network experience that bases itself on loneliness, isolation and on the experience of not belonging to the world at all is described by Arendt as *“the most radical and desperate experience of man.”* (Arendt 1972, p. 477)

6.4.5.5 Power: Summary of the Analysis

In the above section, it was argued that in our context, the concept of distributed leadership was legalised through the college network reform in an era of performativity and managerialism. The reflection through the gap analysis has highlighted how college networking can be impaired by isolated goals, hierarchical structures and predetermined outcomes that do not sustain collaboration and shared leadership practices.

6.4.6 Macro Theme: Administrative Load

In this study, the macro theme ‘Administrative Load’ refers to the management of a school or College. This mainly entails the process of administering and directing an institution (paperwork, financial work and other managerial tasks).

6.4.6.1 Administrative Load: A Voice from the Policy Document

The document addresses very briefly the issue of Administrative Load. It is particularly highlighted that the focus should be student learning and not administration. The principle of school networks should be the importance and centrality of student learning. The curricular aspect rather than the administrative dimension should provide the impetus for wide participation and drives effective learning. The focus should be the provision for students’ needs through a collegial effort, rather than managerialism and administrative load.

A shared student learning focus is important to the effectiveness of the network. If all members of the network can answer the question as to 'what difference are schools likely to make to our children?' the network activity has the greatest chance of success (Reform Document, 2005, p. 58).

The document is proposing to support this paradigm shift as the main purpose of local education through governance and autonomy, brought about by fundamental changes in the administrative load through the diversification of school ownership and the restructuring of the Education Division. The onset of decentralisation is supposed to facilitate horizontal connections with other schools and the sharing of administrative tasks, thus lessening the work load on individual schools.

6.4.6.2 Administrative Load: My Lived Experience as the Researcher

The implementation of the college network reform in Malta was expected to lessen the administrative load through the support structures, new roles and organisational setup. The new reform provided the possibility of a smarter way of administering management load and related work. This was planned to be carried out through the support and the setup of an organisational chart that challenges previously established modes of working that had been implemented for several years. It was argued that the positive dimension of this reform is the possibility of a paradigm shift in work relations and related dynamics. The education community is being presented with an alternative for the management of the Administrative Load that is meant to benefit staff and the teaching and learning process through more efficient and effective ways of working.

Although the network reform projected a scenario that would lessen administrative pressures due to decentralisation and networking, the actual lived experience shows that the Administrative Load has increased because of the new reform. In this experience, school leaders reported an increase in paperwork, tight deadlines, additional activities and related work because of college-driven initiatives.

These days I have been staying at school quite a while after the scheduled time. The paperwork and electronic replies are all done after school. I cannot find one single moment to concentrate on my administrative tasks. Demands by different stakeholders are incessant. The only solution is working after my usual time schedule without any extra remuneration.

Over a long period of time, this schedule is becoming very tiring and demotivating (Journal entry: 7th December, 2009).

Through informal conversations, I became aware that school leaders often complained of too many competing agendas within the new college setup and on overburden of paperwork and administrative tasks. Some of them reported burnt out feelings due to work load.

In real terms, the new reform did not address the required structural support to address the needs of the schools functioning within the new setup. Schools were not given additional clerical help to address the newly introduced additional administrative work. The lived anecdotes show that this is still causing an excessive workload on the School Management Team in meeting all given deadlines and data return. There was an overall feeling of managerial burden due to the lack of human resources and increased pressure in schools to perform and to deliver.

However, the maintenance of these college activities had been delegated to the same number of people who had always contributed their efforts on a voluntary basis. A colleague of mine advised me that even voluntary efforts have a saturated limit ... and I think that this maxim applies perfectly well to this case (Journal entry: 20th October, 2009).

School leaders in this experience noted that college initiatives impede school initiatives. These college initiatives involved numerous meetings, taking of minutes, feedback reports and related managerial work. These college meetings and initiatives lessened the presence of school leaders within their schools. There was a feeling of undue pressure in schools due to college activities. To make matter worse, there was a lack of planning and coordination of initiatives.

School leaders noted that in such a situation, important matters both on a college and school level were not given sufficient time to complete the job at hand. This frequently resulted in rushed decision making.

School leaders were regularly asked to monitor administrative progress and challenges and to report all data to the office of the Principal. Such managerial work added tasks for the school leaders with an overload of paperwork, voluminous feedback sheets and

imposed deadlines for various tasks. Although networking was meant to lead schools to work together, in fact schools were still operating in isolation, controlled by the centre organ located at the Office of the Principal.

After school hours it is necessary to check emails, to reply to the Office of the Principal on several issues concerning our school and to try and catch up with paperwork ... One of the emails that we received early this morning concerned the introduction of newly updated renumeration sheets to help the school with the supervision of children having full time or full time one-to-one supervision basis, in case their learning support assistant is not available. We are constantly given updated lists of these on call assistants for our reference (Journal entry: 17th February, 2010).

The implementation of the college network reform in Malta was expected to lessen the administrative load through the support structures, new roles and organisation setup. The new reform provided the possibility of a smarter way of administering management load and related work. This was planned to be carried out through the support and the setup of an organisational chart that challenged previously established modes of working that had been effectively implemented over several years.

As Head of Schools we are finding ourselves working as accountants, secretaries and we are carrying out various inventory exercises. The situation is the same both on school and college level (Journal entry: 24th January, 2011).

It was argued that the positive dimension of this reform was the possibility of a paradigm shift in work relations and related dynamics. The education reform was being presented with an alternative of managing the administrative load that was meant to benefit the staff and the teaching and learning process through more efficient and effective ways of working.

All Heads of School were requested to attend another national meeting in the span of two days. We are on the eve of the examinations and the administrative work is hard pressing. Yet, it seems that our difficulties are neither understood nor respected (Journal entry: 1st February, 2013).

Although the network reform projected a scenario that would reduce administrative pressures due to decentralisation and networking, the actual lived experience shows that the administrative load had actually increased because of the new reform. In this

experience, school leaders reported an increase in paperwork, tight deadlines, additional activities and related work because of college-driven initiatives.

A Head of School told me today that he read all mails at home. I share the same practice. At school, I do not even manage to input my password in my laptop. Every mail entails a lot of work – particularly when information is requested, reports have to be drawn up and statistics required. I end up working in my study till late at night to make up for the school back log of paperwork (Journal entry: 24th January, 2011).

School leaders therefore complain of too many competing agendas within the new college setup and an over burden of paperwork and administrative task. Some of them reported burnt out feelings due to work load. In real terms, the new reform does not provide the required structural support to address the needs of the schools functioning within the new setup. Schools have not been given additional clerical help to address the newly introduced additional administrative work.

Reforms and feedback did not result in any changes in our working conditions. Unplanned meetings are set at any time of the scholastic year, irrespective of the school calendar and set agenda (Journal entry: 19th April, 2012).

The lived anecdotes show that this is still causing an excessive workload on the School Management Team in meeting all given deadlines and data return. There is an overall feeling of managerial burden due to the lack of human resources and increased pressure in schools to perform and to deliver.

6.4.6.3 Administrative Load: Gap Analysis

The new reform document provided the possibility of a smarter way of administering management load and related work. This was meant to occur through the support and the setup of an organisational chart that challenged previously established modes of working that had been implemented for many years. It was argued that the positive dimension of this reform was the possibility of a paradigm shift in work relations and related dynamics. The education reform was being presented with an alternative of managing the administrative load that was meant to benefit the staff and the teaching and learning process through more efficient and effective ways of working.

Although the network reform projected a scenario that would lessen administrative pressures due to decentralisation and networking, the actual lived experience showed that the administrative load had increased because of the new reform. School leaders in this experience reported an increase in paperwork, tight deadlines, additional activities and related work because of college-driven initiatives. School leaders complained of too many competing agendas within the new college setup and an over burden of paperwork and administrative task.

In real terms, the new reform has not addressed the required structural support to effectively deal with the needs of the schools functioning within the new setup. Schools have not been given additional clerical help to address the newly introduced additional administrative work. The lived anecdotes show that this is still causing an excessive workload on the School Management Team in meeting all given deadlines and data return. There is an overall feeling of managerial burden due to lack of human resources and increased pressure in schools to perform and to deliver. Networking requires constant flow of communication and ongoing events to keep the network alive and functioning. This requires a lot of preparatory work, logistics, emails, meetings, meeting minutes taking etc. This networking issue has therefore not been effectively addressed with the provision of the necessary human and material support.

6.4.6.4 Administrative Load: Reflections

Over time, literature on leadership has been appropriated in education policy with a focus on definable and measurable links between leadership, organisational and cultural change. In policy, leadership has often been posited as the solution to the problem of school reform in response to the cliché that ‘change is the constant.’ The literature review of an educational leadership referred to in this study (Gunter, 2013; Bottery, 2009; Harris, 2008) highlights that in our times, school leaders and systems are confronted with evidence of growing educational inequalities between schools, students and staff members because of a managerial mentality that places emphasis on the administrative load.

Key feminist theorists (Blackmore, 2014; Braidotti, 1994) and research quoted in the literature review of this study helps us to identify the discursive moves in leadership that have dominated feminist research by depoliticising and decontextualising

leadership. This study argues for refocusing the feminist gaze away from administration and numerical work in leadership to the social relations of leadership and power locally, nationally and internationally. In the literature review of this study, I highlighted the importance of a feminist critical perspective that can treat leadership as a conceptual lens through which to problematise the nature, purposes and capacities of educational systems and organisations to reform and indeed, re-think their practices. Feminist understandings supported by an Arendtian framework can provide substantive alternatives to how we theorise and practise leadership.

In *The Human Condition* (1958a), Arendt gives us a very important concept for critical analysis of leadership and the related administrative load. Arendt distinguishes between and analyses the concept of labour, work and action. In her theoretical writings, Arendt describes labour as “*necessary to produce what a human needs to survive*” whilst work “*produces goods that are more durable and hence stabilises the social*” (Arendt, 1958a, p. 9). The goods produced by ‘work’ include intangibles such as the ‘goods’ produced by teaching include such aspects as knowledge, understanding and learner autonomy.

The theoretical framework of this thesis presented in an earlier chapter describes the Arendtian notion of action as a task involving thinking, talking and doing things that stimulate the human mind. It has been argued after Arendt that whilst activity might be repetitive or spontaneous, action involves a process of thinking whilst doing. Of interest to issues discussed in this thesis is the understandings of labour, work and action from the narrative analysis that confirms Arendt’s contention that labour has come to dominate.

The narrative analysis of the thesis shows that the high administrative load experienced by school leaders in network organisation is only composed of repetitive and paperwork tasks that can be classified as ‘labour.’ These tasks are merely administrative and serve only the purpose of getting things done daily. Arendt describes ‘labour’ tasks as required only for individual survival. Unfortunately, the college network lived experience presents ‘labour’ as a continuous and unchanging feature in the reform network administrative aspect.

Arendt (1958a) argues that a reform intended to bring about a paradigm shift (like the college network reform discussed in this study) should aim to promote work rather than labour. According to Arendt, work and its product, bestow what she refers to as ‘a measure of permanence and durability’ upon the lives of the individuals and society in general.

Arendt (1958a) would recommend that the administrative load within a college network experience would offer its participants experiences that would have a long-lasting effect with a permanent positive contribution. In such a scenario, Arendt (1958a) would propose that work ‘remedies the wordlessness of labour.’ This is a very promising prospect for the college network experience.

The final target for Arendt (1958a) is to inculcate ‘action’ in administration and juxtapose it with the realities of labour and work. Arendt (1958a, p. 68) argues that action does not grow out of labour and work. It is based on human beings, who through their birth right have freedom through action. Lived experiences generate action through reflective and critical thinking. Human activities are thus put into action through a reflective perspective of experiences.

The application of this Arendtian concept to the context of this study implies that college participants need to problematise and to reflect critically on their lived activities within the new reform. Arendt (1958a) illustrates that ‘action interrupts ongoing process of labour and work initiates new processes which in turn, are subject to interruption by further actions.’

The narrative analysis of the college network experiences needs to be elevated from ‘labour’ and ‘work.’ We need to focus on Arendt’s analysis of the importance of action as the space to share and exchange views to debate and to deliberate. This is my personal interpretation of her definition of action. This space and opportunity can sustain the empowering action within leadership that continues to be threatened through the construction and implementation of neoliberal and neoconservative modernisation reforms in the general educational field providing similar experiences to the narratives analysed in this study.

Administration (in the form of Arendtian labour) stifles all action and possibilities of change. We need to have the courage to put forward such bold questions as presented by Arendt (1958b) who challenges us to analyse whether persons' characters are experiencing what Arendt described as 'corrosion' or character assassination in the new reform and whether groups within the reform are 'scapegoated' in the name of a respect agenda or a subservient attitude. In her theoretical writings, Arendt warns that imposed reforms and governance might lead people to think, act and behave in a subservient and illogical way that might be only justified in the name of respect and subordination to authority.

Such an Arendtian analysis, raises important questions about the rise of the social realm in the analysis of the policy reform. From the perspective of Arendt's (1958b) writings, freedom is located not in the ideal claims of the Reform Document but in political and life process. Arendt encourages us to keep on questioning policies and rulership whilst trying to think within a space or sphere where neither rule nor those being ruled existed. This is what Arendt (1958b) proposes for a liberating paradigm that would lead to growth within new reforms.

6.4.6.5 Administrative Load: Summary of the Analysis

This analysis on my personal experience has shown that networking, collaboration and attempts at team work have not reduced the administrative duties and managerial paperwork in the local college network Reform. This managerial routine and repetitive work have been described as 'labour' after Arendt's theoretical perspectives. As opposed to 'work,' it was argued that labour only leads to short term goals and temporary results, rather than long term goals and tangible outcomes.

6.4.7 Macro Theme: Voice/Communication

In this study, voice refers to the opportunity to get the educators to express their opinion on school/college matters. It refers also to a free and secure environment for communicating and voicing feedback.

6.4.7.1 Voice/Communication: A Voice from the Policy Document

The theme of 'voice' is not directly mentioned in the policy document. However, the new policy advocates voice indirectly through the possibility of participation in the

different fora of the college network organisation. In this context, the reform refers to the voices of leaders, teachers, students, parents and all stakeholders.

School networks will use the community resources in ways that set up the involvement of the community at large. In return, schools will increase their role as community learning and cultural centres. The task ahead is a mammoth one (Reform Document, 2005, p. xxi).

The policy makers in this reform make an effort to address the demands of the present age to ensure a quality education for the 21st century. The document acknowledges that a participative citizen in today's society needs to be equipped with the necessary communicative skills to be able to function effectively in a networked society.

The demands around us are changing and this makes it crucial for our educational system to undergo a planned, well-thought out change that enables each and every child to be provided with a learning experience that not only imparts knowledge but, more importantly, helps them acquire the skills they need to approach future learning in and out of school. Successful networking will ensure much more successful schools (Reform Document, 2005, p. xxi).

The document does not directly specify how the voices of the college participants (school leaders, teachers, students and parents) will be heard and acted upon. However, it acknowledges the need for change which is crucial for the schools to ameliorate their role as participative centres.

6.4.7.1 Voice/Communication: My Lived Experience as the Researcher

The introduction of the new college network Reform in Malta was meant to give voice, space and ample opportunities to college participants to meet, discuss and work together in a collegial way. The document advocates a paradigm shift in the teachers' attitudes and ways of working. Educators in Malta have been working in isolation for a very long time. There have been no opportunities and appropriate structures for educators to voice their opinions, difficulties, suggestions and recommendations. The lived experiences highlight the initiation of opportunities for college participation.

Communication and cooperation with the College schools in our network is very essential for the successful implementation of the school calendar. The College Principal recommends this inter school communication,

[with] full cooperation and collaboration between the schools in the College (Journal entry: 12th September, 2008).

These aspects are mainly realised through the setup of regular team meetings between members from the different schools across all levels facilitated by the setup of the College organisation. The analysis of the lived experiences highlights the shared satisfaction, motivation and empowerment of the college participants in the first few possible college-based meetings. College participants share their desire for further possibilities enabling them to voice their opinions within their profession.

Before the networking reform, we could communicate directly with Directors, Assistant Directors and other personnel at the Central Division. With the onset of the networking reform, this communication opportunity seems greatly restricted. It is very evident that communication is one way only - through the channel of the Principal (Journal entry: 27th October, 2008).

Despite the initial positive experiences, the narrative inquiry is laden with anecdotes that illustrate the onset of fear of speech within the new college framework. Silence is described as a necessary evil. It has been noted that there is no voice safety in the new college setup.

I felt very demotivated. At the end of the day, I realised that after all 'Silence is Golden' and perhaps the best policy too. However, this silence really kills your personality (Journal entry: 10th November, 2009).

There is lack of sincerity, induced pressure, imposition of decisions and no genuine room for discussion. The Council of Heads in this experience is described as a 'monologue.' The agenda is pre-set by the Principal, decisions are already taken, and Heads of Schools are not given space and the necessary trust to voice their opinion and beliefs. The situation is so bad in this analysed experience that 'censorship' has become a common happening in what are supposed to be meetings and fora for discussion.

The agenda of the meeting is issued by the office of the Principal. The items of the agenda are always set and strictly adhered to. Nobody can deviate from the set agenda. We can only intervene in a tight period at the

very end of the Council of Heads during the agenda item for ‘other matters arising.’ What happens is that everybody would be tired, and the item is very easily disregarded by all of us (Journal entry: 4th October, 2011).

Although the Reform Document advocates networks as a forum for discussion and planning together, ‘silence’ is prevailing among teachers due to insecurity and fear. In this experience, teachers report that they are not actually heard, and a demotivated attitude from staff members dominates the college fora.

I felt very disappointed. It seemed that the rhetoric of the policy networks requesting repeatedly the slogan ‘we are smarter together than alone’ just amounted to empty words. The attitude is still an individualistic one that does not allow for support and dissemination of best practice (Journal entry: 2nd April, 2009).

A top-down approach with an imposed one-way communication is reinforced by induced pressure and domination. Teachers remain silent, apparently disinterested in policies, college activities and ongoing reforms. They are not involved or informed.

Although the reform is still in its first stage, it seems that it is already officially accepted as the way ahead for the near future. As educators we are constantly being asked to give our views about the ongoing reforms. In return, we are promised that our views are to be taken into consideration and might have a direct effect on the forthcoming years of the reform. However, the overall feeling is that we are being asked to discuss decisions that have been already taken and legislated. It is a very disempowering feeling (Journal entry: 20th March, 2009).

This experience highlights major difficulties in the implemented communication procedures within the network. In this case, all communication must be channelled through the Principal. The latter is the gatekeeper of all provided information. The top down approach with an imposed one-way communication is impinging on the functions of an effective network system.

The staff at the lower levels (teachers, learning support assistants) are arguing that their voice and input suggestions are being less influential than ever before. They feel that the top-down approach has strengthened its force and power these days. Some complain that they feel too far ‘down’ in the pyramid to exert any influential power or possibility for change (Journal entry: 16th October, 2012).

I have therefore observed that network members have not been given a participative role but are actually passive members at the receiving end of a predetermined agenda. The decentralisation policy has not materialised within the College. These communication difficulties are hindering team work, collaboration and networking within the College.

This ‘made up’ environment is very hard for me ... sincere people are very hard to find. We are all very individualistic. Ambition and career plans reign over everything else ... even collegiality and teamwork in times of networking! What an ironic situation! (Journal entry: 10th June, 2009).

6.4.7.3 Voice/Communication: Gap Analysis

The Reform Document projects a participative school community with greater involvement and commitment because of school networking (Reform Document, 2005). The document states that schools will strengthen their role as community learning and cultural centres. On the other hand, the reflections on the lived experience show that the promised opportunity of a safe space in which to voice opinions, difficulties and solutions was replaced by fear and preferred silence.

It has been noted that there is no ‘safety’ in the college setup that secures a free and an open discussion. The members prefer to comply rather than to discuss. No one dares to ‘challenge’ any decision or action taken. Whilst the document projects a collaborative enriched environment, it has been noted that this forum is ruled by lack of sincerity, induced pressure, imposition of decisions and no genuine room for discussion.

The expectations of the Reform Document focus upon a paradigm shift in the way schools operate. It was hoped that one-way channels of communication change to free and open possibilities of communication. This experience shows that a top to bottom approach still prevails, despite the onset of the reform. My experience has shown that the communication channels are still a one way process, reinforced by induced pressure and control. The possibilities of safe discussions have not yet materialised and college participants are still not involved, silenced and detached from the life of the College. Although the network reform document intends to consolidate the decentralisation policy that was legislated ten years earlier, the study on this specific

life experience shows that there are still communication difficulties, lack of teamwork, collaboration and above all, not enough networking.

The Reform Document (2005) acknowledges that skills need to be acquired to approach future networked learning in and out of schools. In this way, the Reform Document augurs that successful networking will ensure much more successful schools. The participants in these specific life experiences also share this hope for an opportunity of teamwork and collaboration within the new network reform.

6.4.7.4 Voice/Communication: Reflection

The narrative experience highlighted ‘lack of voice’ and subordinated silence as salient features with the onset of the new reform. Of concern is a general compliance from the college participants to all the newly introduced reform ideas, roles and governance in the college network experience. The most dominant leadership style resulting from the narrative analysis is the patriarchal one that controls all voices and communication channels.

Notably, Arendt (1963) defended such actions arguing that they are not based on any rationale but on a ‘deficit of thought’ or what she referred to as ‘banality.’ Arendt’s (1963) framework to this position is derived from her attendance at and subsequent reporting of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, where as a journalist she sought to understand the processes that enabled totalitarian tendencies to become a reality. Arendt (1963) justifies the compliance of the college participants through the concept of ‘coercion’ on the basis of ‘following orders.’

Arendt’s controversial concepts can help us develop understandings of networking in relation to those who practise it and how engagement with reform can possibly cause damage to education and how professionals might be characterised as ‘following orders.’ Central to this understanding is how Arendt distinguishes between tyranny and totalitarianism: the former is about controlling opponents through silence, fear and removal, the latter uses terror as a form of governance to promote obedience in innocent subordinates.

Arendt's reflections shed very important and critical light on the narrative analysis of this study. We need to ensure that 'lack of voice,' unquestioning silence and the corresponding terror aspects are not about managing change so that people think and act differently but to make other thinking seem illogical and preposterous. Arendt (1958a) helps us to question whether the silence and compliance in the lived experience of the college reform are creating an atmosphere of what Arendt (1958a) describes as 'paranoid distrust' between college members. In her writings, Arendt (1958a) warns that totalitarian regimes seek to destroy all non-political bonds that might form a bulwark against the demands of the reform.

Literature on leadership (Foster, 1989; Lashway, 2003; Harris, 2005; Gunter, 2013) argues that the idea of the 'leader' depends on the prior context of an organisation. The literature review of this study argues that leaders can only exercise their powers within a context that is bounded by certain rules and responsibilities and the leader's role is expected to be centred on the tasks of making sure their roles and responsibilities are accomplished. The provision of such possibilities as the opportunities for voicing opinions, suggestions and recommendations depends both on the leadership style and the context of the organisation. The literature review of this study quoted Bottery (2009) who argued in favour of the design of a workplace that takes into consideration such important principles as participation, voice and communication within the infrastructure and the setup of the organisation. Bottery (2009) argues that such a context would facilitate a democratic leadership within schools.

Arendt (1958a) helps us to understand silence and lack of voice as 'isolation' features. This critical theorist warns that the aim is 'to isolate' in order to make the person feel powerful, but the person is powerless because he or she is not authentically engaging with others. This warning can shed very important advice to the participants of the new college network reform.

According to Arendt, a silenced audience can lead to totalitarianism. She has described totalitarianism not as a class, a party or government but as a mass movement of isolated individuals who work within a total, restricted and conditioned loyalty to their institution. Arendt's (1958a) warns that adherents of totalitarian movements not

only commit crimes against others, but also against themselves. This is a very severe warning to the college participants within the new reform.

6.4.7.5 Voice/Communication: Summary of the Analysis

My personal experience has highlighted several episodes of subordinated silence resulting from top down communication. The analysis of this personal experience has shown that imposed general compliance to newly introduced reform ideas, roles and governance could result from a patriarchal concept of leadership that controls all voice and communication channels.

6.4.8 Macro Theme: Professional Development

In this thesis, the term ‘Professional Development’ refers to formal coursework (carried out at school and out of school) aimed at updating one’s knowledge on educational matters. These sessions are carried out in different ways – consultation, mentoring, coaching, lesson study and reflective practice.

6.4.8.1 Professional Development: A Voice from the Policy Document

The document acknowledges the need of dialogue for proper professional development for effective networking:

In all cases, there is a need for careful preparation, piloting, gradual implementation, periodic evaluation, training and effective dialogue with stakeholders, including negotiations, where necessary, with the unions concerned and the staging of proper information campaigns (Reform Document, 2005, p. xv).

There is reference in the document to the fact that the local reform will provide the necessary training opportunities for the members of the College. However, it is not specified how this training will be provided. The document lacks the necessary information on the provision structures, the necessary resources and the training schedule. The document simply states that networking will provide better training opportunities in conjunction with other service providers.

Network of schools, together with other service providers, will respond creatively and collaboratively to the needs of each ‘whole’ learner. No single school can hope to provide the diversity, flexibility or an economy

of service that the creation of network involves (Reform Document, 2005, p. xv).

There are no further details in the local document on the conditions, the success criteria and the framework of this proposed suggestion that Colleges and schools provide their own Continuous Professional Development.

6.4.8.2 Professional Development: My Lived Experience as the Researcher

The reform of college networks in Malta proposes the opportunity for the setup of ongoing Professional Development through network of schools. The network reform facilitates the opportunity for schools within the College to organise joint Professional Development sessions focusing on teaching and learning. Staff members can share good practices, discuss challenges and explore opportunities within a College utilising networking structures and channels.

Working with fellow colleagues in a college environment is very interesting and motivating. I am finding the neighbouring Head Teachers/Colleagues within the same College and (members of the College Council of Heads) as very friendly and approachable (Journal entry: 16th December, 2008).

The analysis of the lived experiences shows positive experiences of the first few attempts at professional development within the college setup promoting the setup of training between schools. College participants recommend opportunities for meeting, planning and learning together.

On frequent occasions I noted that such professional development opportunities benefit staff members and enhance college work. It is also noted that the College Principal has a very influential role in the development of such training and upskilling. A timetable for the provision and availability of the Peripatetic Teachers (Support Teachers in specific areas for the curriculum) is devised by the College Principal and distributed to all College Schools at the very beginning of the scholastic year.

I try my very best to provide a slot to my teachers during which they can meet for professional talk. I utilise the periods of the peripatetic teachers with the pupils to give an opportunity to the class teachers to meet in groups to discuss curricular issues. Yet it still seems that this effort is not

appreciated enough by my class teachers (Journal entry: 16th November, 2009).

These professional training opportunities are, however, still very sporadic and controlled by the College. The lived experiences show that professional development sessions organised by the College are still dominated by top down decisions when it comes to the selection of the session trainers, training topics and training methodology. The proposal for diversified and school centred professional development sessions has still not materialised, despite the onset of the reform.

This morning I attended a meeting on Induction. These meetings are still being held centrally at Floriana or Hamrun. We have not yet devolved essential components of our education system such as training, meetings and continuous professional development sessions. These meetings and courses can be easily held at a college level (Journal entry: 12th October, 2011).

It is noted that there is lack of time and lack of proper structures for revamped Professional Development within the new college setup. Professional training sessions are still centralised (not college-based) and held after school hours. These sessions are not very well attended by senior management team members, teachers and LSAs. It is often the case that College Principals, Directors and various policy makers are also absent during such professional development opportunities.

A Professional Development Session is being held once a month at the National Curriculum Centre in Hamrun for school leaders and teachers on a voluntary basis. The theme of this month was centred on the continuous professional development of educators. Attendance to these sessions is very poor. The same group of people attend these sessions on a regular basis. A certificate of attendance is given at the end of these sessions. However, this incentive is not resulting in a higher attendance (Journal entry: 21st January, 2011).

On the other hand, the college setup has provided the opportunity for the Heads of School within the College to meet once a month and to discuss College and school matters. The insights of this specific experience show that the college network reform has succeeded in providing a structured opportunity for the Heads of School to meet with their College Principal on school matters. The setup of the Council of Heads Meetings has been described by the participants in this experience as a very sound

proposal of ‘learning opportunity’ leading to professional growth and participation. Heads of School have highly recommended this college meeting (referred to Council of Heads) as it can provide a forum for learning together, reflecting and evaluating.

Today, we held the first Council of Heads meeting for this scholastic year. The College Principal welcomed the members of the Council of Heads especially the new council members. The session commenced with a Group Dynamics Activity to gauge the mood of the group with respect to emotion and energy present at that time of the year. Group members had the time to introduce themselves (Journal entry: 7th October, 2009).

The college system can thus provide space for review analysis and discussion on various school matters, including assessment and methodology. This data sharing practice is described as a possibility of an ongoing, professional development experience in leadership for the college network leaders. The potential benefits of Council of Heads Meetings have been advocated by the college network leaders even though their overall experience of these meetings has been dominated by an imposed agenda by the College Principal.

The reflections on this lived experience highlight the need to rethink professional development opportunities. The college network reform has provided a structured opportunity (once a month) to Heads of Schools to meet and to discuss together. However, this could be extended to offer ongoing professional training to staff members (SMT members, Teachers and LSAs) embedded within their work schedule and related work conditions. Teaching staff members will benefit from time to plan, learn and grow professionally together.

Today I attended a very interesting public lecture. The topic was ‘peer to peer tutoring.’ I have to seek after-school hours’ opportunities in order to update myself in my professional development. I really wish to find these professional growth opportunities in my College to be able to learn and to grow with my College colleagues (Journal entry: 17th April, 2012).

6.4.8.3 Professional Development: Gap Analysis

The Reform Document remarks specifically that networking will require careful preparation, piloting, gradual implemented evaluation, training and ongoing reflections and discussion. However, this specific experience of the college network

reform shows that professional development has not yet materialised within the new setup. It is noted that there is lack of time provision and lack of proper structure for formal professional development. In addition to this, professional training is still centralised (not college-based) and held after school hours (Reform Document, 2005).

The network reform envisages training and effective dialogue as the key to the success of the reform. Proper information campaigns and professional development sessions are presented by the document as the backbones of the reform. However, the lived experience shows that there are still no structures in place to ensure the launch of these information campaigns and professional development sessions on a college basis. The lack of attendance at professional development sessions provided by the Directorates (not the College) means that training is quite limited and presented through a top-down approach.

The Reform Document presents the experience of networking as a professional growth opportunity to all members. The document argues that there is no single school which can provide a synergised service that networks provide. The lived experience shows that the network participants also share this trust in the college networks. Professional Development Sessions need to be retaught and recreated within the onset of the new reform. Staff members require these structured opportunities to plan, to learn and to grow together supported by the necessary structures and provisions.

6.4.8.4 Professional Development: Reflection

The literature review of this thesis highlighted a new concept that is being introduced in our educational institutions – the concept of the ‘capacity building school’ (Reform Document, 2005). The concept provides autonomy to students, staff, parents and other community members. It has been argued that such new practices involve major changes in leadership roles and patterns. Referring to work redesign theory, this study proposes Heckman and Oldham’s Job Characteristics Model (JCM) to sustain the importance of professional development and the need to meet together. It has been illustrated that these structures need to be set and provided for teachers to be able to meet and plan as a team.

Teachers need to be entrusted with leadership tasks that grant them power and authority. Leadership literature highlights the importance of the processing of information and the generation of solutions to problems for effective teamwork. Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn (2001) have been quoted in the leadership literature as advocating such processes for the setup of organisational learning.

According to Arendt (1958a) these things will not happen through the ‘causality’ and ‘inevitability of events.’ Professional growth is continuously recommended by Arendt in the form of ‘thinking’ individuals who try to question and to understand, rather than passively accepting events and happenings. Arendt’s approach, according to Kohn (2011), is to recognise that the conditions from which events develop remain contemporary and so, there is always a need to understand the precarious situation in which the human condition is located.

The Arendtian approach is very relevant to the analysis of professional growth in the college network experience. Arendt referred to herself as a ‘practical minded person’ who used critical thinking approaches to analyse experiences in different parts and components. The analysis of the lived experience of this reform highlights the need of professional growth to empower college network participants to challenge the paths of the reform and to critically understand and explain the conditions they are experiencing through the reform.

For Arendt, this is not only a personal preference regarding how she wanted to engage critically with reforms, but also recognition that totalitarian regimes had challenged the human condition in such a way that the traditional categories and ways of thinking simply did not serve their purpose.

Arendt (1958a) presents us with the ‘analysis of catastrophe’ as a tool for professional development. The theoretical framework of this study explained this Arendtian concept as the analysis of the conditions from which events develop. According to Arendt, this analysis challenges us to think, question and understand. This thesis recommends the use of Arendt’s ‘analysis of catastrophe’ to examine whether lived narratives of the college network reform in Malta reveal any interventions into schools that lead to what Arendt describes as the ‘inevitability of events’ or simply

compliance. In Arendt's terms it would be necessary to ask the college participants to think about the relational threat of what 'I' and 'we' are doing: the failure to recognise natality (new beginnings) and pluralism (diversity), particularly evident in the urge to measure and to examine 'what works' prescriptions.

Utilising Arendt's theoretical framework, this thesis has attempted to demonstrate the importance of professional development so that the college network reform rethinks its approach when utilising seemingly neutral strategies (such as distributed leadership) towards identifying, using and debating the intellectual resources necessary to think critically.

In her literature, Arendt not only presented scholarly analysis but also told stories for analytical purposes. Arendt encourages us to keep a log of our narrative experiences for reflection purposes. A written anecdote, according to Arendt, is worth a thousand statistics, citations or evidences.

The lived experiences analysed in this study shows that life in educational institutions in our challenging times is complex. Unfortunately, as pointed out by Gunter (2012), the paths of the reform in education have not always been processes of democratic renewal but a series of regulation and deregulation projects underpinned by a hodge podge of ideas and beliefs legitimised by functional research and normative exhortations to lead and be led.

Thinking with, through and against Arendt's historical and political concepts and methods makes a distinctive contribution to the understanding of the college network reform, by revealing the conditions for totalitarianism, but at the same time by examining events in ways that enable questions to be asked about how the contemporary situation may or may not be crystallising into a totalitarian regime.

6.4.8.5 Professional Development: Summary of the Analysis

In my experience, the local college network has not yet materialised into a 'learning community.' Professional development is generally still sporadic without an established structure and continuity. An Arendtian reflection proposes the

enhancement of critical tools that empower ‘thinking’ educators to question and to understand rather than to passively accepting events and happenings.

6.4.9 Macro Theme: Conflicts

The Reform Document does not directly address conflict management and resolution. It does not provide any specific procedures or guidelines to be utilised in cases of conflict. In contrast, the document suggests a general positive approach in an attempt to keep all members of the school community synergised within schools.

6.4.9.1 Conflicts: A Voice from the Policy Document

The document recommends the importance of a positive network environment as a necessary requirement for job satisfaction. All members of the school community will benefit if networking manages to create a positive effect on schools.

The network environment will provide teachers with greater job satisfaction and the support to help them acquire the space and the opportunity to work flexibly in a task and needs oriented manner. Parents/carers will benefit from the positive effect networking creates in the education of their child. Parents, as partners in this experience, will be able to engage in their child’s educational journey and to enhance their own lifelong experience (Reform Document, 2005, p. xv).

The Reform Document also recommends the provision of support (though not specified) to help educators acquire the space and the opportunity to work flexibly.

6.4.9.2 Conflicts: My Lived Experience as the Researcher

Members of the education community in Malta had high expectations of the new reform advocating School Colleges in our context. Teachers were looking forward to a flexible working environment that provides the space and opportunity to work in a motivated way alongside college colleagues.

The Principal presented a Power Point Presentation which dealt with the setting up of Colleges and their characteristics. Reference was made to the document ‘For All Children To Succeed’ and to the fact that Colleges provide a new network organisation for quality education in Malta. The Principal referred to the present phasing of A and B schools into C schools and to the phasing in of learning zones within schools. A reply to ‘Why Colleges, Why Networks?’ was given. Emphasis was placed on the

importance of team learning and the subsequent benefits of networking. The Principal emphasised the motto 'Working smarter together, rather than harder alone' (Journal entry: 7th October, 2008).

However, despite these high expectations, the reflections from the lived experiences of the reform illustrate many challenges to this paradigm shift.

We are faced with very contradictory situations that put school administration personnel in great difficulty and dilemmas. We have attended a six-week afternoon course on the implementation of a virtual learning environment – in our case it is being called 'Fronter.' We are constantly being advised to include the aspect of the Virtual Learning Environment in our School Development Plan so that we can pave the way for its implementation. Yet, the necessary structures and agreement are never in place in a timely manner (Journal entry: 16th May, 2012).

Paradoxically, it is reported that in certain cases, the setup of the College has brought conflicts, competition and even rivalry both within the Colleges and between Colleges. This conflict is sometimes so intense that there is no space or allowance for noncompliant decisions. It is also remarked that induced pressure, fear, anxiety, insecurity and feelings of harassment and tensions dominated the atmosphere of both the College and the individual schools.

One of my colleagues described the present system of Colleges within the education system as a band club organisation. She likened the Colleges to the Band Clubs found scattered in all parts of the islands. Rivalry, insularity and competition seem to be the dominant features of these band clubs. Unfortunately, sometimes we feel that the same ingredients are featuring in our college system as well. All Colleges want to dominate the public media and to advertise themselves above the others. This is often done at the expense of catering for important educational features in our system, such as team work, collaboration and sharing of best practices (Journal entry: 20th October, 2010).

The reflections of the lived experiences highlight the difficulty of unstable new reform structures in bringing about the desired changes in the operation of both the College and the schools. In my opinion, the promotion and the publicity of the Colleges are given priority over other important factors, such as capacity building and professional development. I also noted that roles are still not very well defined and established. This difficulty in the role interpretation is leading to confusion and conflicts. These

role conflicts are leading to stress, difficulties in communication, struggles in planning and varied interpretation of issues and events, resulting in what the researcher believes to be a very insecure environment.

I am also concerned about my role as a College Committee Coordinator (I have the responsibility to voice specific queries of the Committee) and my role as a member in the College Council of Heads. The two roles seem to be in conflict. I would like to work to promote team spirit (Journal entry: 3rd May, 2010).

The analysis of lived experiences has shown that good leadership can support conflict resolution. Interpersonal skills and well-established group dynamics can lead to a situation in which problems are solved internally within the school context. Such an example from the lived experiences is the group cohesion of the Council of Heads members. The reflections on the lived experiences show that the Council of Heads members are ready to unite for a ‘win-win’ solution by organising challenges and difficulties. This group cohesion is also extended to the College Principal in certain cases. The lived experiences show that the setup of the college organisational chart has provided the possibility for college members to communicate directly with the College Principal.

The Principal drives the College and the schools’ achievements at great height. Constant presence, constant monitoring and incessant persistence ensure that work is done and the staff members are on task (Journal entry: 11th May 2010).

So, the College Principal as a superior leader is not detached from the schools and their staff. The Principal Office is located within the college network premises and the Principal can visit the schools within the vicinity as often as is required. For many years, the official in charge of schools’ administration would operate from the Centre, whilst maintaining a distance from the schools. Thus, the new organisational set up has rendered the possibility of in-house support more tangible, accessible and supportive to schools within the College. The Reform Document is rendering the possibility of services and support provision to be closer to the schools within each College.

6.4.9.3 Conflicts: Gap Analysis

The Reform Document projects that the network environment will provide teachers with greater job satisfaction and support to help them acquire space and opportunity to work flexibly in a task/needs-oriented manner (Reform Document, 2005). However, the lived experience shows that the collegiality proposed by the Reform Document because of networking is being overtaken by conflicts, competition and rivalry, both within the College and between Colleges. It has been noted that job satisfaction is diminished because of induced pressure, fear, anxiety, insecurity and tensions. The promised ‘flexible’ working environment is being engulfed by lack of tolerance to any noncompliant decision.

Although the Reform Document introduces many new roles meant to support the college structure, college network participants are not benefitting from the effective service of these newly added personnel. The analysis of the lived experience highlights the difficulties encountered in the interpretation of the written role descriptions. Their role is not yet well defined and still lacks the necessary details for effective implementation. This difficulty is, in fact, leading to confusion, conflicts, stress and struggles in both school and college events.

The Reform Document also highlighted that parents and their children will benefit from the positive effect that networking creates in the education of their child. The analysis of the lived experience illustrates that the college participants can now communicate more effectively with each other since the college organisation structure is located within the premises of the college school buildings. The role of the College Principal is not detached from the school and staff. Reflecting on the lived experiences consolidates the writings of the Reform Document that renders the support of the Principal more tangible, available and supportive in actual implementation.

6.4.9.4 Conflicts: Reflection

Main theories of feminist pedagogy, such as the work of Luke and Gore (1992), Boler (1999) and of McWilliam (1999) set out in the literature review, focus on how emotions impact on learning as individuals feel both the pleasure of success and the pain of failure, as well as fear and anxiety arising from having one’s sense of self-being challenged. These theories include the theme of ‘conflict.’ Sachs and

Blackmore (1998) recognise the importance of the emotional management work of leadership. They argue that this requires recognition of one's own emotions and how they are displayed and perceived, as well as being aware of the emotional health of the organisation so critical to a sense of wellbeing and trust.

The discussion of conceptions of leadership quotes set out in an earlier chapter, draws on strands of research from leadership literature from work such as Glickman et al. (2001), Fullan (2001) and Hopkins (2001) that shows a direct correlation between teachers' efficacy and levels of morale in schools. The quoted research findings in this thesis illustrate that a positive environment and a strong teacher collegial culture secures a better-quality teacher environment. This, in turn, provides positive evidence about the impact of teacher leadership on student performance. Mainstream leadership literature (Rosenholz, 1989; Lashway, 2003) emphasises that a conflict free work place has a positive effect upon organisational development and change.

In her theoretical writings, Arendt (1958a) contends that the tradition in education and philosophy is not well prepared to examine social reality. In Arendt's view, a perspective that is entirely focused on theory, rather than human beings is not applicable to study real life experiences where many of its questions, distinctions and modes of inquiry do not apply. Arendt provides us with a perspective of philosophy that recognises conflicts and human reality and distinguishes it from other intellectual inquiries, especially science. Arendt contends that conflicts are natural and part of human reality (Arendt, 1958a).

The lived experience of this study highlights that our daily living experience incorporates decisions, socialising, taking part in activities, conflicts and so on. Healthy conflicts can lead people to determine the truth of an institution, policy, event or law through debates, questioning and analysis. According to Arendt, this can be done solely on their judgement of the relative worth of the available alternatives. Arendt advises that the search for meaning through conflicting debates and positions can create an urge to know what is worth pursuing, what form of life is worth living and what kind of manners are worthy of a human being and why.

The analysis of the lived experience shows that although these questions about conflicts differ in their depth and complexity, they share several basic elements. First, they are non-empirical in nature. Arendt argues that no amount of empirical information can reveal the specific meaning of either a conflict or an event in life. Second, Arendt argues that conflicts arise because of “existential perplexity.” Human beings can undergo several experiences and events without being conscious of what is happening. Arendt seems to emphasise that unlike empirical questions that arise out of a contingent ‘urge to know,’ conflicts arise from human beings’ thinking nature and are actually inevitable.

Making use of Arendt’s framework on social reality shows that conflicts cannot be solved in one plausible way. Solutions to conflicts can never be conclusive but at best, persuasion can force the agent to give or withhold a decision. As college network participants, we must strive to reflect deeply on the significance of events. From this perspective, conflict resolution must be focused on reflective practices highlighting the meaning of events on actual practice. Such an exercise reaches an Arendtian objective by undergoing a systematic inquiry into human life experience and developing a comprehensive inquiry. This reflective practice is what this study recommends to further understanding the social reality of the Reform Document.

6.4.9.5 Conflicts: Summary of the Analysis

The analysis of my lived experiences has highlighted episodes of conflicts, differing opinions and complex experiences through attempts at networking in the local context. ‘Solutions to conflicts’ have been described by Arendtian theory as a reflective and growing experience rather than a conclusive event.

6.4.10 Macro Theme: Bureaucracy

In this study, the macro theme ‘bureaucracy’ refers to the hierarchical nature of the administration structure of the college network reform. Decisions and related actions have to be taken within a prescribed procedure of the organisation.

6.4.10.1 Bureaucracy: A Voice from the Policy Document

The Reform Document proposes an interesting re-invention of structures and practices in our educational system through the setup of school networks. It highlights that the

new organisational set up would more effectively focus on reaching local solutions and reducing drastically bureaucratic practices. The document states that the structures and practices associated with school networks will be more appropriate for more effective organisations that function on horizontal rather than on vertical levels of governance. It is also envisaged that there will be major issues to be solved and tackled. Such a paradigm shift will require a collaborative effort from all stakeholders and the implementation of effective network leadership.

This will not be a simple or straightforward journey. We knew that there are issues to solve. This is a process that involves collective commitment, discipline and the evolution of effective network leadership. Experience shows that all networks need to plan well to ensure that they are clear about the systems, roles and responsibilities which will help them develop and flourish. If we can do this when our network is in its infancy, and if we are able to build from the existing knowledge base, we will find that the journey together, whilst being no less challenging, will be exciting, productive and properly satisfying (Reform Document, 2005, p. xv).

The document is emphasising the need for planning as a major pre-requisite for more efficient structures and practices within school networks. It is also stressing on the importance of properly defining structures, roles and responsibilities in the reformed educational system. The document states that the implementation of these logistic alignments will help school networks develop and flourish within a collaborative, rather than a bureaucratic mentality.

6.4.10.2 Bureaucracy: My Lived Experience as the Researcher

The vision of the document for college networks in Malta promotes the possibility of smoother work ethics and practices between schools within the College. The new reform is fully supporting the ideal of implementing the necessary structures and organisational support to flatten hierarchical levels, whilst facilitating the distribution of roles and work tasks.

The analysis of the narrative inquiry of the lived experience gives evidence of some testimonies of initial opportunities within the new reform that might lead to reduced bureaucratic practices. The evolution of the dynamics of the College and the

possibilities of the implementation of structures and practices for sharing and contributing augur well for effective networks.

We have the introduction of the School Development Sessions in our schools. This is an afternoon dedicated entirely to a review of the work done during a term of the scholastic year. The proceedings/programme of the School Development Plan must be sent to the Principal beforehand for approval. Data is collected during the curriculum slot (another newly introduced opportunity) held very regularly every Monday. Structured questionnaires, open-ended interviews and feedback from parents provide the necessary data for the review exercise (Journal entry: 10th September, 2009).

However, despite the vision and willingness to implement horizontal levels of communication, working and operating, school networks still lack the necessary structures and practices within which to implement this vision. The network models proposed by the document highlight the multi-tier organisation of leadership for the new reform, but the lived experiences highlight that the ‘Centre’ still has a very strong role in the new college reform.

I compare the College to a big ship moving by itself in an ocean with a given momentum. The ship is directed by the Captain (the College Principal) assisted by the engineers (the Head Teachers). The ship functions thanks to its engines, pumps and valves (the subordinates – the teachers, the learning support assistants and the students) (Journal entry: 9th June, 2009).

Decisions are still top-down and channelled through different levels of hierarchy. The system is still based on paperwork and administrative tasks. There is still evidence of complex bureaucratic practices in all sectors of the educational system, including teaching and learning (choice of textbooks, syllabi and assessment), finance, travelling abroad, inventory procedures and transport provision.

It seems that the new college system has created more bureaucracy than ever before. The ‘steps of hierarchy’ might be challenged by some officials. The Chief Heads in these hierarchy ranks are already being irritated. We are witnessing the setup of coping strategies that bypass official imposed channels of task actualisation. This makes communication and channels of reference more difficult than ever before (Journal entry: 12th January, 2010).

The narrative highlights an experience of a performative attitude within the new College that measures and control all ongoing activities. This controlled attitude is being claimed to cause quite a considerable increase in administrative work within the new college system. School leaders argue that college tasks have been added to school tasks with the result of a double workload for school personnel.

Our position and authority as Heads of Schools are rendered useless. Bureaucracy seems to be getting worse. We are just occupying a role similar to that held by the 'piggy in the middle' of a hierarchy. Sometimes I feel really belittled and treated in a childish way. This evening, I needed to remark to the Precincts Officer regarding unfinished work at my school. We are instructed to keep our Principal always in copy of the mails addressed to this newly appointed Precincts Officer. I would have preferred to communicate solely with him regarding the issue in my school. However, I am instructed to keep the 'Big Brother' informed (Journal entry: 17th February, 2010).

A recurrent theme in my lived experience study is the issue of workload pressure that has intensified to an extent that school leaders in this experience claim that the administrative load has superseded the educational focus. School leaders are finding limited opportunities to visit classes and to join school activities due to time constraints. School leaders' time schedule is totally absorbed by college and school tasks.

I feel that the college lived experience has increased both bureaucracy and administrative work. I strongly think that educators might not want to be directly involved in the college life due to a fear of being given further tasks (this time related to college work) added to the already tall order of school tasks (Journal entry: 6th June, 2011).

The considerable increase in administrative work with the introduction of the college reform has strengthened bureaucracy and administrative control. Task-oriented leadership (rather than person-oriented leadership) is featuring dominantly within this particular lived experience of the new college reform.

Transition and hand over exercises within the College are still very difficult in our educational system. We still suffer from 'shovel' effects. The parameters depicting our College physical boundaries do not allow us to venture into the other Colleges in our own context. It is very difficult

for a member from another College to work with colleague members in other Colleges (Journal entry: 26th October, 2012).

This analysis of the theme is recommending the effective setup of the proposed structures and practices proposed by the local document for networks to function properly. It is also being suggested that college development plan makes more space for school time and initiatives. The college participants in this experience recommend the reduction of out-of-school meetings and duties. They are recommending the setup of more student-centred initiatives that directly benefit the learners through a synergised and networked structure. The College is expected to support individual schools, rather than individual schools supporting the College.

In my opinion, we are still very much focused on extracurricular activities. I think that this importance has been increased with the introduction of the new college system. We are getting the impression that the leaders of the Colleges in our education system are more interested in advertising their college events in the media, rather than promoting teaching and learning. The introduction of the website by some Colleges has increased this media stress (Journal entry: 18th February, 2009).

6.4.10.3 Bureaucracy: Gap Analysis

The Reform Document claims that the start-up of school networks will lessen bureaucracy and administrative pressures (Reform Document, 2005). The document proposes that school networks will provide us with the capacity to re-invent structures and practices in ways that benefit the overall organisation. However, the analysis of the bureaucracy theme in this study shows that a central core of authority is still very much present in the new network set up.

Decisions are still top-down and channelled through different levels of authority. School leaders argue that the network reform is totally loaded with excessive and unnecessary bureaucracy. This contradicts the proposals of the network document that targeted improved structures in favour of a more democratic organisation.

The Reform Document stresses that the removal of long-established bureaucratic practices will not be a simple or a straightforward journey. The policy makers admit that there are issues still to be solved. The foreward messages of the policy document

highlight the fact that the college network reform is just the beginning of a new revamp in our system. Followup and continuation are required to tackle the remaining educational issues (change of attitudes, work ethics, ways of working and other issues) that might hinder this revamp. The document also claims that this process involves such positive aspects as collective commitment, discipline and motivation which should result in effective network leadership. This challenging scenario is confirmed by the analysis of the narrative experience. The performative attitude that propagates efficiency, measurement and accountability has increased the administrative load and strengthened bureaucratic practices. The new network system is still based on paperwork, administrative tasks and long processes of procurement and tender procedures. The narrative experiences approve the Reform Document's claim that a radical and a challenging change is needed. The network reform document cannot flourish within a performative context. Working collaboratively cannot materialise within a culture of competition, individualism and performativity.

The normative experience sustains the Reform Document's claims that democratic practices will materialise when roles and responsibilities are clear and properly defined. The participants in this lived experience share the document's proposed aims for a socially just experience in a networked journey that will be motivating and properly beneficial in today's challenging world.

6.4.10.4 Bureaucracy: Reflections

The leadership continuum model analysed in depth in the literature review of this study places the bureaucratic-managerial style of leadership at one end. The analysis of the lived experiences claims that the network vision of the Reform Document is being implemented within a hierarchical organisational structure.

As quoted in the literature review, Bottary (2004) suggests that such an organisational chart puts the leader in an isolated role and focuses solely on task-oriented and institutional demands. Similarly, Foster (1989) further argues that the reason for exerting bureaucratic-managerial leadership is not social change, or meeting followers' needs but achieving certain organisational goals. Critical feminists have warned against visionary policy discourse, especially if not supported by proper structures and practices.

The contributions of such feminists as Blackmore (2012a & b) and Yeatman (1998) act as a warning that any radical intent can be readily subverted through a range of discursive processes mobilised through policy and discourse that appropriates teachers' and leaders' passion for education as a site and source for social change. Critical feminists strongly argue that leadership, as with feminism, should not be an uncontested field of theory or practice.

Arendt (1958b) warns that bureaucracy can become a substitute for total control and power. Bureaucracy can become a main instrument leading to a totalitarian organisation. Arendt (1958b) argues that propaganda status and modern cliché, such as performativity, accountability, efficiency and efficacy (all prominent words highlighted in the analysis of the lived experience in this study) are designed to be translated into a functioning reality that builds up into a totalitarian regime.

An Arendtian reflection closely analyses the fabrications that are sustained by a totalitarian propaganda. The analysis of 'bureaucracy' within the narrative experience highlights a hierarchical dimension that separates people from each other within the same institution. Arendt (1958b) argues that, through her writings, she challenges the superiority of close groups of people who find power in their bonding even though they know that they are not approved by others.

Arendt (1958b, p. 158) further claims that different movements have constructed front organisations before they took power, as a means of distinguishing themselves from others. The analysis of the narrative experience within the College shows that bureaucracy is created and maintained by some people, especially leaders to distinguish themselves from others whilst taking hold of absolute power.

The analysis of the lived experiences shows that the College Leader's position is still very central. All actions are top-down lead directly by the leader. Analysing such a bureaucratic scenario, Arendt's (1958a) claims that whereas most systems have a pyramid structure, a totalitarian regime has an 'onion' configuration with the leader occupying a centre space with all actions from within and not from without or above. Arendt (1958a) illustrates how bureaucracy functions in an effective way to spread confidence among the masses, consolidating a totalitarian regime.

6.4.10.5 Bureaucracy: Summary of the Analysis

The analysis of the lived experiences showed that the new roles set up by the new reform are in actual fact reinforcing bureaucracy, rather than promoting a networked environment. Arendt (1958a) makes us aware of the main constituents of totalitarianism, such as bureaucracy. This might lead to ideology, terror and destruction. Following Arendt's framework, we need to engage critically with these main constituents to avoid the setup of such destructive conditions.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter reported on the main themes identified through the classification exercise of the diary entry data conversion and organisation. In the data analysis stage, the main categories (themes) derived from the diary transcripts were sorted and compared until saturated. This selective coding analytical process involved the identification of ten general themes or core categories, most frequently represented by segments of data and utilised for reporting and discussion purposes in this chapter.

The identified themes were highlighted as being the following: College Leadership, School Leadership, Motivation, Support Structures, Power, The Administrative Load, Voice/Communication, Professional Development, Conflicts and Bureaucracy. The narrative inquiry of the identified themes was built on four stages of reflection involving the policy document, the lived experience, a gap analysis and a critical overall reflection, followed by a summary of the reflections. Each theme was first read through the written discourse of the policy document. The second stage reported the lived experience of the researcher of each particular theme. Following this analysis, any gap between the discourse of the policy document and the actual lived experience was highlighted and finally a critical reflection was carried out for each theme through the insights of the literature review within an Arendtian theoretical framework.

The findings of the data analysis exercise will be discussed further in the discussion chapter where the study's main research question will be answered critically, following the reflection of each identified theme in the light of the inquiry discussion carried out in this chapter.

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

The vision of the document proposing networking for Maltese schools (Reform Document, 2005) maintained that through networking, schools would be in a better position to meet the needs of the students. Based on the network structures implied by the networking vision, schools were to be given an opportunity to work in partnership with one another, to share resources, to jointly solve problems and to create new practices. In this context, my study has investigated the main research question that explored how far the notion of leadership, as advocated by the Maltese Education Reform *For All Children To Succeed* (Reform Document, 2005), corresponds to the lived experiences of a school administrator serving in a school college network environment.

The major research question has been supported by a set of minor research questions that focused on the concept of educational leadership, the concept of networking, voice, power, social justice and transformational spaces in the college network reform experience in the Maltese Islands.

To answer these questions, this thesis carried out a narrative analysis of the personal lived experiences in a college in Malta in the first stages of the introduction of the new networking educational reform in our country. The resulting reflective themes from the narrative experiences, which were discussed in Chapter 6, were critically analysed through a theoretical framework derived from studies of leadership and networks which were viewed from an Arendtian perspective. By reflecting on these various themes, a thorough analysis of the primary data through narrative inquiry methodology led to the following conclusions from this experience in response to the major and minor research questions.

7.2 Addressing the Major Research Question

The Major Research Question reads as follows:

Does the notion of leadership as advocated by the Maltese Education Reform ‘For All Children to Succeed’ (Ministry of Education & Employment, 2005) correspond to the lived experiences of a school administrator serving in a school college network environment?

To address this major research question, the main conclusions of this study are discussed in the following sections.

7.2.1 Major Research Question: Overall Conclusion

The overall conclusion, which has been determined from the analysis and discussion of this study, addresses the major research question and reads as follows:

The notion of distributed leadership advocated by the policy document is not being fully implemented in actual practice.

The proposed models of college networks in the network reform policy document gives us a Y network arrangement or which is also sometimes called an ‘inverted tree.’ With reference to works by Leavitt, it has been explained that a network structure modelled on the image of the tree is very likely to have a strong centre of significance (Leavitt, 1951). As presented in the policy document, a participant functioning within the Maltese network model can only receive information along pre-established paths of communication. In turn, the circulation of this communication can only move upwards and downwards with restricted vertical communication between the schools themselves in the given structures. Such a centralised network grants all the power to the centre organ, which in this case is the Principal and the College Board. In the models proposed for Maltese schools, the network school participant has only one active neighbour, that is the adjacent school and its hierarchical superior or what is referred to in the document as ‘the receiving school.’ The hierarchical network systems pre-exist the network participant who is integrated in an allotted space.

The models presented in the college network reform policy document are static with fixed structures that will never change or adapt themselves to the circumstances at

hand. Perhaps, the proposed model structures reflect the still unchanged educational mind-set in our system that says that it is the children who must adapt themselves to the school system and not the other way around. The children are depicted at the bottom of the pyramid structure of the models and arrows are guiding the children to the school buildings.

The thematic analysis illustrates that both college and school leadership in this lived experience are top down within a very bureaucratic environment. Power is still restricted within the central organ – the office of the College Principal. Insecurity, fear, lack of voice and imposition determine decisions and restrict participation within the College. Although the document provides for an overhaul of the Maltese Education system that was meant to establish a strong orientation towards a collaborative mind-set in consolidating an effective collegial spirit, the analysis of the leadership themes in this experience shows that school leaders still work in isolation in a networked environment.

The College Principal is the superior with the School Leader and the school staff as subordinates. The School Leadership theme highlighted that school leaders are detached from the College Principals (as immediate superiors) and from the other School Leaders both within and outside the College, in line with the model but not in line with the principles. The analysis shows that this is leading School Leaders to entrench themselves in set ways whilst preferring to work on their own. It is quite worrying that it is within this context that the cultural changes underlining the significance of team work and joint work must take place.

The thematic analysis within this study focusing on such concepts as leadership, bureaucracy, power, voice, conflicts and communication gives us a scenario described by Arendt as ‘functioning within a system’ (Arendt, 1958a). The analysis shows that leadership within this experience is about adhering to established structures and consumption of what is necessary to endure without any flexibility.

The data analysis shows that in the design and reform implementation, there has been no claim for status based on creativity in the curriculum or leadership innovation; instead claims have been made about what was necessary to bring about the

implementation of the reform. In Arendtian terms, it is ‘animal laborans’ where activity is in ‘worldlessness.’ The delivery approach is about functioning within a pre-set system. Interestingly, Arendt (1958a) challenges us ‘to think without banisters’ and to ask questions that investigate the possibility of any totalitarian conditions, such as; *To what extent should Head Teachers unconditionally accept what others decide for the schools and for the education system in general?* It seems that educational systems are determined elsewhere and the Head Teacher is simply the ‘deliverer’ of the approved outcomes or in Arendtian terminology, the ‘laborers.’

7.3 Addressing the First Minor Research Question

The first Minor Research Question reads as follows:

What concept of educational leadership does the document and the actual lived experiences advocate?

This will be followed by detailed discussions of the implications of the first minor research questions highlighting the implications of the study and the recommendations of the findings to the educational community in Malta and the educational leadership in general.

7.3.1 First Minor Research Question: Main Conclusion

The first conclusion derived from this study to answer the first minor research question reads as follows:

The Maltese college network reform document prescribes a participative leadership concept promoting voice and tangible initiatives, whilst the lived experience of the reform reveals lack of action and unchanged conditions.

The concept of educational leadership set out in the Reform Document for the Maltese School Colleges implies that ideal school networking should lead to the development of autonomous educational institutions, working within an agreed framework of performance, accountability and outcomes. The document states that this will be done based on delegated functions and responsibilities, each co-ordinating their efforts to provide a continuous education programme that offers entry at kindergarten and exists until the end of secondary education.

However, the analysis of lived experiences shows that this concept of participative leadership based on a wide version of ‘distributed governance,’ as proposed by the Reform Document is being translated in quite contradictory terms in its corresponding logistics. The proposed network organisation for the Maltese education system pictures a hierarchical organisation for governance that places the leader at the top and the subordinates below. At the apex of the pictorial models presented in the appendix of the school networking document, one finds the position of the Principal as the new external leadership to the whole system. Ironically, in an era of decentralisation, the new reform document for networking Maltese schools is advocating a hierarchical model of school governance.

The analysis of the lived experience of a Maltese college network illuminates how, in the modern world, people are invited to suppress their ideas and contribution in favour of such clichés as ‘teamwork,’ ‘vision’ and ‘mission’ and so conformism is what dominates. In Arendt’s terms, the narratives of the implementation of the network reform highlighting control and imposition lead to a situation in schools or Colleges where the ‘public space’ is closed. As I have argued in this thesis following Arendt, this might lead to a condition of totalitarianism. The analysis of the themes from the narratives from the Maltese college network reform illustrates that ‘voice’ and ‘can do activities’ are being replaced by lack of actions and unchanged conditions in actual implementation. Whilst the lived experience raises concerns about the volume and the speed of reforms, there are no substantive challenges to problematise the policy and no alternatives.

In such a context, Arendt warns about the dangers of ‘passivity’ (Arendt, 1958a). The analysis of the lived experiences shows that the passivity identified by Arendt can be seen in schools and has been generated by the formulation and practices of Colleges in the local context as labour and activity. Solutions, even locally, have been in the form of labour where life in schools has been reduced to external set practices. The creation of a data rich school through targets, testing, inputting and analysing means that professional practice can become work through the crafting of a performance regime. The analysis of leadership in the narratives of the college network reform in Malta is actually reviewed as domination of bureaucracy, control, authoritarianism and imposition in the lived experience.

The policy document advocates the agency of the leader for the success of the reform. However, the analysis of the lived experience shows that whilst leaders are urged to be active and do things, in fact the act of doing is framed. Leaders have a high administrative load within a tight bureaucratic context determined by strict deadlines and imposed decisions.

The thematic concepts of 'College Leadership' within this study show that a leader is generally defined in terms of hierarchy where leadership as a power process is the property of this elite person who is separated from elsewhere based on role, remuneration and responsibilities. Even rebranding in the form of distributed leadership (as in the Network Reform Document), still retains the supremacy of the leader - central structure with a division of labour and with forms of delegation used only with a purpose to carry out only the necessary administrative work.

7.4 Addressing the Second Minor Research Question

The second Minor Research Question reads as follows:

Is the concept of network as advocated by the policy document congruent to the actual lived experiences?

This line of inquiry will establish what concept of networking is being implemented in actual reality in a local case study. This will illustrate the similarities and differences with the proposed concept in the Reform Document.

7.4.1 Second Minor Research Question: Main Conclusion

The main conclusion derived from this study to answer the second minor research question reads as follows:

Despite the goal of decentralisation, the new reform document for networking Maltese schools is advocating a stage-managed network designed on an inverted Y model – a hierarchical model of college governance.

The concept of network as set out in the discourse of the Policy Document on the function of the college network contradicts the proposed network model of college

governance given in the same document. The policy document states that network activity will generate greater knowledge about schools. This knowledge will not only come from senior leaders in schools, but from all those working and learning within the network. Systems within the network are envisaged to encourage everybody to contribute and to feel that their contributions are valued. The Reform Document highlights that the involvement of Heads of Schools and senior management in the schools is in fact crucial to the development of networks, both in terms of priority and the profile network activity taking place in schools.

The analysis of the lived experiences shows that the discourse of the Reform Document can generate positive reactions. Despite the disillusion, the analysis of the theme ‘motivation’ (as derived from the lived experience) highlights that college members still have trust in the reform and believe in the possibility of collegiality and collaboration through the network reform. This analysis shows links with Arendt’s arguments about labour and work.

This means that there is still a strong dependency of the network participants on their superiors. In Arendt’s terminology, the college network reform in Malta is still based on the claim for having done things in externally approved of ways, where recognition and approval are central to the ongoing and smooth process implementation of the college reform.

Arendt utilises the notion of the ‘*homo-faber*’ for people who literally ‘work endlessly’ and ‘fabricate repetitively’ without any long-term value or contribution. According to Arendt, work is the activity that leads to temporary products that are easily replaced, removed and forgotten (Arendt, 1958a). Utilising this terminology, it can be easily argued that there is evidence of ‘labour’ rather than ‘work’ in the notion of ‘distributed leadership’ proposed by the Reform Document. The pyramid models of networking illustrated in the document do not necessitate a leader to be charismatic or transformational; the leader in a pyramid model emphasises the importance of this for him/herself in how power is exercised. Notably, the leader at the very apex of the pyramid (the College Principal) must show how leadership within a network of Heads of Schools is supported and enabled in ways that have durability, not least through his/her own learning, but also on how s/he builds on this learning experience over time

and joins it up across a range of projects and innovations. In doing this, the leader not only structures the leadership location but also that of others who benefit from college leadership and professional practice.

So, there is evidence of ‘work’ through the relationship between transformation, products and labour in college leadership. However, the opportunity always exists that ‘work’ becomes ‘labour,’ particularly since policy structure arrangements depend on the policy’s vision and mission. The anecdotes and reflections on the policy reform discussed in this study highlight the fact that what might be missing in this experience from an Arendtian theoretical point of view is a sense of natality or doing something new through taking action by the college network participants.

7.5 Addressing the Third Minor Research Question

The third Minor Research Question reads as follows:

What are the implications of the policy discourse on voice, power and social justice in grounded experiences?

The concepts of voice, power and social justice are major components of policy discourse in a reform advocating networking, participation and collaboration. This research question establishes what is happening in actual practice

7.5.1 Third Minor Research Question: Main Conclusions

The college network reform document projects a participative school community with greater involvement and commitment because of school networking. The document envisaged that schools would strengthen their role as community learning and cultural centres. The following sub-sections will discuss the conclusions reached by the researcher in relation to Voice, Power and Social Justice.

7.5.1.1 Third Minor Research Question: Conclusion in relation to Voice

The conclusion derived from this study in line with this minor research question with particular reference to Voice reads as follows:

The reflections on the lived experiences shows that the promised opportunity of a safe space through which to voice opinions, difficulties and recommendations is in fact replaced by fear, insecurity and a chosen silent approach.

It has been noted that work could be carried out to increase ‘safety’ in a free and an open dialogue. The members of the college network prefer to comply rather than to discuss. Whilst the Reform Document projects a collaborative enriched environment, the actual lived experiences show that the ideal is replaced by a college ethos which does not encourage participation and which, in many instances, promotes compliance and consensus.

The expectations of the Reform Document (principles / discourse not proposed models / structures) focused upon a paradigm shift in the way schools operate. It was hoped that one-way channels of communication would change to free and open possibilities of communication. The analysis of the lived experience shows that a top-to-bottom approach still prevails despite the onset of the reform. The communication channel is still reinforced by one way domination and control. The possibilities of safe discussions have not yet materialised and college participants are still not being sufficiently involved. They feel without a voice, silenced and detached from the life of the College. Although the network reform document intends to consolidate the decentralisation policy that was legislated in 2005, the study on this specific life experience, shows that there are still communication difficulties, lack of teamwork, collaboration and above all not enough networking.

The theoretical framework of this study has provided us with an Arendtian way of thinking. Arendt’s reflections provided us with a very important and critical light on the narrative analysis of this study. Arendt (1958a) guided us on how to investigate whether ‘lack of voice’ situations, unquestioned silence and the corresponding terror aspects are tactics intentioned to make other thinking seem illogical and preposterous. Arendt (1958a) encourages us to question whether the silence and compliance in the delved experience of the college reform are in fact creating an atmosphere of what Arendt (1958a) describes as ‘paranoid distrust’ between college members. This study has outlined Arendt’s writings (1958a) that warn against totalitarian regimes that seek

to destroy all non-political bonds that might form a bulkwork against the demands of the reforms.

In this scenario, this thesis promoted the contributions to leadership literature by Harris (2015), Gunter (2013), Lashway (2003) and Foster (1989) focusing on the effects of the organisation context on the leadership style. The literature review acknowledged that leaders can only exercise their powers within a context that is bounded by certain rules and responsibilities and the leader's role is expected to be centred on the tasks of making sure their roles and responsibilities are accomplished.

According to Gunter (2013) the provision of such possibilities as the opportunities for voicing opinions, suggestions and recommendations depends both on the leadership style and the context of the organisation. Furthermore, Bottery (2009) argues in favour of the design of a workplace that takes into consideration such important principles as participation, voice and communication within the infrastructure and the setup of the organisation. The lived experiences fully support Ryan's (2012) claim that such an inclusive and participative context built on trust would facilitate more democratic leadership within schools.

7.5.1.2 Third Minor Research Question: Conclusion on Power

In the local context, the college network reform proposed a total reshuffle of what has been taking place during the past years. An overhaul of the central structure was promised in line with the requirements of the needs of the reform. The first proposed change was a shift from the long-established Department to Division. The shift was meant to pull the field of education out of the twentieth century and into the modern age. However, the analysis of the actual lived experience showed that:

... despite the onset of the new reform, schools in the local context are still dominated by centralised and controlled power.

This time, the centre of power had shifted from the Centre to the Office of the Principal. In this scenario, the proposed overhaul did not change power channels or ways of working within the school.

We can link this discussion to leadership studies offered by Bottery (2004) and Gunter (2012) who makes us aware that the notion of ‘distributed leadership’ in our context was legalised in an era of managerialism, influencing all societal institutions including schools. Through this study, I have concluded that various notions of performative decisions of choice, self-management, outcomes, standards, efficiency and efficacy have penetrated all leadership practice in Malta and this situation is supported by major studies on distributed leadership by Gronn (2003), Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), as well as Harris (2008). The leadership continuum developed by Foster (1989) illustrated how totalitarian leadership has the tendency to shift education from the collective to individual good, cooperation to competition and process to product.

This regimented leadership style evident in the narrative has been described as ‘patriarchal’ by Blackmore (2007), Sachs (2003) and Yeatman (1990). As we have seen, this patriarchal leadership is characterised by centralised power, fear of authority, lack of trust, induced pressure, imposed control and autonomy. Power is not distributed and autonomy is engulfed by imposed decisions and strict control.

Despite the evidence of this prevailing ‘patriarchal’ leadership style in the new college reform in our context, there are still anecdotes of hopes for the development of collaborative ways in a networked environment. It is suggested after Ryan (2005) that schools must work towards inclusive leadership that promotes horizontal relationships among an organisation’s members, endorses collective enterprises and works to generate practices. The study promotes the importance of communication to promote inclusion. It advises school leaders to value inclusive two-way interchanges, characteristic of dialogue. Ryan (2005) suggests that engaging in such dialogue requires establishing relationships with communication partners, understanding others and listening to people.

This study has also emphasized that understanding leadership can be strengthened by what has been described by Lumby (2015) in the literature review as “the leadership ability to define the reality of others.” This means that participation and improved communication can help to restore distributed power and democracy in a college network environment. It is encouraging to note that there is still hope among the

college participant educators that the college network reform will provide opportunities for teamwork and collaboration.

7.5.1.3 Third Minor Research Question: Conclusion on Social Justice

The vision of the college network reform policy document for Malta (2005) advocates the setting up of a learning environment that is socially just, autonomous and replete with empowering opportunities and ongoing support. It describes a total revamp of the educational system to provide teachers with a socially just environment and greater job satisfaction. Through networking, schools should be in a position to respond creatively and collaboratively to the needs of the ‘whole learner’ in a socially just way.

However, the data analysis of this lived experience highlights quite a contradictory scenario as described below:

Motivation is stifled by frustration, inequality, helplessness, fear, suspicion and isolation. The actual lived experiences highlighted in this study show low-level job satisfaction dominated by an authoritarian style of college leadership. This study has also highlighted instances of isolation dominated by detachment, lack of involvement, lack of positivity, lack of a safe space in which to work and the required autonomy to work in a socially just way within a networked environment.

This study has drawn on the critical feminist theory, mainly through the contributions of Yeatman (1988), Weedon (1999) and Blackmore (2012a & b) to reinterpret notions of human relations with regard to social injustice and poor morale as not only attributed to work conditions but related also to powerlessness and unliberating attitudes. The critical feminist theory cited in this study highlights that these feelings might be derived from a sense of a lack of individual and collective agency due to teachers’ and leaders’ inability to redress the inequality arising from the performative mentality in schools.

The literature review in this study has shown that the leadership continuum (advocated by Foster and Silverman, 1988) in today’s context has shifted away from cooperation and care to gaining competition advantage. However, the educational leadership continuum cited in this study after Foster (1989) and Gunter (2012) illustrates that

such collective feelings of injustice and low morale are not restricted to the field of education but broadly echo the value shift in society in general.

At the same time, this study has utilised Arendt's theoretical perspective to warn that a workforce can learn to 'labour' and somehow can carve out a way of handling unjust situations with a sense of durability. This study has reinforced Arendt's argument that there can be an 'acceptance' that the power to determine what is to be done lies away from the citizen and is in the hands of the policy makers and institutions. As in Arendt's view, accepting the principle of sovereignty as a replacement for that of free action only results in either the arbitrary domination of a people or else their historical withdrawal from the sphere of public life.

7.6 Addressing the Fourth Minor Research Question

The fourth Minor Research Question reads as follows:

What transformational spaces does the implementation of the reform provide to the network participant?

The vision of the college network reform aims at providing opportunities for growth and development. The line of inquiry to this question establishes to what extent this is happening in reality.

7.6.1 Fourth Minor Research Question: Conclusions on Educational Leadership

This thesis fully supports Arendt's (1958a) argument that those who are engaged in educational leadership need, more than ever, to think about their work – its purposes and processes, as well as its effects and outcomes. In other words, what is required is a transformational thinking approach in leadership. This thesis promotes the view that what is needed in education is more than thinking through academic achievements and prescribed policies – 'the banister' in Arendt's metaphor. It also promotes the view of Arendt's Theory of Natality and recognises it as offering a new approach to educational leadership. The following sub-sections will discuss these aspects in greater detail.

7.6.1.1 Fourth Minor Research Question: Thinking without a Banister A Transformational Thinking Approach in Leadership

This thesis sustains Arendt's (1958a) argument that prescribing a set of steps that governments and leaders can take, regardless of wherever and whoever they are, eliminates one of the most significant educational resources that we have – our capacity to understand, analyse and imagine within our local contexts. What is required is the ability to think without restrictions, or as Arendt described it in her writings as 'thinking without banisters.'

This thesis therefore promotes Arendt's concept of 'thinking without a banister' in relation to college school networks in Malta and any educational institution. In line with Arendt's view, this thesis highlights the fact that educational leaders must be able to not simply follow policy prescriptions. In order to carry out the work of leading and leadership, educational leaders need to be able:

- To critically analyse policy directions;
- To assess and evaluate their own institution in its local, national and international context;
- To not only understand how and why particular educational issues come to be centre stage, whilst others are side-lined but to also communicate this to others;
- To call on a rich set of ideas in order to develop directions for the institution in particular and for education more generally.

This thesis proposes that such an approach requires, among other things, a set of critical thinking tools that lead the educational leader to what Arendt (1958a) refers to as free space for thinking and problematising issues.

This study found Arendt's approach helpful when analysing through a critical lens. It helps us to think impartially about school networking, leadership and collegiality and reveals new ways of thinking and taking action. In Arendtian terms, this means misinterpreted or problematic issues. Using her ideas to think about this one issue,

this thesis showed the limited understanding that the college network reform in Malta has operated within. The analysis of the lived experiences in this study showed that much of the college network reform on leadership and the associated processes, such as distributed leadership in the local context, is similar to what Arendt calls ‘preliminary understanding’ or having a basic grasp of a situation and policy discourse which preceded and guided the actual implementation. This thesis recommends a critical examination of the starting assumptions of both reform and practice utilising Arendt’s engagement in ‘thinking without a banister.’ We should not be afraid to climb the stairs of thinking and understanding without anything to hold on to. Educational leaders need to be liberated and empowered to think freely, critically and creatively about their roles within the new reforms.

7.6.1.2 Fourth Minor Research Question: The Theory of Natality A New Beginning for Educational Leadership

This thesis promotes the concept of a new beginning for educational leadership through Arendt’s Theory of Natality. Following Arendt, this thesis defines action as being both political and public. Action in educational reform is space and needs space; it has been described as an opportunity where the person describes the self, where discussion happens and where the possibilities of ‘natality’ could be realised.

This thesis concludes that participative educational leadership in college networks requires Arendt’s analogy of ‘sitting at a table’ in governance that depicts places where people can be separate but at the same time connected. It has been argued through the literature review of this study that when these spaces are removed and people are essentialised into a type, then totalitarianism can be experienced. Leadership in college networks must provide opportunities for teamwork and collegiality whilst securing individual school space and identity.

The Arendtian theoretical framework argues that governance must be marked by the positivity of thinking as a process of natality. The literature review of this study showed how Arendt’s concept of natality transcends the boundaries of both classical philosophy and of critical theory as an exercise of negation. Within this theoretical framework, this thesis never ceases to emphasise the empowering force of affirmative

passions and thus, redefines the embodied subject as ‘becoming’ a nomad looking out for ‘space’ to venture in the openness without any limitations or imposed conditions.

The transition through these Arendtian concept is very relevant to the situation of the network reform in Malta. A reform policy that provides no space for opportunities for action and growth, makes one feel threatened to take any action and move from one school/college to another. The narrative enquiry has also highlighted that the leader is also seen as a ‘threatening’ figure. This generates an interesting mix of ‘powerless and powerful feelings’ and ‘endangered and dangerous’ positions. Metaphorically speaking, the tight rope walker is clearly in danger of falling but also looks like a dominant figure flying in mid-air. As suggested by Braidotti (1994), the nomadic leader feels that any missed step will send her crashing down in the underlying abyss, but the leader is also seen by the school as having an ‘unnatural’ power due to her liberating nomadic attitude. These opposite feelings must be juggled to generate a sense of belonging to the new Head and her new node.

When eventually the leader manages to promote the opportunity to others to work collaboratively together (in Arendt’s analogy this would be the round table) whilst still having individual spaces and personal liberty (this would be the individual space round the table), the leader is no longer seen as a threatening figure because the ‘danger’ changes into space for creativity. The Head Teacher and her school can work together in synergy whilst providing space for individual initiatives and possible action. With the leader’s extensive experiences and insights acquired through nomadic ventures, the school network will allow for more space and opportunity to realise various initiatives and projects.

Eventually, this idealistic state will generate a web-like environment whereby the leader can act in liberty in her node whilst generating higher links with other nodes, especially the previous nodes. The ‘web’ will have the ability of having an inbuilt strength greater than the individual needs.

7.7 Recommendations Resulting from this Study

In this study, I have accepted that the Maltese educational system, like all other societal systems, has had to face the challenge of changing the way it functions – from a centralised, isolated structure to a new network organisation. However, the conclusions of this study imply a mismatch between the proposed official document discourse, with the student at the centre and the implementation strategy during the first five years of the networking reform. For this reason, this thesis concludes by drafting a tentative alternative reality and proposes a somewhat different approach. Rather than focusing on structure and leadership, this alternative proposal focuses on the needs of the students by placing the students at the centre of the reform and by considering them to the focal point of the reform. Having set the stage with the axle of the wheel focused on the student, all other structures are then built around supporting the student.

Thus, it follows that both College and School Leadership must focus on core students' needs. Power in schools must be diluted for the best interest of the students in student engagement. Motivation is to be focused on students' interests. Educators will, in turn, be more motivated when evaluating the results of their effort and work in student engagement.

The themes of voice and communication will again be focused on the students, rather than management and administration. Support structures will truly function as educational tools '*for all children to succeed*' as intended by the policy reform document.

7.7.1 Recommendation: Conceptual Change in Lived Experiences

The literature review of this thesis discussed and analysed the configuration of different types of network models. The shape of four major network models was illustrated using descriptions highlighting their organised structures, their set patterns of information exchange and the defined positions of the network participants.

Besides reviewing these centred systems, this thesis contrasted acentred systems, namely rhizomatic networks in which communication runs from any neighbour to any

other, the stems or channels do not pre-exist and all individuals are interchangeable, defined only by their role at any given moment. The resulting recommendations read as follows:

It is recommended that a conceptual change in governance and space in lived experiences is brought about by adopting The Rhizome Network in the local educational system.

The starting point of all this proposed methodology starts with identifying students' needs, be it academic or social. This concept is in line with the theories presented by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and more specifically, the rhizomatic network which was discussed in the literature review of this study. It was argued that as a rhizome grows to find water and parts of it die when there is water scarcity, in the same way the rhizomatic network grows round students' needs and irrelevant sections die away.

Following Arendt (1958a), structures need to be flexible and grow or "shrink" according to the need at hand. Flexibility of structures can be brought about by putting less emphasis on the actual building of the school and concentrating more on the life within the building. In a nutshell, the focus should be more on function rather than the shape of building. The educational network then needs to develop around the students and to offer all the necessities that are identified. Different schools need to function together in a thematic network, rather than a logistic one. Being such a small nation state allows us to stop focusing on locality since from a spatial point of view, the whole country is smaller than a major European city.

Clearly, when discussing such networks there must be a realignment and rethinking at human resource level. As proposed by Braidotti (1994), educators need to follow a nomadic approach following the oasis of the students' needs. Clearly, nomadic educators working in a rhizomatic thinking framework need mentoring and coaching to promote a culture that would result in rhizomatic and nomadic school leaders. The underlying dimension always needs to be the individual students' needs.

After referring to literature by Castells (2000), it was argued that rhizomatic networks are not attached to a network structure but to the means of communication flows. It is the 'fluidity' of a rhizomatic network that distorts its shape and causes it to change

continuously according to the rate of flow of information between the different nodes. In the postmodern age, we are living in Castells' space of flows. Change constitutes an increasingly prominent aspect of our lives. The phenomena of fast accelerating change had taken new and different forms and global perspectives, creating urgent challenges and infiltrating the world of politics, education, leadership, culture and the economic world. The 'society of signs,' as described in the literature review after referring to Castells (2000), is often characterised as one of unpredictable change, where, taken for granted assumptions, are being shaken and displaced. This is also true in the field of education.

As argued in the literature review of this study, rhizomatic thinking, proceeds by way of a great distrust of everyone who wants to save us or give us foundations. It distrusts all schemes and programmes, all visions and missions. It proceeds on the assumption that any given structured model harbours within it an exclusionary gesture. Rhizomatic thinking leads to the metamorphosis of school rhizome networks where people are not dominated, regulated, excluded and exploited through imposed power relations and positionings. Participants in school rhizomes are placed at the centre of the system.

It was argued in the Data Analysis Chapter of this study that the proposed network organisation for the Maltese education system pictures an organisational chart that puts the Principal Leader at the top with the subordinates at lower levels. Each subordinate has a lower layer of other subordinates. In the Analysis Chapter, this was described as a 'Y' network arrangement or as an 'inverted tree.' The person at the top clearly has the most power. The study narrative enquiry illustrated how the emphasis on hierarchy and rigidity did not augur well for a more flexible and innovative educational system in a networked setup.

On the other hand, as argued in Chapter Three, where the focus is on the socio-cultural context of the policy text, a closer examination of both the vision of the network policy and the views expressed by the policy makers illustrates that the direction is towards open communication streams, autonomy and decentralisation. I have argued that the hierarchical structure model of the present network models can evolve in a network of flows that gives space to directed growth. The hub represented by a central organ (the

Principal) moves to the background to leave the network to evolve by itself. But at the same time, it is always ready to guide and to support where the need arises in favour of reaching educational aims. It is my recommendation that empowerment or the potential for decision-making, should shift from the controller to the individual players, who are all experts in their particular field, through a process by which each stakeholder can be given similar autonomy and leadership to influence decision-making by being given a crucial role in the running of their school and college.

7.7.2 Recommendation: A Significant Change in Communication

In this thesis, I am arguing in favour of a network ‘model’ that has no fixed shape. It is made up of disseminated nodes, represented by individual schools, which are bound together by the ‘flows of information’ that spread around. The shape of the rhizomatic model changes continuously as new nodes/schools are added whilst others are removed according to their own response. The ‘power’ is not in the centre, represented by the College Principal in case of school networks but the power lies in the ‘nodes’ that give life and shape to the network model and not the other way around. It is a model that shows the contingency of every school. It comprises the full control of the expert, releases all the loose ends in every system and exposes the systematic constraint of tightly organised structures. This recommendation should bring about a significant change in the mode of communication, adjusting it from a top down flow to one which is much more multi-lateral and reads as follows:

It is recommended that a change in the mode of communication, from top down to a multi-lateral flow, is encouraged throughout the local educational system.

Moving the Principal out of the limelight does not automatically mean disposing of this fundamental role in the network. One can compare the function of the Principal to that of a football coach or better still, to a basketball coach. The coach gives direction, provides spaces for training and supports all team activities. Training is rigorous and disciplined but then once the games start, the players become nomadic and play to their best ability and according to their stringent training and roles. The coach takes a back seat, only intervening when is absolutely necessary, such as changing positions and roles when the need arises. The coach also instigates time-outs when the game is not following the intended directions but during the actual

game, the coach sits and watches without too much intervention. During the game, it is the team members that generate play, defend, score and eventually win or lose the match. The coach always shoulders the full responsibility of the loss or the win of each game. The main role of the team coach (similar to the Principal in the college network) is always to support, to identify weaknesses and to plan improvement actions in both direct and indirect ways.

Rhizomatic networks do all this, not by any show of strength of their own but by letting all the nodes loose by giving them space to act and grow according to their own needs and pace. These nodes, as referred to by Caputo (1987) in the literature review of this study, are not to be ‘assimilated’ by a powerful centre of a network. On the other hand, in line with Braidotti (1994), it is argued that any centre must disseminate its power and its agendas to the peripheries, empowering all nodes whilst tolerating differences, identities and diverging perspectives.

However, a rhizomatic model of school networks is not opposed to institutional organisation or the notion of community. Paradoxically, it requires rather good dynamics to keep school institutions free, to keep them mobile, in motion, flexible, in flux and moving forward. It does not deny that institutional organisation is usually the way to get things done and that we tend to naturally organise our practices along systematic lines. Yet, a rhizomatic model would favour loose learning communities that resist assimilation by one school node, that are both hospitable and reassuring by avoiding assimilating their members into sameness; one that encourages us to view justice and democracy as permanently unfulfilled promises, holding out hope for us and engaging our full commitment to their cause; a response that encourages us to think of networks policy in terms of such a commitment and of the networked school as a concrete endeavour to articulate it.

7.7.3 Recommendation: A Fundamental Change in School Learning

As a result of what I have learnt through this study, I recommend a fundamental change in the way students are taught. I recommend a substantial shift from a traditional concept of learning to encouraging open learning communities. This recommendation therefore reads as follows:

It is recommended that, throughout the local educational system, there is a fundamental change in school learning whereby there is a significant shift from traditional concepts to open learning communities.

We have grown used to identifying schools as being fixed and unchanging structures for learning, rather than flexible, smaller areas that are welcoming, user-friendly and temporary. Our institutions, to the extent that they explicitly address issues of learning, are largely based on the assumption that learning is an individual process, that it has a beginning and an end, that it is best separated from the rest of our activities, and that it is the result of effective teaching. Hence, we arrange classrooms and school offices where students, teachers and head teachers are protected from the distractions of their participation in the outside world and can therefore focus on specific exercises.

To assess learning, we use tests with which students and teachers struggle in one-on-one combat, where knowledge must be demonstrated out of context and where collaborating is considered cheating. As a result, much of our institutionalised teaching and training is perceived by would-be learners as irrelevant and most of us come out of this treatment feeling that learning is boring and arduous and that we are not really cut out for it. So, what if we adopt a different educational leadership perspective, one that is built on a rhizomatic concept that gives space to the growth of learners' learning to be carried out in the context of the lived experience of participation. This study, in line with the writings by Castells and Cardoso (2006), refers to this as the 'network society.' And what if, in addition, we assume that learning is, in its essence, a fundamentally social phenomenon that is about communicating, becoming and changing, reflecting our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing? What kind of understanding would such a rhizomatic perspective yield on how learning takes place and on what is required to support it in administrative terms?

This structure of a 'centralised network model' proposed for Maltese schools in this study is segregating Head Teachers within their own cluster, leaving them very limited opportunities to move and to work along with others in the wider educational system. To approach a rhizomatic concept, I am suggesting that we have to decentralise our system and to loosen the hierarchical network structures explained in the literature

review on networks in this study to assimilate a process that goes back to the early years of our educational system.

At the beginning, schools, especially church schools, grew from convents and dwellings. In his research work on the main developments in Maltese Education, Zammit Ciantar (1996) gives us a genealogical piece of work identifying the first nodes of learning dating back to 1397 which provided schooling for small groups of students. Places of learning were usually small and easily accessible and provided by the Cathedral Chapter and religious orders.

In 1592, Pope Clement VII authorised the Jesuits in Malta to extend infant and primary education to various areas, including the outlying villages making use of religious dwellings, unused church spaces and reaching out to people's homes. Perhaps we need to rekindle these ideas. Why not use historical sites in our villages to teach history? Why not use geographical areas of interest in our own localities to teach geography? What about teaching social studies, art, music, drama in the village's cultural sites, such as unused windmills, local council premises, the village's hall and art studio.

Only by enlarging our concepts of what a school should be can we reach a point of flexibility. If we need sports grounds, let us use those which are available and run by the local councils and football nurseries. This concept of expanding the boundaries of the schools and making effective use of the community resources has long been propagated by the document, *Tomorrow's Schools* (Consultative Committee, 1995) which launched the idea of 'schools as learning communities,' a concept which was reinforced in the National Minimum Curriculum Document (Ministry of Education, 1999). Following this revolutionary concept, there are implications of greater difficulties in management. Managing a school with boundary walls and gates is one thing but managing a 'school' that spans across villages and towns is another.

As I have argued in detail throughout this study following critical theoretical perspectives on leadership and networks, participation and growth in rhizomatic networks has broad implications for what it takes to manage, understand and support learning. For network members, it means that learning is an issue of engaging in and

contributing to the practices of the outer school communities, what is referred to as ‘twinning’ of schools, both locally and abroad. This twinning activity, most often through electronic media is already being implemented locally by some schools through the support of a National Agency for eTwinning. For the school community, it means that learning is an issue of refining its practice and ensuring new generations of learners that can communicate effectively, whilst growing through sharing practices and new experiences. For the organisation of the educational sector, it means that learning is an issue of sustaining the interconnected channels of the network of schools through which each school can function as a node and thus become a channel for the ‘flow of information’ (Castells & Cardoso, 2006). Communication overflows from each cluster to spill over in another cluster.

A rhizomatic context does not limit growth to one node only. There are no parameters that will limit or impede communication to one setting only. Networking, in a rhizomatic concept, does not mean providing an opportunity for clustered schools to communicate only between each other within their identified college. It was argued earlier, that networking that is not sustained in a rhizomatic attitude, may run the risk of ‘exiling’ the network members within each cluster from the other clusters of networks. Before the implementation of the pilot phase of the network policy, Head Teachers used to meet other Heads from all the different schools in Malta during dedicated meetings for them. The narrative analysis has highlighted the unexpected problem of isolation that Head Teachers are experiencing in the new network reform.

In this sense, communication between schools is not a separate activity. It is not something school members do when they are ‘invited’ to a one-off meeting by the co-ordinator to meet colleagues teaching the same year within the same college, thus always reinforcing the hierarchical, centralised and segregated structure of the school network set up. On an administrative level, collegial spaces may not be ‘centralised’ to cater only for the group of Head Teachers that are clustered within that particular network. Communication in a rhizomatic set up becomes part of the network of members participation in larger communities and organisations, in a process of providing collegial spaces through which to create the setup of temporary collaborative organisations that work on the appreciation of what brings staff together,

whilst discussing common concerns and solving possible problems in different locations and time zones.

A rhizome can have nodes in different countries. International colleges, such as the Maastricht School of Management and the City and Guilds, a British institution are represented all over the world and the University of London has also opened a ‘node’ in Malta. The nodes of these institutions exist in different time zones and continents, in keeping with the close-knit structure of the network.

When discussing the concept of temporary collaborative organisations, it is important to realise why the term did not exist in the pre-network area. When a school is just one isolated entity, the organisation is so limited that human sources cannot nurture temporary collaborative organisation. Only through the increased human pool in networks can such temporary collaborative organisations co-exist. These organisations are made up of educators located in different geographical parts of the rhizomatic network.

The international colleges are practical examples of rhizomatic networks in action. They also function through nomadic and rhizomatic concepts. In practice, the node leader, that is the co-ordinator of each geographic country or region, must find students to enlarge his/her nodes. In such a setup, there is also the economical need to finance the institution. In this case, both the lecturers and the tutors need to travel between the nodes to lectures. This is a very nomadic concept where movement follows educational necessities.

Whilst travelling through nodes, which for the international colleges means travelling across continents, the nomadic lecturers and leaders are also very much cyborgs to correct and give feedback to their international students from all over the world. This notion of geographically transposing oneself leads me to another aspect of the leader – his/her nomadity. This concept of nomadism can serve as a safeguard against the dangers of totalitarianism associated with dominance and stagnation.

7.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I referred once again to the various research questions and addressed them in the light of the concepts and reflections that I observed during this research study. There was one major research question and three minor ones, and in each case a conclusion was reached.

Through narrative analysis, this chapter provided a discussion and a detailed reply to the major research question of the study. The findings based on narrative enquiry were supported by the discussion of the resulting outcomes of the minor research questions. The concluding statements were guided by reflective analysis, based on the theoretical framework derived from study of leadership and networks when viewed from an Arendtian perspective. The narrative enquiry analysis led to the final discussion in this chapter, based on my lived experiences in response to the major and minor research question.

This chapter also provided a number of recommendations derived from the conclusion of this study. A conceptual change in educational leadership and the school experience is recommended for a new beginning. The proposals given are based on encouraging meaningful change processes in the implementation of the college network reform in the local scene. The focus is on effective communication with various stakeholders without imposed limitations or controls.

The final reflections in the conclusion and the related recommendations are shared and summarised in the last chapter of the study. This is followed by recommendations regarding future research possibilities in anticipation of future studies which will be supported by more detailed knowledge on College Education Leadership, in relation to local education.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the overall recommendation to the main research question of the study and the limitations of the study are discussed within this framework. This concluding chapter also highlights the significance of the study and outlines various opportunities for future research on this subject.

8.2 An Alternative Vision of Leadership for School Networks: Rhizomatic Leadership

In a rhizomatic network, specific attributes of the leader become necessary following the educational objectives of the school plan. There is a great possibility that the specific attributes are not found in the Head Teacher as a leader but need to be sought after with a different person. However, this does not mean that the Head is rendered useless or irrelevant but needs to be relocated to a different node. Relocation means matching abilities of the leader with the necessary attributes of the nodes. Ideally, this transposition is self-driven, that is the leader herself/himself feels the need to move somewhere where her/his skills can be fully utilised. A leader could have, for example, exceptional organisational skills which could be exercised in a node. Following the nomadic move and the necessary actions by the leader in that node, it is motivational for the leader to move to another node that needs restructuring.

In the present situation, this transposition is not possible due to bureaucratic controls and lack of the necessary procedures. Movement from one school to another can be achieved by means of a transfer system. Historically, this system has had many negative connotations, almost regarded as a ‘punishment’ due to a time when school transfers used to be imposed on certain teachers and school administrators who were instructed to move to another school without any specific reason (Muscat, 2004).

Whilst social and political conditions changed, transfers are still regarded mostly as ‘a negative change,’ very often being the last resort to teachers who find themselves in circumstances of redundancy or lack of adaptability to the school ethos, these two reasons being the two most common concerns.

Paradoxically, earlier in this study it was noted that in a rhizomatic network, transfers or movements from one point to another are generally viewed by nomadic philosophers such as Braidotti as being ‘positive,’ ‘enriching’ and ‘motivating’ (Braidotti, 1994). It has been argued in the literature review of this study that a rhizome gives the possibility to leaders to offer to give their services where they are most needed due to the possibility of unobstructed mobility. It has been argued in the first chapters of this thesis that mobility can give job satisfaction and empowerment (Braidotti, 1994). From a nomadic perspective, teachers and leaders acculturate themselves to a nomadic attitude that urges them to ‘transpose’ themselves from one school to another, in different sectors of the educational system, following needs and circumstances, whilst enriching themselves through various learning experiences. In this scenario, it is the dynamism of the leaders and teachers that keeps the network fluid and alive, loosening unchanging social relations whilst empowering network members through the spread of knowledge, resulting from unrestricted communication flows that are kept alive through the possible interaction with different people and changing circumstances.

As argued in the data analysis chapter, redressing this situation in Malta will not be easy. Indeed, it will be extraordinarily difficult. For many decades, our schools have isolated educators (both teachers and school administrators) from one another, our school day has been fragmented into separate subject matters and we lack time for genuine reflection, sharing and critical inquiry amongst teachers. And, to complicate matters further, as it has been argued throughout this study, the decentralisation processes in networking initiatives are creating more demands on schools which are now of a more intrusive quality as school boundaries are becoming more permeable and transparent within the same network (Bezzina, 1995; Borg & Falzon, 1989).

The relentless pressures of today’s complex network environment due to fast, changing knowledge, the drive for performativity and the emphasis on measurable

outcomes have intensified the overload. In fact, school administrators are being ‘sandwiched’ between the various hierarchical demands of the network models proposed for Maltese schools. Leaders need to be involved in the process and the required training in order for them to create a sense of purpose and enough confidence to be engendered. This specific professional development training entails team building concepts, motivational leadership training, communication and managerial skills which are very useful for non-network leadership but essential for the nomadic leader.

This thesis puts forwards an ‘empowering’ concept to the network leader through the image of the nomad. The leader in a network should take the initiative and be given permission to carry out ‘journeys’ to other schools not only in one’s own cluster but also in other clusters, to explore areas of our educational systems that she/he has never discovered before and to meet other staff, students, parents and other people involved in our educational system that she/he would never have met before. This venture will open horizons to the leader who will work within different sectors and levels of our educational system at different places thus, empowering herself/himself with new knowledge.

In a changing school environment, the leader can no longer conceptualise her/his headship as a ‘kingdom rule’ that lasts for a long period of time. The leader working in a juncture of educational reform must develop and evoke a vision of an administration that is not fixed and permanent to one location only. A nomadic vision implies the leader to ‘move’ according to the need at hand, to volunteer and give services wherever they are needed, to apply expertise anywhere in favour of the learning child. The needs are assessed and identified by the network of Head Teachers themselves in the College Council of Heads who in turn, distribute power and support their respective network members so as to empower everyone to reflect, act and move according to the identified needs. A nomadic leader will rotate and acquire new roles according to the situation and circumstances. Such a leader will not stay long in any place. In practical terms this means that the network Head Teacher must be able to create a driving team that acts with strength and resolution on the school community difficulties and plans the way ahead to solve them. She/he might be required to stay in a school to see the results of the school’s planned actions or else to go to another

node and to leave the execution to someone else. The period of stay depends on the demand of the need.

This thesis has shown that Arendt (1963, 1976) produced texts that challenged the notions of freedom and politics and notably, examined the lives of people, ideas and historical events in ways that are pertinent to the purposes and practices of education. A case was made to utilise Arendt's theoretical framework for local issues pertaining to the investigated educational reform and corresponding leadership. The main issues concerning leadership and networks in the new reform were analysed through the contributions of educational leadership theory read through an Arendtian perspective supported with critical perspectives from feminist theory. Such an integrated approach enabled analysis of not merely the structures of moral and political activities, but also the form of consciousness and human passions and emotions that underpin and sustain them. In doing so, this thesis opened the area of educational leadership experiences to reflective and critical thinking.

8.3 Limitations of the Thesis

This study can be described as a modern-day ethnography, whereby the narrative of the researcher's lived experiences, in this case mine, is analysed and reflected upon with reference to the broader social context. This study cannot claim to represent the lived experience in all colleges. The aim of this study is not to generalise to be relevant for every context. As argued in the Methodology Chapter, the narrative is always tentative and cannot provide certainties. It has been emphasised that the narrative enquiry is also very personal and central to the human experience. Temporality, causation and human interest embrace the particular within a given context. It cannot be interpreted in other contexts. The methodology of this study emphasises that the outcomes of the lived experiences are not always the same for everyone, despite them having the same experiences. This study illustrates how the narrative captures the contextual influences in a way that other research methods may not.

This is not a scientific study that can be replicated and generalised to the whole reform. The primary task of this study has been the better understanding of a particular human experience in society and in time. This study argues that this knowledge will

ultimately and along the way, lead to a betterment of human life. We cannot fulfil this task unless we can reflect upon humans as they are engaged in living their times. As with the methodology, the work proceeds according to the general principles, interpreted under local conditions, rather than fixed rules. Narrative research, with its contingencies and explorations, cannot be controlled at the outset by outside observers in the same way as hypothesis-testing studies. This limitation restricts the generalisability of the study.

The data collected in this thesis occurred during a fixed period and covers the following scholastic years namely that of 2008/2009, 2010/2011 and 2012/2013. This amounts to five years of the implementation of the Malta's state college network reform. These are practically the first years of the establishment of the reform on a whole national approach. My position in this thesis is both of a participant and a researcher. Thus, I could not prolong the data collection (the autoethnography process) for further years since I had to move to the next phase of my study, mainly data findings, reporting and analysis. I am reading this PhD study on a part-time basis and thus, this posed a limitation on my available time for my research study. I had to apply for an additional one-year extension in order to be able to analyse in depth the voluminous data that was incurred in such an ethnography study over a period of years.

The current situation of the reform might have changed since the context is now different. My study provides a deep analysis of an inception and early development of a college network in our islands. There is much that we do not know about power, leadership, bureaucracy, voice, governance, social justice and conflicts in the newly formed context in the Maltese Islands.

This study contributes useful knowledge about how these elements have interacted in a specific Maltese college system as it was moving from its initial phases into more developed maturity. This is primarily a study on educational leadership at a specific juncture of our educational reform. However, the core elements of this study provide a valuable resource for future researchers interested in the understandings of the Maltese education system, the differences between rhetoric and reality of policy and the complexities of policy implementation that are helpful to policy making in many other countries.

The recommendations forwarded in this study reflecting my view of what should happen imply another kind of change management that has not succeeded with the 2005 reform. The implementation of a rhizomatic model of networking favouring loose communities that enable unrestricted communication and active participation requires a massive change in mindset and group dynamics. This study is setting up quite a challenge that might not be easily achieved. A culture change takes time and requires incessant support and perseverance to yield results.

8.4 The Significance of this Study

Guided by the main research questions, this study shows how the principles underlying Arendt's (1958a) quest for meaning can serve as a useful methodology to attempt to explain 'meaning' in the college network reform in Malta and assist in bringing about some significant changes in the local educational system. This was also supported by referring to other theoretical literature from the educational leadership sphere in search of 'meaning,' such as by the authors Harris (2015), Gunter (2013), Lashway (2003) and Foster (1989), among others.

8.4.1 Use of the Arendtian Conceptual Framework in Education

This study makes a case for the use of an Arendtian theoretical framework as a thinking guide and reflective lens to the local issues pertaining to the college network reform in Malta and the corresponding leadership. It has been argued throughout this study that Arendt's approach can provoke ideas, meanings and understandings for educational leadership by examining the relationship between people generating ideas (policy makers) and people taking action (leaders). Through Arendt's critical lens, leadership in education is not seen as 'natural phenomena' but driven by thinking individuals that must be understood, both in terms of their set frameworks (objectivity) and the actual lived experiences of these activities (subjectivity).

This Arendtian conceptual framework enables the educational community in Malta to reflect, not only on the content of the initiatives in leadership, but also on the rationale, values and philosophical concepts that underlie them. This study has highlighted Arendt's conceptual framework and its application to examine leadership and human affairs based on contingency, human reality and reliability.

The analysis of the study highlights the need of Arendt's perspective, based on a hermeneutical approach as a drive to discover what should be done, what is right to be done, what is acceptable and why. As a result of this study, I believe that our educational community requires the implementation of this Arendtian framework to examine 'the totality' of experience, whilst analysing in depth the delivery of intentions, agendas, interactions and outcomes that might not be easily deciphered at a superficial level.

By utilising Arendt's phenomenological framework, based on the concept of natality or new thinking, this study encourages educational leaders to reflect more on their work and to think deeply about its purposes, processes, effects and outcomes. This thesis takes the view that what is needed in education is more than thinking through academic achievements and prescribed policies – 'the banister' in Arendt's metaphor.

Following Arendt's view, this thesis emphasises that educational leaders must be able to not simply follow policy prescriptions. Arendt highlights the need that educational leaders should be able to communicate their thinking with others as well. To do the work of leading and leadership, educational leaders need to critically analyse policy directions and assess their impacts on institutions, both on a national and international level. They need to be aware why certain issues are given more prominence, whilst others are side lined. Following Arendt, this study gives, among other things, a set of critical thinking tools that can lead the educational leader to analyse and discuss various issues in fresh and challenging ways.

Overview: **This is the first thesis in the Maltese educational fora that has analysed the proposal of adapting and applying an Arendtian conceptual framework to local educational leadership.**

8.4.2 Use of Narrative Enquiry of a Lived Leadership Experience

This study embraces narrative enquiry as the main research method. It offers this field a narrative enquiry of a study of a lived Maltese leadership experience in a college network setup. This study builds on a reconceptualisation of the concept of the subject/object in a research relationship. This study highlights the fact that policies in education are not a stand-alone factor but exist in a context at a time. It also acknowledges that human relationships are continuously changing.

This narrative enquiry of a lived leadership experience is embedded in a culture, in a tradition with unique, historical conditions and experiences. Such a pragmatic approach for experience is not only fit for a theoretical framework for narrative enquirers, but offers a research framework that promotes a way of understanding experience. It is experience, not narrative, that is the driving pulse of this thesis.

The methodology chapter has highlighted how narrative inquiry was utilised to study leadership experience. For me as a researcher, narrative was the closest I could come to experience. The main research aim was to extract meaning from experience recorded in journal entry forms.

Narrative enquiry helped me to analyse, interpret and reflect on issues of power, voice and social justice from my own recorded stories, by asking questions of meaning and social significance. Such a narrative methodology offers educational leaders the possibilities to revisit their way of doing things, to look for new directions and to find more effective solutions. My hope is that this study offers support by working from the boundaries to help educational leaders stretch themselves in new ways as they try to come closer to understanding the leadership experience relevant to our educational system.

Overview: **This thesis therefore offers a contemporary contribution to the field of narrative inquiry in the Maltese educational system.**

8.4.3 Local Scene Analysis of Educational Leadership

The narrative enquiry in this study has clearly shown that the local policy reform which brought about college networking in the Maltese islands (analysed in this thesis) cannot be simply considered as a benign and normal process. Following an Arendtian perspective, this thesis shows how important it is for reforms in education to be investigated and questioned, both for design and delivery.

The literature review of this thesis has highlighted that major interventions in education, presented as modernising reforms are being rendered into complex and communal exchange processes which do not respect the values and practices of those

most affected by it, such as the students, teachers, school leaders and parents, that is the stakeholders.

After referring to Castells (2000), I have argued that the current models of preferred school networks in colleges are based on functional and normative categories, often labelled as ‘standards.’ I have reached the conclusion, as argued by Arendt (1958a, 1958b) that by complying with this, a person can become ‘stateless within a state.’

The data analysis of this study has shown that new reforms are presented as ‘innocent’ but in reality, leaders, teachers and children have been rendered stateless through demotivation, bureaucracy, control, disillusion and imposition. This study presents a critical philosophical outlook to the local educational scene examining whether there is any potential enforced crystallisation of totalitarian conditions in Maltese education through the emerging ‘distributed leadership’ in networks. This was the main element of the study research question.

The study of local educational leadership literature utilising an Arendtian framework enables the analysis on the relationship between the state, reform policy and knowledge that can show how the newly introduced reform might deny the active dialogue within the plurality of theories, methodologies and methods, within leadership in the local scene. As discussed in the theoretical framework of this study within an Arendtian ideology, this study can also show how reforms might lead people to learn to ‘labour’ and potentially ‘work’ but not to take action.

This thesis invites the educational community in the Maltese Islands to consider it necessary to focus on how interventions in schools through external policy such as the college network reform in Malta might be about removing the spaces for action and, as advocated by Arendt (1958a, 1958b) how the job of those functioning within the local would be to provide a veil of ordered compliance.

Overview: **This thesis therefore contributes to the local scene analysis of educational leadership and review of the reform policy which brought about the system of Maltese college school networks.**

8.5 Final Reflections

This study, based on a narrative enquiry of a college network in Malta, shows a substantial mismatch between the vision of the Reform Document and my actual lived experience, both as a participant and as the researcher. As has become evident from the discussion, the notion of distributed leadership for successful networks which was recommended by the Reform Document is not being effectively implemented. The models proposed by this document for networks in Malta present a hierarchical organisation that totally contradicts the possibility of distributed leadership in college networks in Malta. The proposed models depict static and fixed school buildings that cannot be easily changed, according to need. This is totally not compatible with contemporary social reality.

In a changing school environment, school leaders can no longer conceptualise leadership as a ‘kingdom rule’ that lasts for a long period of time. The narrative analysis of this study clearly shows that the school leader working in a juncture of educational reform must develop and evoke a vision of an administration that is not fixed and permanent to one location only. A nomadic vision implies the leader and educators ‘move’ according to need, to volunteer, to give services wherever they are needed, to apply expertise anywhere in favour of the learning child. The needs are assessed and identified by the network of participants who, in turn, distribute power, support and expertise among themselves and their respective network members to empower all to reflect, to act and to move according to the identified needs.

A nomadic leader will rotate and acquire new roles according to the needs identified. Such a leader will not stay long in any place. In practical terms this means that the network leader must be able to create a driving team that acts with strength and resolution on the school community difficulties and plan the way ahead to solve them. The leader might be required to stay in a school to see the results of the school’s planned actions or else go to another node and leave the implementation to someone else. The period of stay depends on whether there is a greater need elsewhere. Movement from one place to another needs to be facilitated by unobstructed communication flows that can be enhanced by the expert use of information technology and communication methods.

8.6 One of My Last Diary Entries

"It is already five years down the line from the Reform. We started the new experience of this networking reform by having three Colleges and three College Coordinators in a pilot study - Now we have ten Colleges. The coordinator is established as the College Principal. There are no 'physical changes' in the school institutions. Our schools still look the same from the outside. Many of the post war school buildings still tell the history of our educational system from their facades. Whilst looking at these relatively 'large' buildings when compared to our terraced houses, it seems as if time has stopped. The dark stains on the globigerina limestone are witness of difficult moments and challenges. Yet the standing buildings are testimonies of a surviving and resilient mission that will challenge the years to come.

The story inside the schools is different. My experience in the college reform is teaching me that is not the reform but the approach and the style of the leader that can actually make all the difference. It is the attitude and the charisma of the leader that actually mould the concept of leadership in a College and the story of many people within the same buildings ... We are living different experiences while success or failure are both determined by the College and School Leader's drive and direct involvement.

Nowadays, I can value the importance of the role of the leader more than ever before. This particular lived experience has taught me that the fluidity of college dynamics makes 'change' and 'ownership' in the leadership process as two complimentary yet contrasting concepts.'

Thursday 18th October 2012.

8.7 Future Research Possibilities

As a result of the findings of this thesis, I would recommend that more narrative studies in the local context are carried out in the future, to seek more deep and grounded inquiries of the lived experiences. This thesis argues for the need of ethnography to analyse the real gaps between the words of the Reform Document and the actual lived experiences.

Following Arendtian thinking, the rationale behind the Reform Document is well-intentioned and all-encompassing to meet the demands of today's networked world. However, as well advised by Arendt, we should never stop problematising reforms, in this case in education. Arendt urged her readers to continue questioning and thinking critically on reform and their discourse especially when it comes to implementation.

The vision and objectives which are reflected in the Reform Document represent a clear overview of where such reforms, if implemented effectively, could lead. A good outcome of such educational reforms is beneficial to all as it represents the careful nurturing and educating of future generations to help them become democratic citizens who are able to meet the demands of society, both in their private lives and in the public realm.

Future studies could possibly focus on revising those aspects of the reform which, once implemented, have not had the desired results and/or did not bring about the necessary changes in the field of education. Future studies could investigate what issues are impeding the implementation of such changes and present workable recommendations for the benefit of the whole educational community in Malta and in a wider sense, local society as a whole.

8.8 Final Conclusion

Across the globe, there is a trend towards standardisation and normalisation as to what constitutes good leadership through the implementation of the new reforms. This thesis has argued that in today's constantly changing world, school leadership in the juncture of educational reform cannot be uniformly prescribed or assumed to be fixed and permanent to one location only.

This thesis promotes the view that what is needed in education is more than words in policy documents or 'what works.' Prescribing a set of steps that governments and leaders can take, regardless of wherever and whoever they are, eliminates one of the most significant educational resources we have – our capacity to understand, analyse and imagine within our local context.

This thesis urges that in these times, those who are engaged in educational leadership more than ever before, need to think about their work – its purposes and processes, as well as its effects and outcomes. This is the case regardless of whether we are looking at the leadership field in the college network reform in Malta or at any other leadership field in education.

The narrative enquiry of the lived experiences in a college network in Malta can be applicable and understood within the transactional field of educational research, with a recognisable lexicon by participants in education. This thesis aims to support this kind of reflective educational work and contribution. By grounding analysis through narrative enquiry, this study urges school leaders anywhere to keep alive experienced memories; not just to make sense of and theorise what has happened, but also to examine what this means and what the ongoing policy and practice trajectories are.

This study does not only contribute to the record of events, but also to how other stories that are not officially endorsed can be heard. In building research and policy projects, there is a tendency for individuals and groups to understand their social reality and practice without delving into the deeper layers of water in search of ‘the pearl’ (representing the quest for knowledge). This is in line with the advice given by Arendt (1958a, 1958b) in her writings.

This thesis is a provocation for knowledge producers as field members in schools to challenge how they are being positioned and how they seek to position the self. Primarily, by engaging more through narrative enquiry, this thesis offers helpful perspectives on leadership in the new college reform in Malta, whilst simultaneously inspiring dialogue within the educational community and impacting change through critical social justice and equity lenses.

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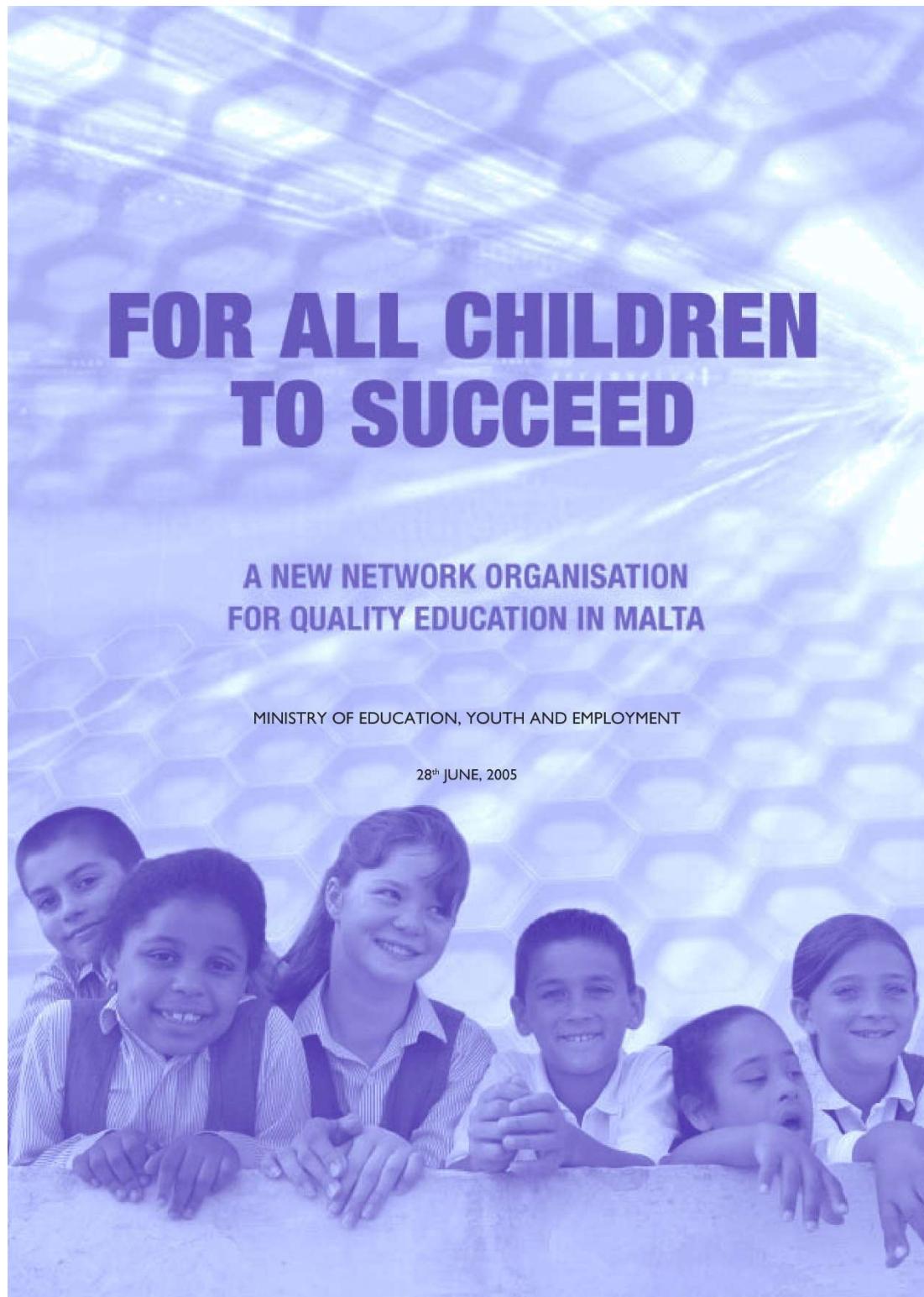
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FOR ALL CHILDREN TO SUCCEED
June 2005

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Louis Galea
Minister of Education, Youth & Employment
Chair, Policy Unit, MEYE



SERVICE TO OUR CHILDREN

“...the Education Division will move away from its role as the operator of government schools, and evolve into a regulator of the entire sector, which includes all public, Church and private schools; helping all of these, as all are of service to our children.

In the same vein, decentralisation in the public sector will proceed with added impetus. Aided by administrative support and the development of managerial skills, State schools will acquire greater autonomy and will be in a position to nurture their own identities. In this way, each school will adapt the national curriculum to its own needs.

As already happens with most Church and private schools, Government primary schools will pair up with secondary schools in order that the passage from one to the other may be smoother. Likewise, though by different means, the passage from school to employment will be rendered easier, including for people with special needs....”¹

**H.E. Prof Guido de Marco
President of Malta
House of Representatives
24 May, 2003**

¹ From the Government's Programme as outlined in the Address by HE Prof Guido de Marco, President of Malta, on the occasion of the opening of the Tenth Parliament, 24th May, 2003.



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FOREWORD

QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

Over the past fifty years we have been delivering education for all: Malta's strong educational roots now seek a new space, freedom, and the tools to ensure **quality education for all** in the coming years. Only a quality leap forward guarantees to present and future generations a full and equitable participation in a healthy democracy and an economy replete of challenges and opportunities.

That explains the growing use of transformation as a goal and why it is now so important. Recent reforms have shown that improvements in key areas such as numeracy and literacy scores are possible. However, raising expectations and performance permanently in our education system means changing 'whole systems', often radically, and equipping them better to effectively face change.

Transformation will only occur by shaping and stimulating disciplined processes of innovation within the school system, and by building an infrastructure capable of laterally transferring ideas, knowledge and new practices.

Huge amounts of money, time and effort are spent trying to spread good practice between different schools. Most of that effort is wasted. The little we know about how this happens (which is not enough) is not used to design more effective dissemination strategies. The basis for improvements is already moving from an emphasis on 'informed prescription' towards 'informed professionalism'. But who will inform and challenge the professionals to adapt?

A familiar reply to this question has always suggested government should 'trust the professionals'. Some education stakeholders still feel that if they could be left to get on with the job, they would perform successfully. Unfortunately, this is not the case. As in any other reform process, it is natural that people involved are likely to protect themselves against change as they are likely to embrace new and better practices. One of our main challenges is to build new professional identities and new professional learning communities that are oriented towards adaptation and bring about radical innovation.

The network is the main organisational form which can give depth and scale to this process of transformation. With the right leadership and governance, the formation of networks, driven by collaborative and competitive endeavour, can play a vital role in creating a first class system of education and of schools. This makes knowledge-based networks an essential component, not the alternative for the way we provide public education. Rather than being represented by a new government agency or a single policy lever, transformation becomes an 'emergent property' of the whole education system as it begins to generate, incorporate and adapt to the best new ideas and practices that develop around it.

During the last decade we became familiar with the emphasis placed on such subjects as the national curriculum, school development plans, inclusion, literacy programmes, ICT in schools, standards and quality, level descriptors, and teachers and school accountability as drivers for school improvement. The different initiatives we embarked upon in the recent past brought in their wake important developments in all areas and levels of educational services in Malta and Gozo. In terms of long term educational development, these remain important strategies. New educational research and the far reaching technological developments changing the world around us, however, make it clear the education system as we know it has reached its limits. It urgently needs renewal to remain relevant.

As we move into a new phase of educational reform, more creative and responsive structures for supporting the work of students, schools and parents are needed. We believe that networks are the new essential units of organisation to replace the questionable dichotomy of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches to educational change.²

² See for example: Hargreaves, D.H. (2003). *Working laterally: how innovation networks make an education epidemic*. DfES Publications and Huberman, M. (1995) Networks that alter teaching: conceptualisations, exchanges and experiments, *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*. Vol. 1, No. 2 pp.193-211.



To achieve this, we now need to strengthen our education system by transforming it into a new framework that will make it respond in a more relevant, effective and timely manner to the needs of our children, our families and our country.

It is for this reason that the Ministry of Education has embarked on a comprehensive process of educational review. This covers the following areas:

1. Early childhood education provision
2. Inclusive education policies, structures and services
3. School attendance and absenteeism
4. State primary and secondary schools
5. Education Division restructuring
6. Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC)
7. Adult basic skills
8. Career guidance
9. Higher and tertiary levels of education
10. Lifelong learning

The drafting of the reports and the accompanying recommendations in almost all these areas are now ready or quite advanced and the whole process is expected to be completed this year. Eventually, each report will form part of this comprehensive educational review. This will lead a new network organisation to provide improved quality education in Malta.

The present document focuses on areas 4 and 5 of the education review, namely the creation of new networks at State primary and secondary education levels, and the restructuring of the Education Division. We are here first identifying the ten interlinked developments that provide a backdrop for the vision to strengthen and improve the quality of education in Malta and the direction this takes. Then, we are proposing a new way on how to deliver improved and better managed education services.

This document, which raises important issues for the future of Malta's education system, is intended as a sound basis for a focused, intense, informed, objective and widespread discussion and dialogue, with all stakeholders particularly and the general public. It is not the intention to take a big bang approach in implementing the proposed reforms. Precautions will be taken to phase-in the reforms and the widest possible consensus will be sought.

In all cases there is a need for careful preparation, piloting, gradual implementation, periodic evaluation, training and effective dialogue with stakeholders, including proper information campaigns and negotiations, where necessary, with the unions concerned. As we shall see, different models are likely to be introduced in different areas according to the availability of secondary school buildings, their size and quality of facilities in relation to the primary schools. To match the building stock required by the school networking exercise, strategic planning for the refurbishment and building of State schools now needs to be redirected.

In the 21st Century Nation-states and many other entities survive better through securing partnerships based on shared responsibilities. Schools are amongst such entities and can only prosper and flourish if they form and gain strengths through new alliances. The intensification of networking based on communication is the way learning communities can free themselves from unnecessary stifling central control and bureaucracy without, however, suffering from weak direction, lack of accountability and an absence of quality assurance.

The emergence of an increasingly shared architecture for our educational system will in itself be of utmost value for the development of the individual and of society. Only when people share in shaping the changes around them will they enable and empower others to do the same.

The proposals put forward in this document have been drawn as a result of an in-depth reflection on the workings of the present system and in the light of how schools network in other countries. The intention is not to replicate any one particular form of organisation or network design. Rather, it is an opportunity to share learning that has already been generated in order that it can inform planning and implementation strategy.



It needs to be made clear at the very outset that this document is not an end in itself nor is it necessarily all-exhaustive. The document intends to spur a critically constructive and mature debate and an implementation process that aims at radically improving the quality of education in Malta where the child remains the central hub of all our plans. Our focus in this restructuring and renewal process is the child who will benefit from enhanced teaching–learning process. The expectations of all of us in the education system are high; we expect standards to be raised; we expect the quality of education to heighten; we expect people in every community to experience a refreshing change and to take an active role in the process.

Each and every one of us must engage in a conscious, untiring effort and commitment to this change process. I know that change will not be easy. However, if we do not embark on this journey with an open mind and a well defined strategy, the repercussions will be regrettable.

I am sure we all want to give each and every child in Malta the best possible chance to develop properly into a happy, healthy, creative and productive person. Each child is unique and has a right to an excellent learning environment that nurtures one's potential, talents and abilities. Every child has the right to succeed in life, irrespective of one's socio-economic background. Children with any disadvantage also have an equal right to be empowered and this is something that we want to address.

Let us all together embark on this exciting and challenging journey - for all children to succeed.

Louis Galea
Minister of Education, Youth & Employment



MESSAGE BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT

May and June seem to be happy months as far as the hatching of conceptual development in Maltese Educational praxis is concerned.

I have happy recollections of May/June 1996, when I was requested by the Malta Union of Teachers to draw up a keynote paper for their biennial general conference entitled "A Quality Education for Malta". It is a term that has come to stay. That paper was written in the first heady days of my appointment as the first ever incumbent of the position of Director (Curriculum Management) and was basically an exhortation to change the outer aspects of Maltese Educational provision through changing the inner attitudes of our minds.

On the 2nd May, 1997, a conference was held for head teachers which set the first steps towards translating the concept of "Quality Education" from theory into practice. The conference introduced the concept of School Development Planning in Maltese Schools and was followed by a gamut of inter-related projects over the next eight years. That process is documented in my contribution to the publication "Knowing Our School" published by the Department of Operations, Education Division in May 2004. School Development Planning was followed by the publication, following a wide ranging consultation process, of the National Minimum Curriculum; the formulation of a strategic plan for the implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum; the sustained implementation of the various objectives outlined in the NMC (vide Chapter I of this publication); the development of the Performance Management Programme for each teacher; and, the setting up of the position of Principal Education Officers in order to enable a system of external audit of schools to take off in the near future.

And that brings me to May 2005. Several references are made in this document to a milestone conference that was organised by the Education Division, being the EXCEL Network National Conference that was held between the 17th and 18th May 2005. EXCEL Network, launched in May 2003, is a forum which networks Maltese school leaders with their counterparts in the UK, in order to share ideas and good practice. The conference was a celebration of good practice in various member schools hailing from both national contexts. It was a pleasure to sit back and relish what a long way we have come in the past decade.

Yet, there was more to the conference than that. The keynote speech delivered by Professor David Hopkins was an excellent mental spur for us to chart the next stage in the way forward towards a quality education that will further ensure that each and every child will succeed in what he called "a modern social democrat education settlement".

Professor Hopkins made two basic points. Quality Education can better be realised by introducing policies to drive school improvement through two separate strands, namely, "High Challenge" and "High Support". Quality Education can better be realised if at both micro and macro level, educational provision aims at achieving simultaneously a "high excellence, high equity education system".

I believe that the proposals in this document can enable the system better to translate Professor Hopkins' two basic tenets into practice. To my mind they are also a natural extension of the reformation process that we have collaboratively undertaken over the past ten years.

At chapter 2, the proposed Malta Education Directorate and the Educational Services Directorate will focus on the "High Challenge" and "High Support" aspects (as referred to earlier on), respectively.

At chapter 3, the proposed college networks is an apt framework for attaining a "high excellence education system" through the pooling of resources and the sharing of ideas and good practice. The guiding principle here is that "none of us is smarter than all of us". Furthermore, the present day paradigm of networking as the most important organisational form of our time, being a brainchild of the World Wide Web zeitgeist is explained in an illuminating way at pages 23 and 24 of this document. Personally, I found it very persuasive.



Beyond the more effective and efficient work practice that will be inspired by the proposed college network, there is the effect on the client of the system – the “be all” of all our endeavours, the child. It is being posited that within a college network of schools each and every child will have a better claim to equity of provision within the educational ecology. No child who will be a “citizen” of a particular college network will be out of sight and out of mind. No child will be “somebody else’s responsibility”. At the same time, a college is a network of schools and not a merger. The proposed structure will still allow enough internal diversity to enable the stretching of all abilities to the “highest excellence” possible. It will safeguard against a debilitating leveling down of all provision.

I enthusiastically await the onset of this reform and like any educator who is sincerely interested in the development of our nation, look forward to active participation in the discussion during the coming months. It is evident that a successful outcome to the implementation of the reforms will deepen our commitment to a quality education wherein every child will succeed.

Charles Mizzi



MESSAGE BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL EDUCATION DIVISION

Malta has always aimed high and achieved results where Education is concerned. Local leaders in Education have never lived in isolated contentment but have systematically looked beyond our shores to ensure that what was taking place in our schools was comparable with the latest happenings and trends internationally.

The present proposed way forward is the expected result of what has been taking place during the last years. This is not an invitation to work harder but one to work smarter. The change from a Department to a Division in 1994 was the first cultural face lift required to get education out of the twentieth century into the modern age. The audit of the present situation has shown that a reform was due, to bring the central structure in line with present day requirements and realities.

On the other hand while schools have been vested with a number of responsibilities, the need has been evident to schools themselves that further changes were needed. The importance of the learner as the principal client is always central. Any Education structure, in spite of all its complexities and requirements, cannot lose sight of this fundamental fact which lies at the very core of its existence. This particular client consistently requires a quality service. Exigencies are continually changing and need updating to keep in line with current trends, yet the focus on the central character remains constant.

Undoubtedly, this is the very basis of **For all Children to Succeed** where the idea of networking among schools is being advocated. The results of the Excel project have shown that schools tend to gain through networking. Each school still requires its individual strong leadership to achieve. The direction of a strong central authority to monitor development plans and to audit progress cannot however be underestimated. Networking, on the other hand, whilst allowing each school to hold to its identity, mission and ethos, gives strength to initiatives. The required commitment assures that progress is achieved and the sharing of ideas, talents and efforts results in better achievement for the learner.

Having been directly involved in this micro networking project, I am aware of the implications of the proposed changes on the Education Division. It is a fact that there is no change without pain, yet I have no doubt that education in Malta stands to gain by this proposed way forward. I am sure that all those of us directly involved in education are able to overcome the difficulties that such changes naturally give rise to and achieve the aims that are being proposed.

As professional educators we will all be able to rise to the challenge.

Cecilia Borg



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- *The Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment is close to completing a review of the education system, from early childhood education to higher education. The objective is to reform the whole system of lifelong learning into one which is smoother and seamless.*
- *This document addresses the issue of the governance of the education system and of the autonomy and decentralization of State schools. Challenges faced by other areas in the field of education will shortly be addressed once reports by working groups set up by the Ministry are completed.*
- *The key challenge for Malta is to invest seriously, heavily and continuously in human capital in ways that affect life changes. We want all children to succeed. The next phase in Malta's education development is to ensure **quality** education for all.*
- *The network is being accepted as the main organisational form which can give depth and scale to this process of transformation. The education system, like all other societal systems, faces the challenge of having to change the way it functions – from a hierarchical, apex-governed structure to a new network organisation that can achieve quality education in Malta.*
- *"Networks are now the most important organisational form of our time, reshaping the activities of families, governments and businesses. They are increasingly fundamental to successful enterprise and they challenge our notions of leadership." (Hannon, 2004)*
- *In accordance with the Government's declared programme, the Education Division will be restructured into two distinct yet complementary judicial entities. The **Malta Education Directorate (MED)** will regulate, generate policies, set standards, and monitor the whole system to assure quality in all State and non-State schools. The **Educational Services Directorate (ESD)** will act as operator and will coordinate those services which can be more effectively and economically rendered centrally.*
- *The 1988 Education Act provides that the regulatory and policy-making authority is vested in and exercised by the Minister for Education. Legislation will enable the Minister to delegate authority to MED and ESD to carry out specific functions and in specific sector and to agencies set up for specific purposes.*
- *The Minister of Education will chair a small Standing Committee to ensure direction, coherence, synergy and coordination throughout the whole system.*
- *The shift from centralisation to decentralisation necessitates that schools network together. This will empower schools further in that they may be able to take decisions as suits to the needs of their students. Moreover, schools will become more autonomous operating within a stipulated, agreed framework which also ensures accountability.*
- *In this way, through networking, schools will be in a better and stronger position to meet the needs of students. They will work in partnership with one another, share resources, will jointly solve problems and create new practices within the specific and particular context of a group of schools forming one whole unit. Networks will ensure a smoother flow from one level of education to another, as well as provide schools with the required space to develop their curriculum as laid down by the National Curriculum, and, also, according to the needs of their students.*
- *In a schools network system, children will still attend the primary school in their town or village and will proceed to a secondary school within that particular network. Each school will have its own Head of School and staff. However, each school will form part of a network with other schools and the whole network will be called a College. Each College will have a Principal who will lead the whole network and who will chair a Council of Heads of schools, again within that network. A College Board will provide direction to the whole network.*
- *The ideal network would include a number of primary schools. These would then feed students into a number of secondary schools. The current schools building stock limits the simultaneous introduction of the*



ideal structure on a national level. Whilst therefore schools are being built, refurbished and extended, different forms of school networks will be introduced to demonstrate the benefits networking provides. This document proposes the phased-in introduction of the following Colleges:

1. One College will absorb the Cottonera State schools - the Cospicua, Kalkara, Senglea and Vittoriosa primary schools, the Boys' Area Secondary school, the Girls' Area Secondary school and the Boys' Junior Lyceum. Discussions will also be held to encourage Church and Independent schools in this area to enter into a partnership with the state schools network.
2. Another College will take into it the eleven state primary schools in Gozo, the two State secondary schools (Junior Lyceum and Area Secondary), the Sannat Special Unit, and the Drama, Music and Art schools in Gozo.
3. A third College will consist of the Birċebbugia, Ghaxaq, Gudja, Kirkop, Mqabba, Qrendi, Safi and Zurrieq primary State schools and the new secondary level facility due to be completed shortly in Kirkop. For the moment this new campus can only be feasibly available for boys. Girls will continue to attend the Junior Lyceum and Secondary schools they currently attend. However, future building plans ought to take in consideration the requirement of a secondary level school for girls in this catchment's area.
4. A number of Colleges will provide for the introduction of horizontal networks of schools all operating at the same level. There will be Colleges consisting of primary schools, Colleges consisting of both area secondary schools and Junior Lyceums, another College incorporating the boys' and girls' centres, as well as Mater Dei school and St. Patrick's Craft Centre.
5. A special College will be made up of the schools of art, drama and music in Malta. The eventual aim of this network is to develop into a College consisting of specialist schools where students will follow the ordinary curriculum as they do in other schools but which will provide a special focus on music, drama and art, and possibly later, on dance and sport.
6. Finally, one College will incorporate the four special schools in Malta. The aim here is to develop these schools into resource centres for all the other Colleges and to function as service providers to students who stand to benefit more from this type of educational provision. This will cover the initial phase. The ultimate objective is to see these schools individually networked with the mainstream Colleges.

- The present report proposes the retention of the Junior Lyceum examination, but with appropriate modifications being made (including a more graded paper) to cover the whole range of performance-based abilities of all students. This examination will be developed over time into a compulsory national benchmarking exercise. This will be taken at significant stages to test the educational development of all students of both primary and secondary schooling in the state and non-state sectors.
- All necessary legally binding measures will be put in place to safeguard the vested rights of personnel currently serving with the Education Division, with other public educational institutions or other departments and public entities, and who will be detailed to carry out their duties with the newly proposed public educational entities and school networks.
- This reform will create an environment where **children and students** will benefit from increased self-confidence, increased encouragement and opportunities and the on-going support they need to acquire to further their knowledge, competencies and attitudes that help develop their personalities. This will make them grow into active citizens capable of contributing towards their own well being, their families and society.
- This same environment will provide teachers with greater job satisfaction and the support to help them acquire the space and opportunity to work flexibly in a task-and-needs oriented manner.
- **Parents/carers** will benefit from the positive effect networking creates in the education of their child. Parents, as partners in this experience, will be able to engage in their child's educational journey, and to enhance their own lifelong learning process.



- *School networks will use the community resources in ways that step up the involvement of the community at large. In return, schools will increase their role as community learning and cultural centres.*
- *The task ahead is a mammoth one. It will involve collective commitment, discipline and effective network leadership. The task is equally stimulating, offering as it does a challenge to those involved in the task of improving the quality of education in Malta and Gozo. The demands around us are changing and this makes it crucial for our educational system to undergo a planned, well thought-out change that enables each and every child to be provided with a learning experience that not only imparts knowledge, but, more importantly, helps them acquire the skills they need to approach future learning in and out of school. Successful networking will ensure much more successful schools.*
- *In all cases there is a need for careful preparation, piloting, gradual implementation, periodic evaluation, training and effective dialogue with stakeholders, including negotiations, where necessary, with the unions concerned and the staging of proper information campaigns.*
- *Networks of schools, together with other service providers, will respond creatively and collaboratively to the needs of each 'whole' learner. No single school can hope to provide the diversity, flexibility or an economy of service that the creation of networks involves*



CHAPTER I

TEN ACHIEVEMENTS AND TEN CHALLENGES

A notable observation made by the Chalmers Report³ on higher education concerns the difficult challenges faced there. These are also the result of the successes achieved in past years. This may well be true of one part of the system, higher education, because it is, paradoxically, true of the whole education system.

Undoubtedly, our recent educational history is marked by achievements and successes that are reflected in the remarkable socio-economic progress and the improved quality of life the Maltese people have registered these past two decades. In time, however, a number of defects, weaknesses and deficiencies grew around the system and now pose challenges that must be urgently addressed. It is expected that in the course of the discussion and the implementation of proposals outlined in this document, all stakeholders will seize the moment and constructively contribute, in a determined national effort to achieve quality education for all, to a better understanding of the opportunities and the challenges that lie ahead.

There are at least ten major achievements that were registered in the last two decades or so. It is these that now present us with the same number of challenges which must be faced in the next decade. Every achievement made has inevitably led to new challenges.

1.1 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

An achievement perhaps worth considering first is the ICT revolution. It is now necessary for any society that wants to flourish to become a learning society. ICT is an essential feature of such a society. In 1994, the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) introduced the National Strategy for Information Technology (NSIT).⁴

Government's policy then, was to create an information knowledge society. It was to serve as the bedrock for prosperity, economic growth and social inclusion. In the education sector, Government made it clear this was by no means simply a matter of putting computers in every classroom to serve as an additional, entertaining piece of audiovisual equipment, or some sort of educational toy. The structural introduction of ICT in the education system implied the need of a new approach in teaching and learning. In short we sought to create a completely new mind-set.

It was therefore underlined that education was all about communication; the communication of knowledge, concepts, values, attitudes and skills as basic instruments for personal, as well as, socio-economic development.

In the past, in Malta, a vague feeling prevailed that the history of education in particular and of politics in general, had been to a great extent determined by the so-called pre-war 'language question'. Today we realise that to learn a language, in the widest context of the word, is to learn a way of life and to widen one's horizon. The prevalence of one system of communication over the other, even one as powerful as ICT, limits the possibility of a society developing. On the other hand, the dominating module of communication in a society, influences the cultural context within which that society develops. The advent of ICT as the dominant system of communication creates the possibility of a more open, dialogic, relational and flexible approach to all issues. This discourages any dogmatic, stand-alone, or rigid stance.

³ Chalmers, R et al, (2004), *State Higher Education Funding*, Report of the State Higher Education Funding Working Group to the Minister of Education, Youth and Employment (2004), Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment

⁴ Camilleri, J. ed. (1994a, b, c and d), *A National Strategy for Information Technology for Malta*. Office of the National Strategy for Information Technology, University of Malta.



It also means that the education system, like all other societal systems, faces the challenge of having to change the way it functions – from a hierarchical, apex-governed structure to a networking organisation.

In a nutshell, the essence of a net, whether it is a primitive fishing device or its contemporary analogue, the World Wide Web, is a light, flexible structure that is at the same time strong and resilient, even when damaged; and damage is certain to occur where there is diversity. Consequently, contrasting, even contradictory views are bound to evolve. In such cases, the strength of the net is essential to avoid the collapse of the system. In this sense, nets have the possibility of being extended and remodelled whilst still in use. Moreover, they can be laid one over the other. They weigh little, but their multiple-level structure adds to their strength. Finally, any network, however extensive, is the sum total of a multiplicity of subnets, welded together as tightly as a *Gordian knot*, without even jamming communications and degenerating into chaos. Connecting links will continue to develop and promote the widest range of exchanges possible.

In the context of a network – one that replaces a hierarchical pyramid – the principle of subsidiarity emerges not as an impediment to the efficiency achieved at superior levels, but as a domain for taking decisions at the place where the most relevant information is available and where the impact is most felt. **“Networks are now the most important organisational form of our time, reshaping the activities of families, governments and businesses. They are increasingly fundamental to successful enterprise and they challenge our notions of leadership.”** (Hannon, 2004)⁵

1.2 THE EUROPEAN UNION

A second achievement, and the challenge it has spawned, has been our accession to the European Union (EU). Here the education sector anticipated participation through the EU educational programmes even before official membership was secured. Education is intimately related to one's sense of national identity. Membership within the European Union is nearly as great a conditioning factor of national self awareness as the global knowledge society made possible with the birth and evolution of information and communication technology. The frequent exchanges we are experiencing with other EU nations, from Italy to Scandinavia, from Ireland to Poland, have already proved significantly enriching in different areas and levels of the education system. The British education system will continue to be of particular interest and value to us for linguistic and cultural, and other valid reasons. Membership in the EU, however, allows us to benefit from a much wider network of knowledge and experiences, a talent for which the Maltese are renowned. The availability of multiple EU models re-enforces our challenge to put together several amalgamated variants in the field of education. These newly embraced elements moulded into a new whole will amount to yet another quality leap forward.

1.3 THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

A third achievement has been the launching of the National Curriculum for the year 2000⁶. This was a radical departure from the National Minimum Curriculum of the early nineties, which specified a number of elements teachers should teach and which were obligatory for students. The recent National Curriculum is in fact a Framework Curriculum. It stipulates what is educationally necessary for a person to grow up cherishing such values as democracy and solidarity. It also stipulates the development of dialogic and other skills and competences that help one to face better the challenges of an ever-changing world. Consensus achieved amongst all stakeholders on the content of this Framework Curriculum has brought about another challenge, the task to further implement it well at school level. This requires proper adaptation by introducing new structures and fresh approaches.⁷ In particular, the different schools need to co-operate, pool and share experiences and ideas in a systematic way – that is, to network and support each other to obtain (even more) satisfactory results.

⁵ Hannon, V, 2004 (June). *The Future Is Networked*. Speech delivered to the Networked Learning Communities Annual Conference, London

⁶ Ministry of Education (1999). *Creating the Future Together: National Minimum Curriculum*. Ministry of Education, Malta.

⁷ See also other documents related to curriculum policy such as: *Tomorrow's Schools* (1995) and the *NMC Strategic Plan* (2001).



1.4 INCLUSION

A fourth major achievement has undoubtedly been the high rate of inclusion reached in education. In spite of such remaining lacunae as leftover illiteracy and integration problems of certain students, the aim of education for all has been successful. Quality education is however, still not yet equally distributed amongst students. Access to Junior Lyceums, Secondary Schools and Boys/Girls' Centres does not properly reflect the talents and potential of students since levels of ability are assessed at one standard set of tasks. These three different types of schools need to be transmuted into a system which provides quality education for all in line with the diverse talents and potential of each and every student. What we require is a system that reaches the learning modes of every boy and girl. In fact, a review of the inclusive and special education sectors has now been carried out by a working group and their report has been completed and forwarded to the Minister of Education.⁸

1.5 GOVERNANCE

A fifth achievement and challenge is the diversification of school ownership and the need for a new kind of governance and integration to cover the whole system. Over the years there have emerged, in addition to State schools, a number of State-subsidised Church schools, the more recently Parent (Foundation) schools, and a variety of other entrepreneur run schools.⁹ Demographic factors (in particular the declining birth rate) and the need to respond to parental demands and needs have made the challenge more complex. While all types of schools should retain their diverse characteristics, the system must achieve the same level playing field for all. This will enable parents to make choices from a variety of schools all of which offer quality education.

The current situation also makes it necessary to make fundamental changes that will deliver the heart of the reform. This implies a need to restructure the Education Division. A clear distinction must evolve between two different emerging bodies fulfilling complementary roles. The first body, the policy maker and regulator, will generally cater for policy development and coordination, standard setting and the monitoring of the whole system to assure quality. The second body will be the operator and will co-ordinate and supply pedagogical, managerial and ancillary services to be effectively and economically rendered centrally to all State-run schools. Where appropriate and financially feasible they will also feed all the other different types of schools.

1.6 AUTONOMY

The sixth achievement which has brought its own challenge is a taste of decentralisation experienced in recent years within the State-run sector. This has led to a correlative increase in autonomy, identity and style by individual schools. The operation of schools within the State system has been generally dependent on the decisions taken centrally at the Education Division. Except for sporadic instances, schools have had limited horizontal connections with schools at their level and hardly any vertical connections with schools operating at a lower or higher level. For decisions to be decentralised and schools to be better empowered, the forging of properly networked connections is necessary.

1.7 TRANSITION

A seventh major achievement was the increased access from one level of the education system to another, from the primary to secondary education for all and from the secondary to the higher education sectors. The challenge created by this achievement - how to eliminate the rather staccato if not abrupt

⁸ Spiteri, Lino et al. (May 2005), *Inclusive and Special Education: Review Report*. Working Group appointed in December 2004 by the Minister of Education, Youth & Employment.

⁹ All State and non-State schools (Kinder, Primary and Secondary) in Malta and Gozo cater for 70,000 students in all.



manner by which students move from primary to secondary schooling in the State system - is a predominant key issue which this reform wants to start addressing. There still is a need for further development of life-long learning, from the earliest stages (with the emphasis on learning how to learn) right up to the University of the Third Age and similar institutions. As with all the six previous achievements and the challenges they present, the answer also lies in the creation of school networks.

1.8 EARLY START

The eighth achievement we have experienced has been the extension downwards of the education system in the sphere of kindergarten education. Getting an early start is educationally and socially beneficial to the child. This extension has been an indispensable corollary to the highly desirable increase in the participation rate of women in productive employment. Early childhood education should buttress the education a child gets at home not replace it. This provides the foundations that shape the basic attitudes towards learning, deeply mark educational achievement, and address inequalities in the family background. All this becomes more important when viewed against the frequent difficulties and pressures borne by parents. The challenge of improving quality in this sector calls for the enhancement of the specific preparation of persons working there. In this regard, a document is currently being completed. It will serve as a basis for discussion of the main complex issues involved in this area.

1.9 HIGHER EDUCATION

A significant achievement made in recent years was the increased access to higher education. The establishment of the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST) today provides courses for students whose leaning towards vocational studies – as an alternative to university education – is being increasingly satisfied. Today, MCAST has a student population of nearly 4,000 students, a considerable achievement by any measure. In the last decade alone we have seen an enormous increase in access to tertiary education. As many as 10,000 students today attend the University of Malta. There is also the easier access to European Union Universities and to other foreign ones providing courses in Malta. The Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) feeds the local tourism industry with the professional personnel it requires.

The Chalmers Report¹⁰ covers extensively the financial aspects of higher education. The Government is in the process of setting up a National Commission for Higher Education that will ensure a more forward-looking, co-ordinated and rational functioning of higher education. The Commission will act as the government regulatory agency in the higher education sector and will be responsible for the creation of an operational milieu in which the various licensed institutions operating in this sector – be they private or public funded – will be required to conform to specific academic standards and subjected to systems of appraisal and accreditation programmes. This will facilitate the progression and mobility of students across institutions, to enhance their employability, and maximise their propensity to create value. This Commission will also monitor closely Malta's higher education institutions in the Bologna process.

1.10 THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The setting up of Local Councils brought about another sea change in the way this country is administered. This brought with it an awakening of popular interest in the way local communities are run and catered for. In particular, there has been increased interest in the state of educational facilities available at community level. Simultaneously, there has been an unprecedented parental involvement in School Councils. The National Curriculum already stipulates a need for schools to develop into cultural and

¹⁰ Chalmers, R, et al (2004), *State Higher Education Funding*; Report of the State Higher Education Funding Working Group to the Minister of Education, Youth and Employment. Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (2004)



learning centres for the entire community.¹¹ The challenge lies in fostering increased effective community involvement and for school resources to be administered better.¹² This will help local schools acquire a stronger and a sharper focused identity. As a result, the synergy between local and central educational institutions should flourish once the networking of schools on a regional basis takes place.

CONCLUSION

The rest of this document deals with a more detailed discussion on the restructuring of the Education Division through two key institutional reforms, namely, the creation of two new distinct but complementary central education entities and the networking of schools.

Given the achievements we have had in the field of education in recent years, the challenge now is to think global and act local. In very simple terms this means that our task is to provide smooth and seamless lifelong education that is of the highest calibre.

¹¹ After-school initiatives of the Foundation for Educational Services have already shown the way how state schools can develop into hubs for community learning.

¹² Projects of creating community-based lifelong learning centres have been undertaken by the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) (www.fes.org.mt) and by the Jesuits Paulo Freire Institute (www.jesuit.org.mt/justice/freire.html). These are two examples of how to address the challenge.



CHAPTER 2

CENTRAL EDUCATION ENTITIES

The ten challenges discussed earlier all require the improvement and enhancement of the central education system. One aspect concerns policy development and co-ordination, standard setting, monitoring and quality audit of the experience and performance of students in all State, Church and private schools. This is of key importance in a system that must ensure unity and diversity. The other requirement concerns quality and efficiency in the operation and in the supply of pedagogical, managerial and ancillary support services and of tools to all schools.

2.1 ROLE DISTINCTION

A major challenge which the present education system faces is the effective and efficient operation of the different educational entities. The system has grown to such an extent that it requires a more timely and effective delivery of services and support, clarity in the audit and accountability process, better information and communication, ongoing dialogue, planning and more consistent direction horizontally and vertically.

In a system where the autonomy of schools and the decentralisation of services are expected to assume an increasing profile, it is essential that there is a proper distinction between the functions related to regulation, to the development and implementation of the national curriculum framework, and to provide quality assurance, on the one hand, and the functions related to the operation and the administration of schools (provision of resources and services) on the other. In short, the regulatory and the operational functions need to be clearly distinguished to avoid role conflict and to achieve greater efficiency in promoting a quality educational service to all students.

2.1.1 AUTONOMY AND REGULATION

Research and experience show that a well-designed and an effective application of the principle of subsidiarity, through greater autonomy of schools and decentralisation of services, ought to better facilitate the improvement in the quality and standards of children's and students' educational experience and performance. One of the main objectives behind these proposals is to advance the planned process of autonomy and decentralisation.

Autonomy is not to be confused with complete deregulation. On the contrary, autonomy and decentralisation predicate a grasp by the Education Ministry and the central education entities of the nation's priorities and strategies as adopted by the Government and their effective translation into a coherent and focussed framework of responsive education policies, strategies and objectives.

Autonomy and, therefore, a greater say by schools in determining their own management, can only be effective in delivering the relative results and outcomes if a) there is in place a strong central guiding and monitoring authority, b) autonomy consistently operates within such framework, and c) it is held accountable to it. National objectives, the State's responsibility to ensure a quality education for all its citizens, and the cost-effective maximisation of the available limited financial and other resources, make the process of proper regulation and accountability an absolute must.

Another aspect which the issue of autonomy raises is this. Is it wise to devolve all educational services and operations that are currently being handled, at the centre, by the Education Division? Common sense suggests that decentralising all current services to each and every school, or groups of schools, may prove wasteful both from a financial and human resources point of view. This is why, given the economies of scale, certain services are better provided and co-ordinated centrally.



The State has two main duties to fulfil:

- a) to ensure that the system of individual educational institutions operate within the parameters of a coherent national educational strategy, and to assure the quality of the educational provision that these increasingly autonomous institutions claim to be providing; and
- b) to support the educational institutions to provide, at the grass roots and at the national level, the various services that in this time and age are essential for true quality education.

A new network educational organisation, however light and flexible in structure, needs to have a firm and solid hub to hold together and prosper. In order to function properly, it needs an efficient regulatory directorate and a servicing directorate under the direction of the Minister responsible for education.

These two directorates will be:

- a) **The Malta Education Directorate (MED).** This is a directorate for standards and quality in education, a central national policy maker and regulator for the whole Maltese educational network except for the higher education sector. This is the subject of a separate but parallel exercise suggested by the Chalmers' report.
- b) **The Educational Services Directorate (ESD).** This directorate co-ordinates the operation of educational services and schools, and fulfils the role of a support and services resource centre.

In this way, the Education Division will be restructured so that the operation of all schools – State and non-State – will be subject to the regulation and monitoring of a central education entity, the MED. The MED will not be involved in the management of its own schools. The operation of and certain delivery of services to State schools will be entrusted to a different central education entity, the ESD. This separation of functions ensures better performance of the respective regulatory and operational aspects of the system as a whole.

2.2 MISSION STATEMENT

The keys to success here are unity and diversity, principles that underpin the fundamental scope of the education system as a whole. The objective remains the fulfilment of the potential of every person, and the satisfaction of the nation's needs with regard to sustainable development. This is the mission for which the Ministry of Education is ultimately responsible.

In matters related to education, the regulatory and policy-making authority is vested in and exercised by the Minister who is ultimately answerable to Parliament. New legislation will enable the Minister to better delegate specifically designed authority for different purposes and sectors to MED and ESD and to agencies set up for specific purposes. These will be empowered to perform a variety of functions within the parameters of the Education Act.¹³

2.3 THE MALTA EDUCATION DIRECTORATE (MED)

The basic aim of the MED is two-fold. The first is to be a quality and standard setter which ensures quality education for all and sponsors good practices right up to the compulsory school-leaving age. This will be achieved by providing clear and appropriate policies, strategies and initiatives, and co-operation together with other educational institutions involved in the lifelong learning process. Secondly,

¹³ Laws of Malta, Cap 327, *Education Act 1988*. Article 10 provides: "Wherever under the provisions of this Act a right or a duty is vested in or imposed on the State that right or duty shall be exercised or fulfilled by the Minister."



the MED will facilitate optimum diversity, collaborate on policies, activities and projects, for the system to operate effectively. The MED will carry out any other functions and administer any other services, units, and entities that may be assigned to it by the Minister for Education.

2.4 LEGAL STATUS - MED

MED will be endowed by legislation with its own distinct legal personality. It will be run by a Director General as its chief executive officer. S/he will be appointed by the Minister (in consultation with technical expertise) and will be accountable to him/her on the strength of a definite, renewable performance contract.

2.5 FUNCTIONS OF MALTA EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

For its essential aims to succeed, the MED will need to carry out the following main functions.

i. Curricular and Lifelong Learning Policies

The MED will:

- a) be responsible for the formulation of a National Framework Curriculum, for making submission to the Government, and for monitoring its implementation at every level. This will ensure that the relevant philosophy, principles, objectives, standards and benchmarks are followed and achieved;
- b) promote a national lifelong learning policy and strategy in collaboration with key stakeholders, in particular with reference to education and training beyond post-secondary and higher education to enhance the lifelong learning opportunities for adults;
- c) provide and monitor the implementation of guidelines for school development planning, syllabi, grading criteria, the achievement of targets, level descriptors, assessment performance, examinations (including the Junior Lyceum examination), and to provide the necessary curricular professional guidance and support to stakeholders for their implementation;
- d) ensure that all schools recognise, identify, and prioritise their educational training needs, and ensure these are provided through regular, continuous professional development and training programmes at the most effective level (national, network or school);
- e) propose as well as provide consultation on other national policies in the field of education.

ii. Informational

The MED will:

- a) facilitate the collection, compilation and analysis of all relevant data, in full collaboration with the National Statistics Office (NSO);
- b) commission and carry out research on education for the purpose of formulating educational plans, policies, strategies, guidelines and directives;
- c) make the relevant information readily, completely and comprehensibly available.



iii. Auditing and Quality Assurance

The MED will:

- a) operate, in addition to the schools' self-evaluation and internal audit, a regular process of monitoring, inspection, audit and external review of the operations and performance of every part of the system in its curricular, pedagogical and managerial dimension; this to promote quality education and to facilitate collaboration and exchanges between all the parts of the system;
- b) be responsible for the administration and the implementation of the laws and regulations in the field of establishing the equivalence and the recognition of qualifications and certificates obtained from educational institutions abroad;
- c) develop and support mechanisms that assist educational stakeholders in ascertaining the strengths and weaknesses of the system; this for providers to improve the quality of their output and to help children achieve set learning goals and key competencies;
- d) inform key stakeholders, in an ongoing manner, of the national educational priorities and strategies set from time to time by Government, and to assist the stakeholders to integrate these priorities in their programmes;
- e) identify and promote good practices and assist schools in tapping into effective technical resources for assistance;
- f) take the necessary steps to enforce the legal prescriptions that apply to educational establishments and to all participants in the system;
- g) advise the Government on all matters relating to the licensing, warranting and conditions of operation of collective or individual educators as well as educational institutions.

iv. Financial and Human Resource Management

The MED will:

- a) assess all aspects of the economic dimension of the educational system as a whole and in all its parts and will provide all technical assistance possible for the development of public-private partnerships and co-operative methods of school-management;
- b) prepare its own business plan and will evaluate the business plans of the different units within the education system, including that of the ESD, and will advise the Minister on their budgets and on the modalities to be used in procuring public funds to operate a cost-effective, inclusive and value-enhancing system;
- c) be responsible and accountable for its own administration, for the management of its human resources, financial accounting, and for compliance with financial and procurement regulations;
- d) ensure the fullest possible application and use by all concerned of the available information technology systems.

v. Dialogue – National and International

The MED will:

- a) maintain an effective, ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders in the education system. It will make every effort to achieve the widest possible consensus on all relevant matters. It will



utilise all available media to ensure effective communications with national and international stakeholders;

- b) co-operate with the relevant institutions to ensure there is full Maltese participation in international programmes, especially European, from where useful comparative knowledge and other benefits can be derived;
- c) in collaboration with the Ministry's European and International Affairs Directorate, be expected to monitor closely educational international developments, in particular, European Union recommendations on education, will examine in detail EU documentation, prepare best positions on issues concerned and will actively participate in the relevant EU institutions and programmes.

2.6 THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE (ESD)

For an educational network system to function properly, as we have already seen, it needs regulation, quality audit and strong monitoring procedures through a central entity, in this case, the MED. It also however needs the central supply of support services beyond those which are normally provided by and from the schools themselves, even when these enjoy a high level of autonomy.

2.6.1 AIM OF ESD

The ESD, a services and support entity, is needed to assist in different ways the different sectors such as State-run, State-assisted, non-profit or wholly private schools – excluding the higher education sector. The general aim of the ESD is to ensure the effective operation of and service delivery to State schools. As regards all other schools, it will provide as many services as possible that are available to State schools, this within the parameters of financial and human resources, and this to lessen the divide that exists between State and non-State schools.

2.6.2 LEGAL STATUS

As in the case of MED, ESD will be established by law and will be endowed with its own legal personality. It will also be run by a chief executive officer who will be its Director General. S/he will be appointed by the Minister (in consultation with technical expertise) and will be accountable to him/her on the basis of a definite, renewable, performance contract.

2.6.3 MAIN FUNCTIONS

The main function of the ESD will be the supply to all schools of pedagogical, managerial, operational and ancillary support services. This Directorate, and its specific agencies, will be the main tool with which to speed up the decentralisation of State school management by promoting and supporting the emergence of networks of schools. Within such networks, State schools will achieve the necessary economy of scale, and will allow for horizontal and vertical connections with other schools, as is explained in the next chapter.

2.6.4 SPECIFIC FUNCTIONS

The ESD will have the following specific functions.

i. Planning and Resources Allocation

The ESD will:

- a) develop operational strategic planning in line with Government policy for the State schools'



sector. Priority will be given to the services and support schools and their networks need to ensure the implementation of the National Framework Curriculum and the development of their identity and ethos;

- b) formulate plans for the development of physical resources and maintenance systems with regard to building stock of schools, set up appropriate units for the implementation of such plans; allocate buildings, including sports facilities, and other educational spaces, to individual schools or networks;
- c) strengthen the capacity for accurate, timely, and cost-effective preparation of tender documentation in connection with capital projects and for the regular acquisition of services and provide the necessary assistance to school networks in this regard;
- d) ensure the allocation of equipment chosen on the basis of cost-efficiency including, in particular, Information Technology software and hardware, as well as ensure the appropriate and extensive use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool;
- e) ensure, within the realm of educational possibilities and in collaboration with school networks and with parents, the placement of students according to students' needs and potential;
- f) anticipate staffing requirements in collaboration with schools and their networks; collaborate with the MED, the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta, the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology and other institutions to ensure the training of teachers, other school professionals and personnel as well as their continuous professional development;
- g) assist school networks in recruiting the professional, administrative and support personnel, taking into account students' needs, whilst considering also the programmes for establishing a distinctive identity for each school.
- h) promote, encourage and monitor the democratic governance of schools through school councils with the active participation of parents, teachers and students;

ii. Lifelong Learning Services

The ESD will:

- a) promote and coordinate life long learning initiatives, including community education and cultural initiatives, e-learning and distance learning, adult education, evening classes, and other initiatives provided under the current system;
- b) co-ordinate programmes such as those offered by the Complementary Education Service, the Foundation for Educational Services, the Specific Learning Difficulties Unit and others;
- c) support school networks in the promotion of school library services, as well as, sports, drama, music and other cultural activities for schools;
- d) promote the use of and organise programmes on Education Channel 22 within the context of lifelong learning.

iii. Students Support Services

The ESD will:

- a) ensure the provision of counselling services, psychological and social work intervention services, both with students and their families;



- b) support inclusive education programmes, special education, and other schemes related to disability and special individual educational needs;
- c) ensure the provision and the co-ordination of vocational and career guidance services, including the implementation of programmes aimed at achieving improved school-workplace correlation and assist in the main transition stages, including from school to work;
- d) ensure the provision of services related to develop good behaviour and discipline, deal with cases of child abuse, bullying and substance abuse, and to ensure safe school environments;
- e) ensure the health of students, by means of health promotion, screening, medical services, and healthy lifestyles programmes;
- f) ensure the provision of the appropriate programmes and services for a safe and secure environment in schools;
- g) support school networks in the organisation of special projects and initiatives, including summer schools.

iv. Finance and Administration

The ESD will:

- a) within the context of its business plan, consider and negotiate with State schools their development plans, which facilitate formal budgeting and allocate the necessary finances. ESD will also ensure that, the allocation of funds finances identified priorities. The ESD central business plan will be forwarded to MED for evaluation and in turn MED will ensure its compliance with established national educational policy decisions and priorities. The ESD business plan will be forwarded to the Minister for approval;
- b) be ultimately responsible to ensure the necessary compliance with financial and procurement regulations, business planning and financial audit procedures by schools and school networks;
- c) ensure maintenance and management of assets and procurement of material needed by schools, including transport;
- d) provide the framework and guidelines for the contractual conditions of personnel, professional or otherwise, employed in schools and school networks and will keep records and a complete documentation of financial transactions including those related to the payment of salaries;
- e) administer State aid to non-State schools;
- f) be responsible and accountable for its own administration, the management of its human resources, financial accounting, and compliance with financial and procurement regulations;
- g) ensure the fullest possible application and use by all concerned of the available information technology systems.

v. International Affairs

In collaboration with the relevant Ministry Directorate responsible for European and International Affairs the ESD will:

- a) encourage, facilitate and ensure the schools' maximum participation in European Union and International education programmes;



- b) administer bursaries and scholarships;
- c) facilitate student and staff exchanges;
- d) contribute to the formation and implementation of cultural agreements with other countries;
- e) actively encourage schools to pursue and benefit from the European and International educational programmes, and to ensure compliance with Government and Ministry of Education policy commitments.

vi. Customer Care Services

- a) provide a clear and transparent complaints' procedure for State and non-State schools and ensure that complaints are effectively handled at the proper level of the whole system, and are given particular attention at school and school network level;
- b) provide a customer care service to education sector personnel;
- c) provide a customer care service to students' parents.

CONCLUSION – STANDING COMMITTEE

It is crucial to emphasise that the role of the MED and ESD is to clarify and eliminate currently conflicting roles, whilst ensuring that the best quality service is provided. This exercise entails a restructuring of the current Education Division into two distinct but complimentary bodies that will increase efficiency by delivering a better quality service to children.

In order to ensure coherence, synergy and co-ordination between the two bodies, the Minister of Education will chair a Standing Committee consisting of the Permanent Secretary, as Deputy Chairperson, the MED and the ESD Directors General, and the Ministry's Policy Co-ordinator. Other officials will be invited to attend whenever particular items on the agenda require. This Standing Committee will meet once a month as a minimum and will keep a formal record of its proceedings.

The different phases of implementation of this restructuring will make clearer what kind of autonomy schools and school networks need to achieve in order to do their job properly, to successfully adapt to the challenges of a world which calls for dynamic and self-sufficient operations that guarantee accountability, value for money and justice in practices. Greater autonomy and increasing responsibilities will gradually and progressively devolve on the school networks as they mature and assume more duties, effectively and efficiently.

This chapter does not cover the whole range of issues the proposed restructuring of the Education Division raises. Further clarifications will be needed. Questions will be asked that will need to be answered satisfactorily. This chapter does not presume to have worked out all the eventualities that will emerge in evolving the present state of affairs to the new education network organisation. The Ministry is determined to discuss with all the stakeholders, and negotiate where appropriate, to ensure that the final decisions take into consideration all possible critical analysis, suggestions and recommendations that can improve and add value to the direction being proposed.



CHAPTER 3

NETWORKING OF SCHOOLS

Our knowledge of school networks and their power to innovate and change perceptions and practice comes not just from education, but also from trends and practices adopted by a wider society. Our expectations of services, from banking to hospitals, from shopping to local councils, are for a service which increasingly fits our personalised needs. Services are no longer structured around organisational expectations or institutional needs. They revolve around individuals. The same has to be with education.

3.1 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NETWORKS IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

Networks are an increasingly important feature of contemporary life. Modern organisations understand their importance for innovation and knowledge exchange. Across all sectors, networks are becoming an organisational principle of choice. In the field of education, we now understand that organisational isolation inhibits learning.

There are various interpretations of the word 'network'; it is a concept open to a high degree of conceptual pluralism. We are adopting here a working definition developed by Professor David Hopkins for the type of network in education that has a chance of realising the aspirations many have for them: "Networks are purposeful social entities characterised by a commitment to quality, rigour, and a focus on standards and student learning. They are also an effective means of supporting innovation in times of change. In education, networks promote the dissemination development of teachers, support capacity building in schools, mediate between centralised and decentralised structures, and assist in the process of re-structuring and re-culturing educational organisations and systems."¹⁴

In education, schools will only be able to meet the needs of all learners if they work in partnership with one another, sharing resources and assembling the right mix and range of education for each individual learner.¹⁵ Networks of schools also enable joint problem-solving and the creation of new practices that are particular to a specific context or group of schools.¹⁶

Networks enable us to meet the needs of individual learners in our schools. They also enable us to formalise collaborative arrangements and to investigate new forms of leadership. They provide the mechanism for us to learn from our peers and the space to develop effective and innovative practice.¹⁷ Networks increase access to good ideas and they allow groups of professionals to take collective responsibility for children. It is within this context of understanding and aspiration, that the proposals in this document for better schools and for the success of all children, has been shaped.

3.2 FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL NETWORKS

As pointed out at the 'Excel Network National Conference'¹⁸ there is no blueprint for an effective network. No one set of arrangements is necessarily better than another. In fact, one of the most important things to acknowledge as schools begin their journey together as a network, is that schools, staff and children will be the guides. Their context, their histories, their strengths and needs, their aspirations and the ways of working in their schools, will all influence the design of their network and its activities.

¹⁴ Hopkins, D. (2005). *Making Sense of Networks*, in Tom Bentley, David Hopkins & David Jackson *Developing a Network Perspective*. Networked Learning Communities, National College for School Leadership.

¹⁵ Leadbeater, C. (2004). *Learning about personalisation: how can we put the learner at the heart of the education system?* DfES, London.

¹⁶ Hannon, V. (2004). *The Future Is Networked*. Speech delivered to the Networked Learning Communities Annual Conference, London.

¹⁷ Fullan, M. (2004). *Leadership and Sustainability*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, California.

¹⁸ Excel Network National Conference. *Learning Through Peer Collaboration*. Education Division, Mgarr Primary School, Malta, 17th – 18th, May, 2005.



We do know about what seems to work. There are now many schools, both in the U.K. and internationally, that benefit from working together as a network. From their experience and from the range of research that has been undertaken, it is possible to identify factors that successful networks have in common.

3.2.1 DESIGN AROUND A COMPELLING IDEA OR ASPIRATIONAL PURPOSE AND AN APPROPRIATE FORM AND STRUCTURE.

Effective networks are designed around a compelling idea or an inspirational purpose. They have an appropriate form and structure. Successful networks manage to unite all their school communities around a purpose which is relevant and compelling, irrespective of context or current circumstances. The purpose has at its core improving achievement by students.

However diverse the schools in one's network, it is safe to assume that all of them wish to improve the student experience. That explains why they have committed to the network. Adults who work there want to engage with new ideas if they see in this a direct benefit to students. Those who lead the network will want to work in partnership with the other head teachers to identify and adopt a common learning focus.

3.2.2 FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING

A core principle of School Networks is the importance and centrality of a clear focus on student learning. It is this that provides the impetus for wide participation and drives active learning. Providing for students' needs on a wider horizon than one school provides the unifying moral purpose that underpins successful learning networks.

School networks are designed around adding a value to students' learning that would not be possible where one to work in isolation. Teachers are motivated by purposes that act themselves out in classrooms – and they draw energy from connecting with each other's work and schools.

A shared student learning focus is important to the effectiveness of the network. If all members of the network can answer the question as to 'what difference does what we do in schools likely to make to our children?' the network activity has the greatest chance of success.

3.2.3 CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULT LEARNING

Effective school-to-school networks create new opportunities for adult learning. Whilst student learning focus provides the network activity with a unifying purpose, what is likely to make it sustainable, and a real force for improvement, is the engagement of adults in the schools. Adult learning needs to be purposeful, focused and informed. Ultimately it is teachers and adults doing things differently (or doing different things) in classrooms that affect positively students' learning.

Networks generate the capacity to create new and powerful opportunities for adult learning, allowing practices to cross the boundaries of individual schools and place innovative ideas in the marketplace of knowledge exchange. Here they can be traded, refined and verified.

3.2.4 PLAN AND HAVE DEDICATED LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Effective networks require planning, dedicated leadership and proper management. Leadership and management of the network are crucial to its development. The success of a network (particularly in its early stages) is almost uniquely dependent on the vision, energy and effort of those who take on leadership roles. All organisational structures require tending, and networks are no different. As network structures are more fluid, the leadership of the network will start and shape the activity, guide reflection and adaptation and help refocus. This ensures it remains purposeful.



Networked learning communities have demonstrated the significance of shared or co-leadership arrangements.¹⁹ Not only does this spread the load and help build leadership succession, it also distributes the leadership function across more than one school location within a given network. Shared leadership creates a capacity for healthy dialogue and debate that will foster a satisfying and fruitful team spirit.

One of the most powerful aspects of networked learning is also the most difficult to plan for. Network activity will generate greater knowledge about the schools but this will not come only from senior leaders in schools, but from all those working and learning within the network. Systems within the network must encourage everybody to contribute and to feel that their contributions are valued. Successful networks show that leadership may not necessarily come from the places traditionally found in the past. It is important to ensure that all adults within the network take responsibility for creating, validating and spreading knowledge about what works and of what does not. Those networks which report the best progress during their first year or so are generally the ones that will have planned for distributed leadership from the earliest stages.

This does not mean that no role exists for senior leaders in networks. The involvement of head teachers and senior managers in the schools is in fact crucial to the development of the network, both in terms of priority and the profile network activity is given in schools. Distributed leadership only thrives where there is effective senior leadership. Planning for this distributed leadership means giving staff in each school clear roles, providing them with proper and effective support structures. It also means developing teachers and others into leaders, trainers and enquirers.

¹⁹ Anderson, M. & Thomas, N. (September, 2004). *Facilitating Leadership Development For Learning Networks*. Paper presented to the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference. Manchester.



CHAPTER 4

CREATING A SHIFT – FROM CENTRALISATION TO DECENTRALISATION

An important element of a networking system is the marshalling of elements that enhance greater creative and critical communication and co-ordination. The constitution of school networks in Malta is an intrinsic shift from the current centralised system to a new network system. It amounts to the setting up of an intermediate connecting level between, on the one hand, the Ministry, the MED and the ESD, and, on the other, the different schools at the periphery which will form the basic components of the school network.

In the context of our State education system, an ideal school network would be a group of schools that cater from early childhood right through primary to secondary education. Whilst retaining their individual identities, the schools within the network would be co-ordinated by a leading facilitator who will be accountable to the school network Board. In this way, ideal school networking should lead to the development of autonomous educational institutions, working within an agreed framework of performance, accountability and outcomes. This will be done on the basis of delegated functions and responsibilities, each co-ordinating their efforts to provide a continuous education programme that offers entry at kindergarten level and exit at the end of secondary education.

4.1 BENEFITS OF NETWORKING

This reform will create an environment where children and students benefit from increased self-confidence, encouragement, opportunities and the on-going support they need to acquire and to further their knowledge, competencies and attitudes needed to help develop their personalities. This will make them grow into active citizens capable of contributing towards their own well being, their families and of society.

This same environment will provide teachers with greater job satisfaction and support will help them acquire the space and opportunity to work flexibly in a task-and-needs oriented manner. The system will be diversified to dove-tail with students' needs.

In addition, parents/carers will not only benefit from the positive effect networking creates on the education of their child. Parents, as partners in this experience, will be able to engage in their child's educational journey, and to partake in their own lifelong learning paths.

School networks will use the community resources and in ways that step up the involvement of the community at large. In return, they increase their role as community learning and cultural centres.

The coming together of schools to exchange experiences and to co-ordinate projects and activities will improve the quality of students' education in schools. This will not only generate more trust from parents, but will provide a more motivating environment for teachers. Such experiences should facilitate the decentralisation of the system and the empowerment of the schools themselves whilst improving the quality of education:

- a. By pooling of resources and by sharing experiences, it is much easier for a network of schools than for an individual school to establish a degree of autonomy. A network can provide a better environment, can encourage and foster more initiative and innovation, more team spirit, an increased shared sense of purpose and direction. The pooling of resources will yield an overall result that is greater than the sum of the individual inputs by the different participants in a variety of ways.



- b. The network's support to individual schools will help manage better their curricular development as fits their needs more so in the light of their exposure to the experiences and expertise of their fellow schools. It should eventually become possible for students to satisfy better the options that match their aspirations, talents and abilities and to acquire key competencies.
- c. The network ensures that Heads of School focus better on providing professional educational leadership, employing appropriate and qualified personnel to handle administrative, managerial and other issues which are of a strictly non-pedagogic nature.
- d. The network will also achieve cost-effectiveness through economies of scale and will make new initiatives and innovation more feasible.
- e. The sharing of best practices ensures that these will come to be better appreciated, known and disseminated amongst schools and the wider community.
- f. Networks will enable the better implementation of improved internal educational self-evaluation exercises, audit mechanisms and external quality assurance processes.
- g. Networking will encourage the formation of teams for the cross-school handling of common concerns and for other co-school-management initiatives, like psycho-social services in areas where the need or evaluation is felt.
- h. The talents, interests and motivations of teachers will be better appreciated and they will be more effectively deployed to serve student needs better and to reinforce corporate identity.
- i. Networking will facilitate horizontal and vertical linkages between schools from early childhood on to primary and then through to secondary education, in this way lessening one of the challenging problems of the existing system - that of a difficult transition from primary to secondary schooling.

4.2 FACTORS FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

Two factors that need to be given particular consideration in the strategic implementation of this new education network organisation in our country concern:

- a. the evolving demographic situation, and
- b. the mechanisms used to assure the learning gains made by students at different stages of their educational experience.

4.2.1 EVOLVING DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION

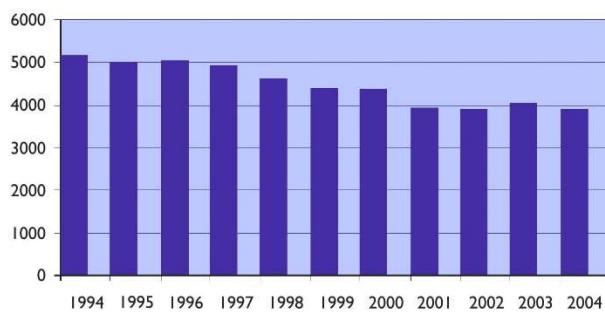
A particular issue emerges from an examination of demographic data. This concerns the movements in the national birth rate. These statistics are fundamental to any educational reform since they are a factor that spurs change. Birth rates have an immediate impact on school populations and therefore have to be taken into consideration when reforms to the educational system are needed. The table and graph below show a 24.5% decline in the number of live births in the Maltese islands over the last decade.



TABLE I:

TOTAL LIVE BIRTHS 1994-2004²⁰

Year	Births
1994	5152
1995	5003
1996	5045
1997	4936
1998	4621
1999	4410
2000	4386
2001	3935
2002	3906
2003	4036
2004	3887



4.2.2 MECHANISMS ASSURING LEARNING ATTAINMENTS

Another important issue refers to ascertaining objectively standards achieved by students in the course of their educational experience. Presently, apart from the normal school examinations, students sit for two major national examinations that assess their educational achievement - at approximately age 11, the Junior Lyceum and/or Common Entrance examination²¹ and at approximately age 16, the Secondary Education Certificate examination.²² A significant number of students sit for neither, whilst others fail both.

²⁰ Statistics provided by NSO, 2005

²¹ The Junior Lyceum Examination is a qualifying examination, coordinated by the Education Division, taken at the end of the primary school course. All those who pass qualify for entry into a Junior Lyceum. The others continue their education in Area Secondary Schools. This examination is optional.

The Common Entrance Examination, co-ordinated by the Secretariat for Education within the Catholic Diocese of Malta, is taken at the same level solely by boys for entry into select Church secondary schools. Entrance is selective according to the number of places available. The MED will continue to be responsible for the Junior Lyceum examination, while discussions will be initiated with the Church school sector regarding the Common Entrance examination.

²² The Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examinations are taken at the end of the secondary school course. The SEC is offered in a number of subjects at ordinary level. The Matriculation Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) is taken after two years of a post-secondary sixth form course. The MATSEC is offered in a number of subjects at advanced level. Both SEC and MATSEC are requisites for University entry. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment has launched a Working Group that is currently reviewing both SEC and MATSEC examinations.



The present report proposes the retention of the Junior Lyceum examination, but with appropriate modifications (including a more graded paper) to cover the whole range of performance based abilities of all students. This examination will be developed over time into a compulsory national benchmarking exercise which will be taken at significant stages to test the educational development of all students of both primary and secondary schooling in state and non-state sectors. Results will help recognise better the students' achievement and the support needed for those who do not reach the expected targets. This will lead to further inclusion of students in the same school. It is important to note that in any educational path, it is imperative to stop and take stock of progress and what next steps are needed. This is a main target with any national benchmarking exercise. It will also be possible to enhance the experience of setting together with that of streaming to suit the range required by the different students.

4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL NETWORKS IN MALTA

A school network would **ideally** be built around a secondary school that serves as a receiver from primary 'feeder' schools. The existing stock of secondary school buildings in Malta makes the application of this ideal school network logically difficult to implement on a national level. Despite this, and in view of the intrinsic benefits awaiting students, teachers and schools in the networking process, different models and approaches are being proposed to overcome this hopefully temporary problem. The various models are fully explained in the next chapter.

In very basic terms each school network will be a College providing a range of co-ordinated educational facilities, resources and services. The different alternative network systems considered in this document will have a number of common elements. These include:

- a. Each will have the same managerial structure. There will be a College Board²³, a Principal²⁴, a Council of Heads²⁵, and a Head²⁶ for each school within the network;
- b. The professionals referred to in paragraph (i) will be drawn from existing qualified and experienced educators.
- c. Primary 'A' and 'B' schools will be phased into 'C' schools to ensure a smoother continuity throughout the primary education course. 'C' schools will host students from kindergarten to Year 6.²⁷
- d. Boys' and Girls' Centres (ex-Opportunity Centres) will be phased out. This reform will step up assistance to students who are not achieving expected learning targets in the class. In the case of the relative levels not improving as expected, new learning zones will be set up within the mainstream secondary school. Students still not achieving the desired results may attend an out of school learning centre where specifically designed short and long term educational programmes will be offered. These new facilities can also provide an education students showing significantly challenging behaviour. This reform will work towards the reintegration of students from learning zones and learning centres into the mainstream education system, and as soon as it remains beneficial for the student and the school community. This measure will further consolidate the principle of inclusion.
- e. The nomenclature of College. Each College will be managed by a College Board appointed by the Minister of Education. The Board will consist of not less than four members one of whom will be appointed Chairperson. The members of the Board will be appointed for three years, after which they may be reappointed. Board members will ideally be invited to serve as non-remunerated members. They will be chosen, on the basis of their expertise, skills, experiences and the valid contribution they can make to the College. Choice will be

²³ Vide Appendix I

²⁴ Vide Appendix II

²⁵ Vide Appendix III

²⁶ Vide Appendix IV

²⁷ Primary 'A' and Primary 'B' schools are found in the larger localities. Whilst Primary 'A' schools cater for kindergarten provision and the first three years of compulsory schooling. Primary 'B' schools cater for the last three years of primary education. Primary 'C' schools are found in smaller localities and cater for kindergarten provision and six years of primary education.



made from among a spectrum of people with a known track record in, among others, personal initiative, educational and community leadership, business acumen, civic spirit, and parental involvement in education. Each College will be endowed with its own distinct legal and juridical status. As regards relations with entities external to the College and the implementation of the statute for every College, the Board will have powers similar to those of a board of directors of a commercial company.

- f. The Principal will be appointed by the Minister of Education following a selection process carried out by a selection board made up of College Board members and a representative each of the Ministry of Education, the MED and the ESD. The Principal will be the educational leader of the College as a whole and will chair the Council of the Heads of Schools that form part of the College. The Principal will be expected to have the necessary professional educational leadership and managerial skills for the effective networking and co-ordination of the schools within the network. The Principal will provide guidance, direction, and support to the schools, through their Heads, in pursuit of their aims and functions and will facilitate the coordination and organisation of common activities, programmes, projects and specialisation at the level of the College or each individual school. The Principal will communicate the national policies or those of the College Board to the Council of Heads and ensure that these are carried out across the College.
- g. Each school within the College will be managed and led by a Head of School. All models are based on the premise that each school will have its own Head of School, Assistant Heads, teaching and non-teaching Staff, a School Council and a Student Council.
- h. The College, through the Principal, will procure, with the necessary assistance from the ESD, a team of education, administrative, technical and maintenance personnel²⁸ as may be necessary to support the Heads of School in a timely and effective manner. Each College will have a College Administrator, a Precincts Officer and other officials to deal with school discipline, psycho-social issues, and curricular activities outside school hours. The technical, maintenance and cleaning personnel will be under the charge of a Precincts Officer who will be appointed to manage these services. The Precincts Officer and his/her team will form part of a unit set up within the remit of the ESD.
- i. The College Board and the Principal will draw on the services of the ESD and of other service providers for support in any priority development area that will have been identified by them.

All necessary legally binding measures will be put in place to safeguard the vested rights of personnel serving currently with the Education Division, other public educational institutions or other departments, and public entities and who will be detailed to carry out their duties with the newly proposed public educational entities and school networks.²⁹

²⁸ It is expected that such personnel would be redeployed from amongst existing personnel within the Education Division or other public entities.

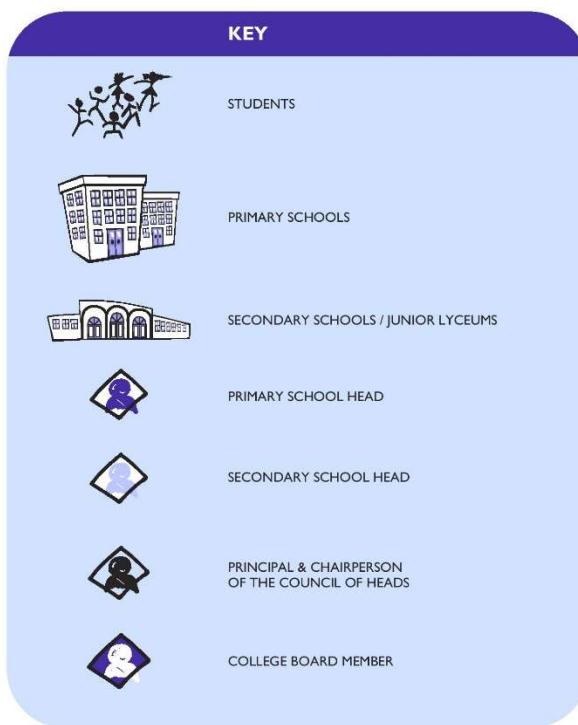
²⁹ Vide Appendix IV



CHAPTER 5

SCHOOL NETWORKS MODELS

This report has so far defined the concept of creating a network of schools, how these will be run and their role in relation to the National Framework Curriculum. As seen earlier, school networks in the various localities have to be defined against the background of the current school population, existing school building stock and location, demographic trends and the relational fit between the feeder primary schools and the receiver Junior Lyceum/Secondary schools. The following are the different models which are considered by this report.

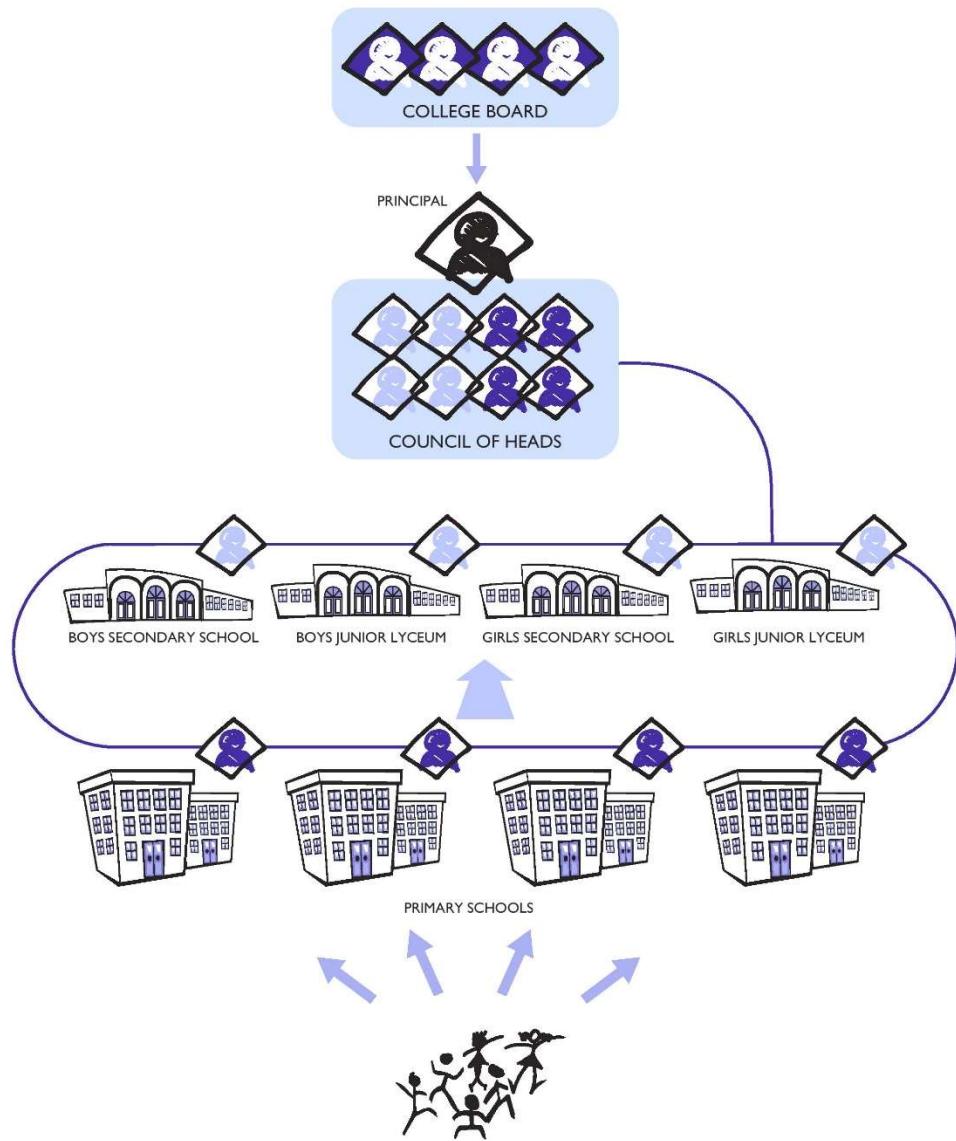




5.1 MODEL I

Model I would introduce the College Board, Principal and Council of Heads to the present structure of schools – with a group of primary schools feeding into a number of Boys and Girls Junior Lyceums and Secondary Schools. The problem with this model is that the existing school building stocks and their location offer no guarantee the objectives of networking can be easily achieved. In particular, it is difficult for students to remain within the same College when they move from the primary to the secondary sector. In this context, this report proposes a number of modifications to overcome some of the constraints this model presents.

It is therefore being proposed that the four primary schools in the Cottonera region will be in a first phase networked with the Boys Junior Lyceum and the two Secondary Schools in the same area. Discussions will be held with Church and Independent schools in the area to explore the possibility of such schools joining the network experience. This would provide an interesting mix of approaches and existing school identities. Girl students attending the Junior Lyceum located outside the Cottonera region will continue to do so until a time comes when a new and modern alternative set-up can be created. For the purposes of all State-sponsored students, this school network would have one College Board, one Principal, and a Council of all the Heads of all the schools involved.

FIGURE I: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL I³⁰

³⁰ Given the logistics of the school building stocks and locations, the first phase of the implementation of this model will have to be as described in the text.



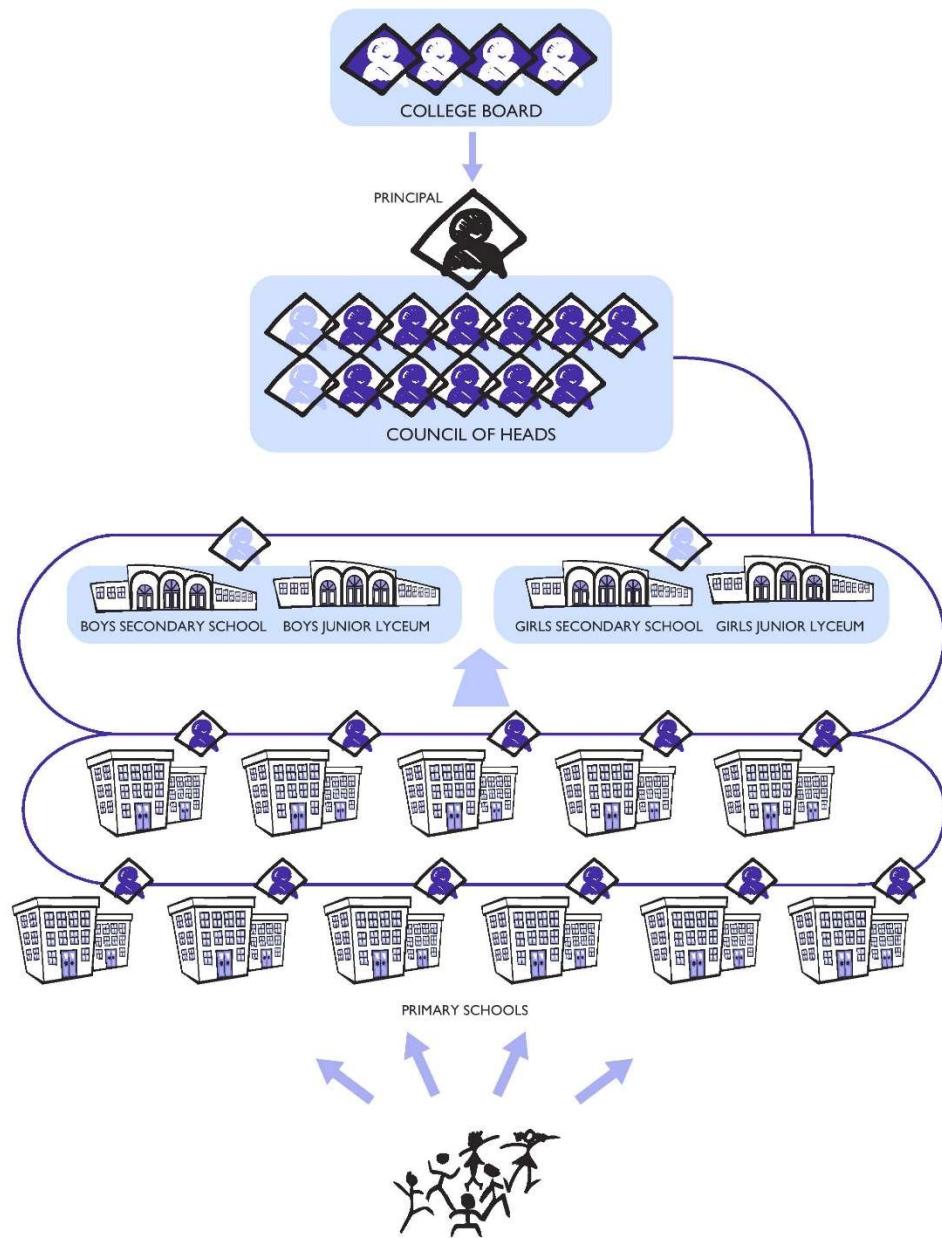
5.2 MODEL 2

Model 2 has been based on the experiences gained in Gozo, where each State secondary school provides for Junior Lyceum and Secondary School students. The two schools receive all of Gozo's primary school children, except for those who go to Church Secondary Schools. Classes for Junior Lyceum and Secondary Schools are separate, but there is one Head, one staff, teaching both Junior Lyceum and Secondary School students, wearing one uniform, using common spaces, facilities and services. While this experience retains modified syllabi, it lessens to a certain extent, the separation of Junior Lyceum and Secondary School students, and enhances the inclusion of the students in the secondary education experience. It is also interesting to note that a higher rate of Secondary School students pass the Junior Lyceum examination at the end of Form 1 in Gozo, in comparison with other students in Malta.

This model implies a simplified administration and, an easier transfer from Secondary Schools to Junior Lyceums. However, existing school building stocks in Malta makes this model difficult to implement on a large scale or throughout the entire state education system. The present state educational structure in Gozo will be consolidated through the school network process, presided by a College Board and a Principal who will phase in the proposed changes. The different Heads of primary and secondary schools will continue to lead their schools but will be working together as members of the Council of Heads. The Sannat Special Unit and the Art, Drama and Music schools in Gozo will also form part of this school network.



FIGURE 2: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 2





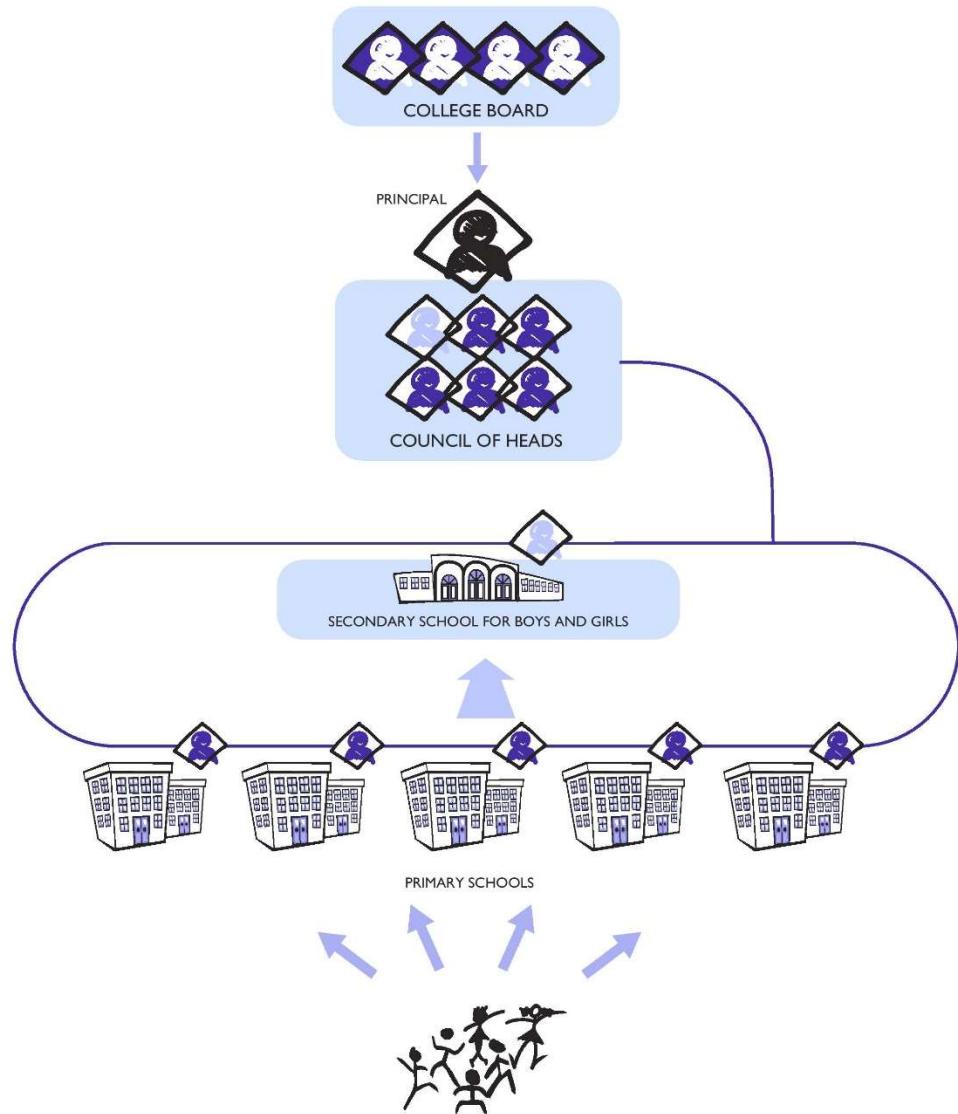
5.3 MODEL 3

Model 3 ensures that all students go to the secondary school in their catchment area at the end of their primary education. All classes in this network would host students with mixed learning abilities and would therefore provide different teaching methodologies for students with different abilities. This model allows for greater diversity, greater inclusion, a simpler administrative structure, and is shown to be the most cost-beneficial.

This model is the most challenging to teachers and administrators and may be challenged by those who do not support the comprehensive system. Again, given the small size and location of many of the existing secondary school buildings, this model presents several logistical problems. By continuing to invest in the extension, refurbishment and building of schools in the coming years, this model can possibly be further considered and developed further in the future, provided a change in popular perception and cultural attitudes also takes place.



FIGURE 3: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 3

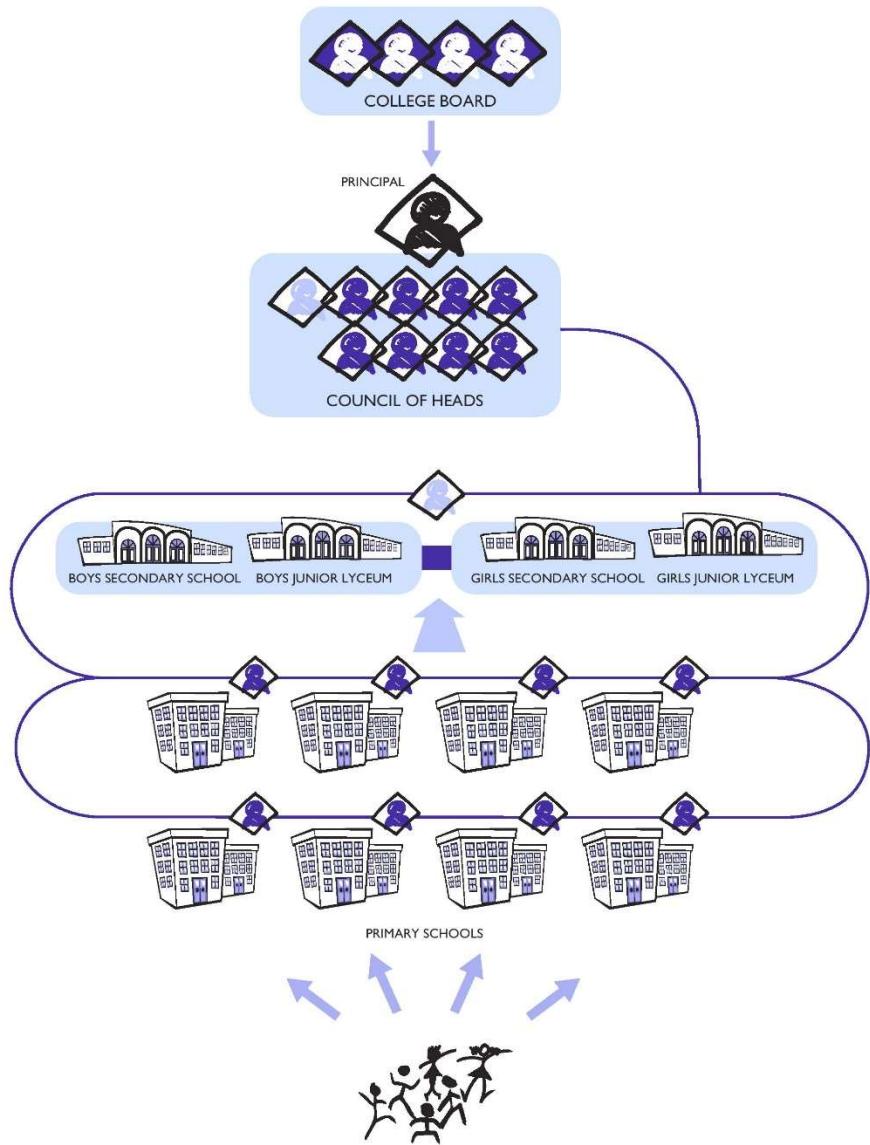




5.4 MODEL 4

Model 4 is an innovative model in Malta. What is being suggested here is a school network made up of a group of primary schools which will provide access to a secondary school level within the same College. This secondary school will host both a Junior Lyceum and a Secondary School on the same campus for boys. The school will have the same teachers, use the same resources, common spaces, facilities and services.

It is being proposed that the new secondary school being built in Kirkop be considered as a first step in the direction of the implementation of this model. The way it works out in reality is for Birċebbugia, Ghaxaq, Gudja, Kirkop, Mqabba, Qrendi, Safi and Żurrieq primary schools to become a part of the same College together with the new secondary level facility which is being built in Kirkop. The physical facilities on this new campus at Kirkop make the implementation of this model at this stage feasible only for boys. Girls will continue attending the Junior Lyceum and Secondary Schools as at present. Subsequent school building plans ought to take into consideration the requirements of school networking, so as to provide for school networks with a secondary level school for girls in this catchment area. Similar to all other models, this school network will have its College Board, Principal and Council of Heads.

FIGURE 4: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 4³¹

³¹ Given the logistics of the school building stocks and locations, the first phase of the implementation of this model will have to be as described in the text.



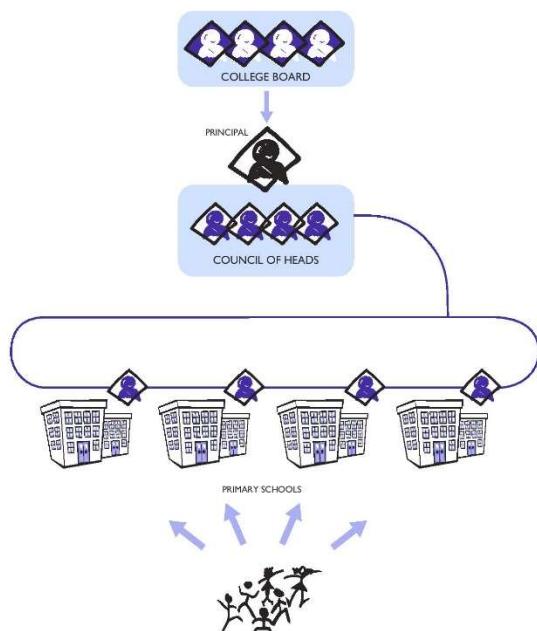
5.5 MODEL 5

Model 5 provides for a horizontal school network, where a group of schools at the same level (Primary or Secondary/Junior Lyceum) network together. The advantage here is that this model can be implemented in the short term throughout the existing State education system, enabling schools to start reaping the benefits of networking at a horizontal level. It is also a major preparatory stage towards vertical networking in order to eventually establish the required continuity between primary and secondary levels. It should further be considered whether an invitation to join such horizontal clusters ought to be extended to non-State schools of the same level as the network.

This model proposes that primary State schools start networking, whilst other networks would include both Junior Lyceums and Secondary Schools. All these horizontal school networks will have a College Board, a Principal and a Council of Heads. The four Boys and Girls Centres, Mater Dei School and St Patrick's Craft Centre will also be grouped in a network except that its aim will be to transform these schools into Learning Centres that will work in conjunction with Learning Zones based in the schools. Adequately resourced and provided with the necessary technical assistance, such centres will carry out programmes for the benefit of students finding it difficult to cope in the mainstream. It is imperative that the necessary services to children not coping should be given primarily in the class. If it is beneficial to the child, the next step should be the periodic withdrawal into learning zones within the school. In serious cases, the child is referred to a Learning Centre for a stipulated period. The ultimate specific objective here would be the student's reintegration into the mainstream. Such learning centres may specialise in different areas so that they will be developed into resource facilities for the mainstream.

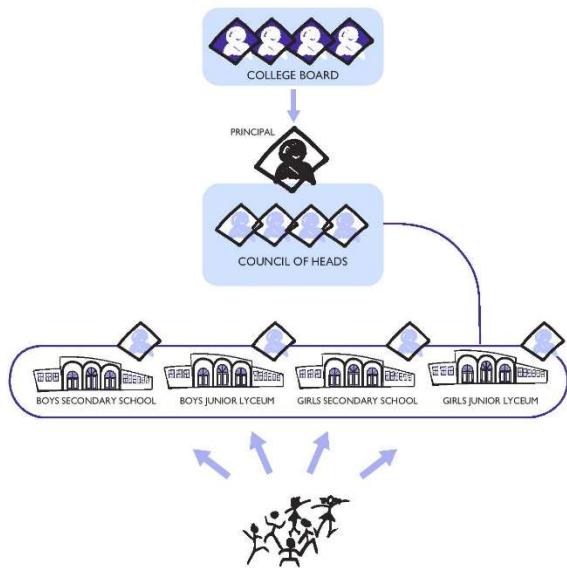
FIGURE 5: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 5

VERSION 1: PRIMARY SCHOOL NETWORK

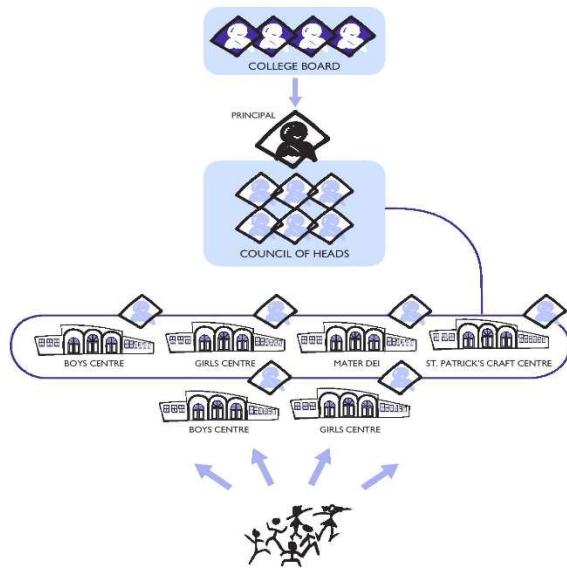




VERSION 2: SECONDARY SCHOOL NETWORK



VERSION 3: BOYS AND GIRLS SCHOOL NETWORK



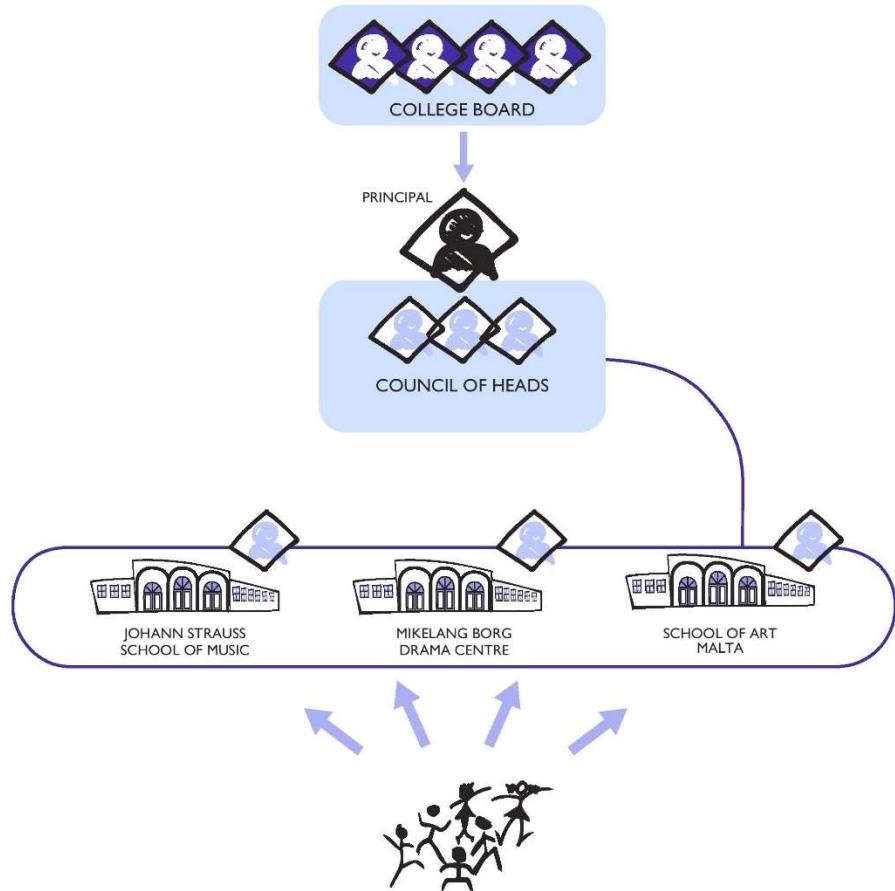


5.6 MODEL 6

Model 6 considers the networking of schools for students with special talents and interests, such as the Arts. Ultimately, there will be schools – and these will be within the College of the Arts – which will follow the ordinary curriculum with a special focus on music, drama, art or dance. As an initial step, it is being proposed that a network is formed of the Mikelang Borg Drama Centre, Johann Strauss School of Music, and the School of Art in Malta. This will allow the usual administrative economies of scale and cross disciplinary interaction. It should be possible to integrate the physical spaces and facilities, whilst allowing for a distinction between the fine arts and the traditional crafts. Libraries and similar facilities will be made accessible to all schools and the public. The premises will still be available for public educational use. This network will also serve as a resource centre for all other schools and school networks providing support for their initiatives in the artistic field. There will also be scope for the development of other disciplines, including, music, the visual arts, classical and contemporary dance and digitised art. Sport will be another area where schools following the ordinary curriculum could develop a particular focus.



FIGURE 6: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 6





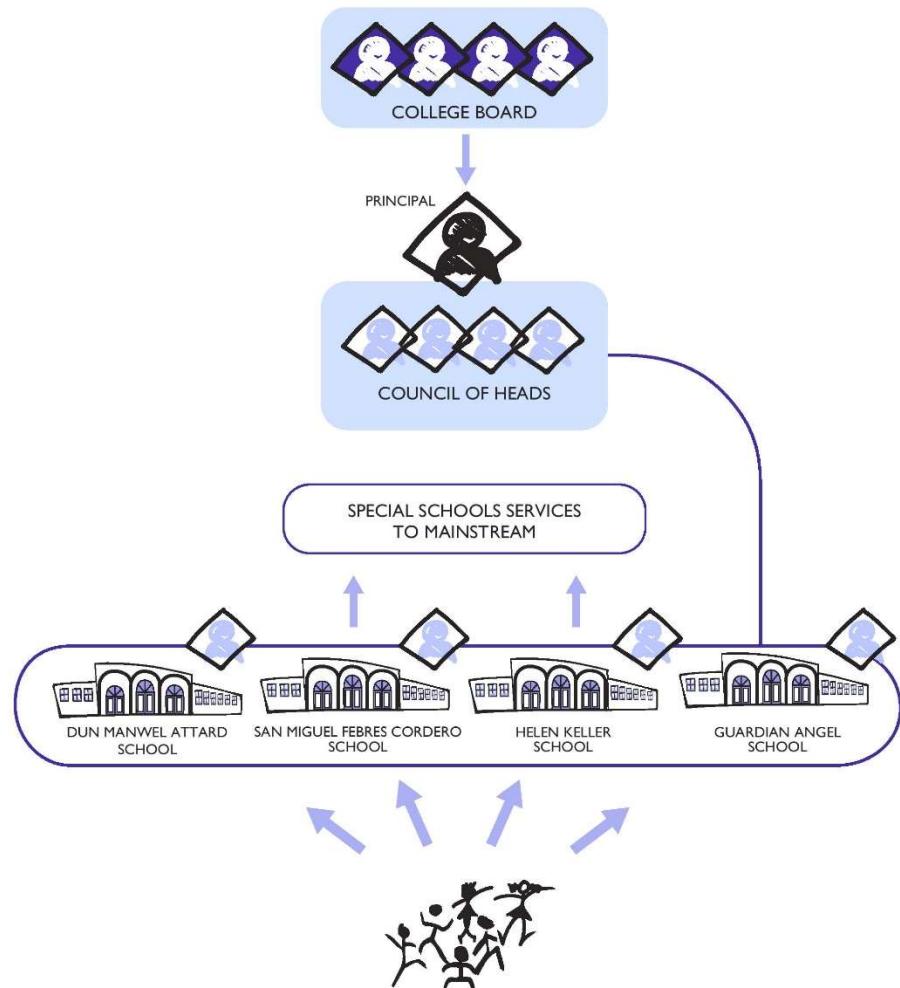
5.7 MODEL 7

Model 7 will incorporate, within a school network, the four special schools in Malta that is, the San Miguel Febres Cordero School, the Guardian Angel School, the Dun Manwel Attard School, and the Helen Keller School. These schools will be expected to offer a two-fold service. The first will be to offer quality educational provision to students with a disability. It is recommended that each school will focus on a particular area of disability (e.g. autism, profound physical disability, etc). The second function of the school will be to offer select services to students with a disability but who are in the mainstream. In this way, the special schools as we know them today will develop into resource centres as well as service providers. The schools will also be under the leadership of a Principal, will have a College Board and a Council of Heads.

The main thrust of these proposals is to ensure that all children and students in Malta and Gozo are given the best opportunity possible to develop their personalities and talents. Equity through inclusion is a fundamental objective. It is in the light of this vision that we have given uppermost consideration to the future development of special schools in Malta and Gozo. The ultimate objective is for these schools to be individually networked with mainstream Colleges. Given the complex phasing in of the networking proposals, we have opted, in a first phase, to provide a school network for these special schools. In this manner, the Colleges will be given time to grow into the new situation, whilst special schools will also start gaining experience in networking with the benefits this offers.



FIGURE 7: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 7





CONCLUSION

The start up of school networks is an exciting opportunity for our schools to develop local solutions. It will provide us with the capacity to re-invent structures and practices in ways that are appropriate for our children today and in the foreseeable future.

This will not be a simple or straightforward journey. We know there are issues to solve. This is a process that involves collective commitment, discipline and the evolution of effective network leadership. Experience shows that all networks need to plan well to ensure that they are clear about the systems, roles and responsibilities which will help them develop and flourish. If we can do this when our network is in its infancy, and if we are able to build from the existing knowledge-base, we will find that the journey together, whilst being no less challenging, will be exciting, productive and properly satisfying.

Being part of a network is stimulating. It offers the prospect of learning new things in different ways for the benefit of all pupils. It can be a complex journey. Whilst a detailed map for that journey might be premature to expect, we believe this document provides clear signposts and directions that will help education stakeholders in Malta and Gozo on their way.

In the opening of this document the Minister of Education argued we are entering a new phase of educational reform in which educational audit, quality assurance, and school networks would play a central role. This is based on the belief that we require a qualitatively different approach to teaching and learning in the 21st century. The demands on young people and the demands of young people make this very true. Teaching in the 21st century should cover not only the transmission of knowledge, but also the process of learning how to learn. As students master information and skills, the result of each learning experience is not only what they learn, but, equally, the ability they acquire to approach future learning in and out of school.

The challenge is to focus this new relationship to achieve both equity and excellence. The solution is to build on what the most successful teachers do best, to create an education system with personalised learning at its heart, a system where every child matters, where careful attention is paid to individual learning styles, motivations and needs. There is rigorous use of students target setting linked to high quality formative assessment and marking, lessons are active, well-placed and enjoyable, and students are supported by partnership with others beyond the classroom.

Personalised learning can only be developed school by school. This is truer of Malta and Gozo where small can be so smart and feasible. Personalised learning cannot be imposed from above. If we want to make personalised learning the defining feature of our education system, we need to develop a new, more focused and purposeful relationship between the Ministry responsible for education, the new national education Directorates, the Colleges, the new school networks, and the schools themselves. The new relationship with schools will bring a sharper focus of our work at national level, will strip out clutter and will release greater local initiative and energy. The desire to free schools so that they can focus on what really matters, on building from and in their strengths, on providing more help in identifying their weaknesses and offering more tailored and coherent support, should bind us all together in this exciting journey.

One thing is clear – individual schools cannot achieve this alone. They can no longer be regarded as the unit of integration. Networks of schools offer more hope. Networks of schools, together with other service providers, will respond creatively and collaboratively to serve each 'whole' learner. No single school can hope to provide diversity, flexibility or an economy of service this entails. Networks can.



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16. Government - Malta Union of Teachers Agreement - Classification, Regrading and Assimilation of the Education Class, 1994, and subsequent addenda and amendments
17. Tomorrow's Schools, Developing Effective Learning Cultures, 1995
18. Government - Malta Union of Teachers Agreement on the Classification and Regrading of the Facilitator and Kindergarten Assistant Grades, 1995
19. Government - Malta Union of Teachers and General Workers Union on the Reorganisation of Instructor Grades in the Education Division, 1996
20. Proposed Guidelines for the Building of Primary Schools, Arch. Joseph Falzon and Arch. Joseph Spiteri
21. Proposed Guidelines for the Building of Secondary Schools, Arch. Joseph Falzon and Arch. Joseph Spiteri
22. The Development of Education - National Report of Malta, International Conference on Education, UNESCO, 1996
23. Secondary Education in Malta, Council of Europe, 1996
24. Careers Preference Survey, Guidance and Counselling, 1996
25. National Minimum Conditions (Schools Teaching English as a Foreign Language) Regulations, 1996 *



26. Language and culture awareness in language learning/teaching (L2 and L1) for the development of learner autonomy, Council of Europe Workshop, 1996
27. Report on the National Library and National Archives of Malta, 1997
28. Absenteeism in Secondary Schools, School Social Work, 1997
29. L-Iskola tal-Holm Tieghi, Leħen I-Studenti fl-Iskola, 1997
30. L-Iskola Kif Nixtieqha, Leħen I-Studenti ta' l-Iskejjal Sekondarji, 1997
31. Ĝhal Edukazzjoni Vokazzjonal u Taħrif wara I-Eta' ta' 16-il Sena, 1998
32. Directory of Youth Organisations, 1998
33. Support Staff Requirements in State Schools, Report of the Working Group, 1999
34. Child Protection Procedures for Schools, 1999
35. Democracy in Schools, guidelines for the setting up of Students' Councils and Class Committees in schools, 1999.
36. L-Imgiba Tajba fl-Iskejjal: Pjan ta' Azzjoni dwar l-İbbuljar, 1999
37. Creating the Future Together, National Minimum Curriculum, 1999
38. Inwelldu I-GeVjeni Flimkien: Il-Kurrikulu Minimu Nazzjonali, 1999
39. Manual for School Librarians, 1999
40. Post-Secondary and Tertiary Students Maintenance Grants Regulations, 1999 *
41. The Way Forward in the Libraries and Archives Sector, 1999
42. Politika Nazzjonali taΩġġhaCagħi, 1999
43. National Curriculum Regulations, 2000 *
44. Deed of Foundation and Statute of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, 2000
45. Inclusive Education, Policy regarding students with a disability, 2000
46. Teacher's Manual Pack on Bullying, Personal and Social Development, 2000
47. Institute for Child and Parent Learning Support Regulations, 2000
48. Guide to the National Library of Malta, 2000
49. Preserving Archival Records: a preservation guide to archival services, 2000
50. National Curriculum on its Way, Proceedings of the Conference on the Implementation of the National Curriculum, 2001
51. National Curriculum on its Way, Strategic Plan, 2001, (*full and abridged versions*)
52. Strategic Plan - National Curriculum on its Way: Report of the National Steering Committee on the Implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum, 2001
53. Deed and Statute of the Foundation for Educational Services, 2001



54. Deed and Statute of the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools, 2001
55. Government - Malta Union of Teachers Agreement on the Addendum to the Classification and Grading Agreement of the Education Class, 2001
56. Report on the National Consultation Process on Lifelong Learning: outcomes to date and plan for the way forward, 2001
57. Malta Professional and Vocational Qualifications Regulations, Employment and Training Services Act, Chapter 343 of the Laws of Malta, 2000 *
58. Tackling Substance Abuse, Procedures for Schools, 2001
59. YouthNet Info, 2001
60. Youth Participation in Voluntary Organisations in Malta, a comparative analysis of European Values Studies, 2001
61. Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Act, Chapter 451 of the Laws of Malta, 2002 *
62. Focus Groups, A Handbook for Co-ordinators and Members, 2002
63. Creating Inclusive Schools, National Policy Regarding Students with a Disability, school self-assessment guidelines, 2002
64. Creating Inclusive Schools
65. Students' Admission Registers, 2002
66. National Library of Malta - Regulations, 2002
67. Schools Library Service, 2002
68. Temple Magic and Songs, 2002
69. 10 Years of Service from Youths to Youths, 2002
70. 50 Sena ta' Kunsill ta' I-Ewropa u ta' Solidarjeta' fl-Għaqda, 2002
71. Noħolqu Skejjel Inklussivi, Gwida għall-implimentazzjoni tal-politika tal-Kurrikulu Nazzjonali dwar I-Edukazzjoni Inklussiva, 2002
72. MATSEC - Frequently Asked Questions, 2002 (sponsored publication)
73. Politika dwar l-Imġiba Tajba u d-Dixxiplina għall-Iskejjel, Good Behaviour and Discipline Policy for Schools, 2002
74. Guidelines for Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Particular Requirements, 2002
75. The Democratic School, 2002
76. Employment and Industrial Relations Act, Chapter 452 of the Laws of Malta*
77. Malta Council for Culture and the Arts, Chapter 444 of the Laws of Malta, Act V of 2002 *
78. Cultural Heritage Act, Chapter 445 of the Laws of Malta, Act VI of 2002*
79. Devolution and Deregulation of Education in Malta, an introductory report, 2003



80. Directory of Learning Opportunities in Malta, Ministerial Committee on Lifelong Learning, 2003
81. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Administrative Guidelines Handbook for Heads of School, 2003
82. Level Descriptors, 2003, providing teachers, parents and students the guidance for assessment
83. Report Regarding the First Term of Office of the National Curriculum Council, 2003
84. Sample Compositions for Formative and Summative Assessment Purposes, selected from the English Junior Lyceum Admission Examination 2002, 2003
85. The Democratic School, Keynote Conference Report, 2003
86. Schooling in Malta, Literature Searches on Three Related Issues: the Junior Lyceum Entrance Examination, Streaming in Primary School, Transition from Primary to Secondary School, 2003
87. Student Services Booklet, 2003, describing the various student services that have developed over the years
88. National Report on Youth Policy in Malta, 2003
89. Sports Act, Chapter 455 of the Laws of Malta, 2003 *
90. Early Childhood Development and Care, 2004
91. Knowing Our Schools, 2004, a tool to facilitate school self-evaluation on the implementation of the school development plan
92. Lifelong Learning in Malta: Towards the Learning Society, 2004
93. Quality Education for All, The Realities and Challenges facing Boys' and Girls' Secondary Schools in Malta, 2004
94. Strategic Master Plan, State School Buildings, Extensions, Upgrading and Refurbishment, including High Level Cash Flow Projections, 2004
95. Understanding Social Studies, A Guide to Social Studies at SECE Level, 2004
96. The Realities and Challenges facing Boys' and Girls' Secondary Schools in Malta, 2004
97. Parent Empowerment for Family Literacy, (PEFaL) Project, a three-level training pack (Tutors, Children, Parents, Basic Skills Programme), 2004
98. Youth Information Handbook, 2004
99. Maltese Language Act, Chapter 470 of the Laws of Malta, 2004 *
100. National Action Plan on Employment, 2004
101. National Archives Bill, Biblioteca Bill, 2004 (discussion in the House of Representatives in progress) *
102. Student Absenteeism - Causes, Remedies, Regulations and Procedures, 2004



103. Government - Malta Union of Teachers Agreement on the Addendum to the Classification and Grading Agreement of the Education Class anent Assistant Directors, Education Officers and Heads of School
104. Handbook on Duties, Procedures and Services for Schools (September 2004), Education Division Malta.
105. Spiteri, Lino et al. (May 2005), *Inclusive and Special Education: Review Report*. Working Group appointed in December 2004 by the Minister of Education, Youth & Employment.
106. Camilleri, R. (ed)(2005), *The Lisbon Objectives and Maltese Education Provision; Rising to the challenge. Proceedings*. Education Division ans Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment Malta.
107. *Mathematics in Malta: The National Mathematics Survey of year one students*. Education Division Malta.
108. PSD Syllabus for Secondary Schools. Education Division Malta.
109. PSD Guidelines for PSD Syllabus. Education Division Malta.

* *Acts and Legal Notices attached to primary legislation related to the portfolio of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment*



PERIODIC PUBLICATIONS

1. Quality Service Charters - various units and departments
2. Reports of the Departments in the Education Division, annual publication
3. Junior Lyceum Entrance Examinations, annual
4. Junior Lyceum Entrance Examinations Report, annual
5. Student Tracer Study Report, annual
6. UNESCO Activities in Malta
7. Council of Europe Activities in Malta
8. Various reports produced for Eurydice - the information network on education in Europe within the European Union
9. Eduforum, the newsletter of the Education Division, 3 issues annually
10. Resources, newsletter of the Curriculum Management Department
11. Mathsline, newsletter of the Mathematics Section, Curriculum Management Department
12. Lo Stivale, newsletter of the Italian Section, Curriculum Management Department
13. Korsijiet ghall-Adulti (Tagħlim Tul il-Hajja) - Adult Courses (Lifelong Learning), annual
14. Tracer Study Report, Guidance and Counselling, annual
15. Harsa Lejn ix-Xogħol, Qasam tax-Xogħol, Guidance and Counselling, Fuljetti A – F
16. Harsa Lejn ix-Xogħol, Attivitajiet, Guidance and Counselling, Fuljetti I - 19
Noti ghall-Ġalliema, Guidance and Counselling
17. In-Service Courses Catalogue, annual
18. Malta National Bibliography
19. Frak tad-Deheb, Central Public Library quarterly
20. Foundation for Educational Services Report, annual
21. European Union Programmes Unit Report, annual
22. Ministry of Education web-site - Informative and resource material produced by the various departments and units of the Education Division



APPENDIX I: CHARACTERISTICS OF A COLLEGE

“College” is intended to mean a school or a network of schools as the Minister responsible for Education may from time to time determine. A College will be under the responsibility of a College Board and will be administered by a Principal.

a. Legal Personality

Each College will be statutorily endowed with a distinct juridical personality.

Therefore;

1. Each college will be a body corporate with its own distinct legal personality and will be capable, subject to its mandate, of entering into contracts, of employing personnel, and of doing all other necessary acts which are incidental or conducive to the exercise or performance of its functions under its statute.
2. The legal and juridical representation of each college will be vested in the Chairperson of the College Board, provided the Board will be able to appoint the Principal or any one or more of its members, officers, or anyone employed by the College to appear in the name and on behalf of the College in any judicial proceedings, deed, contract, instrument or other document whatsoever.
3. A College will consist of a number of schools with their students, staff, Heads, a Principal, and a College Board. The Principal and Heads of School are holders of management positions which imply the adoption of a top management mindset.

b. Functions of the College

The functions of each College will be to:

1. network the schools forming the College by fostering a team culture amongst the Heads of School and their personnel, and by facilitating the effective co-ordination of the said schools, including cross school handling of common concerns and initiatives;
2. ensure the appropriate application of the principles and the guidelines of the National Framework Curriculum in the school/s forming the College in such a way that allows all students to receive their educational entitlement to the maximum of their potential;
3. ensure the ownership of, and the accountability for, the education process and the smooth transitions of all the students entrusted to the College from an early age through to secondary education;
4. ensure continuity, balance, depth, and coherence in the curricular provision for each student;
5. improve the quality of the educational provision by promoting and maintaining high standards of performance and attainment by all members of the school community;
6. ensure the emergence and the sharing of good practices;
7. promote the concept of lifelong learning;
8. promote and disseminate a culture of evaluation amongst members of the College communities. Such a culture will include the implementation of approved internal educational audit mechanisms and the participation in external quality assurance processes;



9. prepare a three-year business plan and an annual estimated budget for the College and apportion the delegated budget amongst the schools of the College;
10. ensure the appropriate selection and use of teaching and learning resources, services and facilities;
11. lead the College schools in ensuring a safe and secure school environment and a culture of discipline;
12. ensure the timely recruitment, induction and continuing professional development of the Principal and the teaching, managerial, administrative and other support staff according to nationally established criteria and procedures;
13. collaborate with the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta, the relevant MCAST³³ Institutes and other training institutions in the training and continuing professional development of schools personnel;
14. oversee the overall management, administration and conduct of schools;
15. provide appropriate customer care and complaint handling mechanisms for teachers, parents/ carers and students;
16. ensure the implementation of the national policy of parental involvement in school development and in the educational experience of their children and to promote effective home-school partnerships;
17. promote the development of schools into community learning and cultural centres.

c. Accountability

The College Board will be accountable to the Minister through the MED or ESD directorate. While the Principal is accountable to the College Board, the schools within the College will report to the Principal and are accountable to the Principal and the Board. The Board and the College schools will provide the Minister of Education and both Directorates with the necessary information, as far as regards anything they do which is ancillary to their functions. They will furnish them with the relevant returns and accounts, and will provide facilities for the verification of any information furnished. In matters involving financial considerations and commitments, the Board will also be subject to the direction and auditing of the appropriate public regulatory bodies. The Board, the College and the schools will be bound by the current Public Service (Procurement) Laws and Regulations..

d. Proceedings

Matters with respect to procedures and proceedings of College Boards and of the schools, as well as financial, the keeping and management of accounts, records, auditing and verification, will be the subject to the appropriate principal law as well as to subsidiary regulations..

³³ Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology



APPENDIX II: FUNCTIONS OF KEY PERSONNEL WITHIN THE COLLEGE

A. THE PRINCIPAL

The Principal, as the Chief Executive Officer of the College, will ensure an effective and efficient dialogue with all Heads of School and stakeholders. With respect to the discharge of his/her functions, a/he will be accountable to the College Board. S/he will be expected generally to execute and implement efficiently the policies of the College, and in particular s/he will fulfil the following functions and responsibilities;

1. Chair the Council of heads' meetings;
2. Support the schools within the College to grow together as effective providers of quality education;
3. Empower schools towards school improvement, effectiveness and growth;
4. Ensure timely provision of support, expertise and resources;
5. Develop and sustain a College ethos, character and identity;
6. Promote a holistic approach to the education of students from early childhood to the completion of secondary education;
7. Monitor the effective implementation of the National Curriculum by means of innovative methodologies and approaches, including the extensive adoption of information and communication technologies as pedagogical tools;
8. Facilitate the delivery of the National Curriculum between the various stages of the educational process and between the schools participating in each College;
9. Stimulate staff and school development;
10. Facilitate discussion and analysis of common school administration and management issues and problems in order to manage change effectively;
11. Offer opportunities to Heads of School, administrators and teachers in the various schools help to pool and share ideas, experiences and good practice and to work together on common educational programmes, projects, activities and other initiatives;
12. Facilitate the organisation of common activities in such fields as physical education and sports, culture (drama, music, art and craft), environment, creativity and entrepreneurship;
13. Promote the development of specialization in schools in various fields of knowledge and/or activities;
14. Encourage and facilitate the pooling and sharing of resources, spaces and facilities;
15. Co-ordinate research, including action research across schools in the College and across Colleges;
16. Provide mentoring to Heads of School when so requested and required;
17. Coordinate the provision of effective psycho-social services across the network;



18. Create links with child care centres to ensure a smooth transition between child care and kindergarten or compulsory schooling;
19. Develop a common policy and approach to the development of the schools into lifelong learning centres;
20. Submit regular progress reports to the College Board.

B. HEAD OF SCHOOL³⁴

The functions, role and responsibilities of the Head of School are:

Overall Purpose

1. to provide professional leadership and to ensure the implementation and the development of the National Curriculum;
2. to secure whole-school commitment to the curricular philosophy, values and objectives through the effective school team building, communication and collaborative approach to decision-making;
3. to promote and further the holistic education of each student in the school;
4. to organise, manage and control efficiently and effectively the human, physical and financial resources of the school;
5. to collaborate with other Heads of College Schools, as well as with Heads of other schools, in a manner that maximises networking under the leadership of the Principal and according to the direction and guidelines established by the College Board and other competent authorities.³⁵

Main Responsibilities

1. Lead the school team to determine and implement school policies in line with the relevant legislation, policies and guidelines;
2. Facilitate a participatory team and collegial process leading to the formulation and constant review of the School Development Plan;
3. Build and maintain an effective and open channel of communications with the school community, with other schools in the College, with the College Board and its administration, with officials of the MED and ESD and other external agencies;
4. Direct the planning, organisation and co-ordination of curriculum related and other activities throughout the year and perform duties connected with the School Council in accordance with current legislation;

³⁴ The functions and duties of Heads of School, teachers and other education personnel are the subject of discussion, debate and negotiations as education policies, strategies and systems evolve to keep pace with the changes taking place in society. Over the years Government and the MUT negotiated and concluded a number of agreements, addenda and side-letters regarding the detailed functions and duties of different categories of the teaching professional class. The functions and duties of Heads of School and Teachers in this appendix are based on the agreed 1995 documents of the Education Division and the MUT. Subsequent agreements since then provided other details that are not being reproduced in this document.

³⁵ See also Head of School's A-Z job description



5. Undertake on-going professional development in educational, administrative leadership, and management and nurture the development and maintenance of the availability of mentors;
6. Ensure order and discipline, help resolve conflicts, and promote healthy relationships between students, staff and parents;
7. Ensure the timely implementation of the established disciplinary procedures when required.

Curriculum Development

8. With the Senior Management Team and the teaching team, determine strategies for the effective implementation of the National Curriculum, such as teaching and learning strategies, the use of educational resources and services, the selection of textbooks, etc;
9. Implement quality assurance mechanisms that maintain high standards of teaching and learning in the school;
10. Ensure the school curriculum includes holistic learning activities that take into account the diverse talents and learning modes and abilities of the child;
11. Ensure that the school curriculum includes holistic learning activities that tap into the resources of the school and of the local community as well as those of national organisations;
12. Motivate and support all categories of staff with the objective of pursuing for themselves lifelong learning opportunities including career development and progression;

Student Matters

13. Ensure the maintenance of effective psycho-social services for students and the effective delivery of pastoral care services for students;
14. Implement an effective referral policy and procedures for students requiring specialised services;
15. Develop and sustain procedures to facilitate the transition of students coming to and leaving school;
16. Ensure an all inclusive school policy;
17. Ensure a safe school environment;

Teaching Personnel

18. Nurture the development and maintenance of the professional school team leading to active participation in decision-making, follow-up action and evaluation;
19. Direct the induction of new staff and motivate, support, develop, monitor, act as their mentor, and appraise professional and non-professional staff;
20. Guide processes, including Performance Management Programmes, to ensure academic and pedagogical quality assurance and standards of teaching and learning;
21. Manage and mentor other personnel attached to the school on a permanent or temporary basis in order to ensure a high level of motivation and of quality service;

**Home-School-Community Links**

22. Create and promote links with the local community and its organisations;
23. Encourage and foster parental involvement in children's educational development, while providing staff with a clear direction, encourage them to seek effective ways of enhancing parental involvement in students' educational development;
24. Promote opportunities for parents to engage in lifelong learning opportunities leading to their own personal development and their enhanced involvement in the school community life;

Administration

25. Carry out the annual school classification exercise and ensure the preparation of timetables, assign classes, subjects and responsibilities to teachers;
26. Ensure that the duty of providing cover for absent teachers is shared equitably among all teachers in the school;
27. Ensure the compilation and upkeep of school statistics, student and staff records;
28. Ensure the provision of a functional filing system and the supply of data and information requested by the regulatory bodies, the College Board and other authorised entities;
29. Ensure the proper maintenance and servicing of the school building, facilities and equipment, as well as the cleanliness and the embellishment of the school environment;
30. Ensure the keeping of a detailed inventory according to prescribed regulations, as well as, the efficient management of stores, apparatus, furniture and other material resources;
31. Ensure the timely requisition of utilities and textbooks;
32. Provide necessary information to ensure adequate school transport;

Finance

33. Prepare the capital and recurrent school budget estimates within the parameters and priorities set by the competent authority and the College Board, whilst contributing to the preparation of the three-year business plan of the Cluster;
34. Manage and control funds according to established Government financial regulations and the guidelines of the College Board, record all transactions according to established practice.

C. TEACHER**Overall Functions**

1. To teach and educate according to the prescriptions of the National Curriculum and the directives of the competent authority, and
2. To teach and educate students according to the educational needs, abilities and attainment of individual students entrusted to his/her care by the Head of School or Head of Unit.

**Main Responsibilities**

3. Plans, prepares and delivers lessons;
4. Teaches according to the educational needs, abilities and achievement of the individual students and groups of students;
5. Assigns work, corrects and marks, regularly, work carried out by his/her students;
6. Assesses, records and reports on the development, progress and attainment and behaviour of his/her students;
7. Provides or contributes to oral and written assessments, to reports and references relating to individual students or groups of students;
8. Participates in arrangements within an agreed national framework for the appraisal of the student's performance;
9. Promotes the general progress and well-being of individual students, groups of students or class/es entrusted to him/her;
10. Provides guidance and advice to students on educational and social matters and on their further education and future careers; provide information on sources of more expert advice;
11. Communicates, consults and co-operates with other members of the school staff, including those having posts of special responsibility and with parents in the interest of students;
12. Reviews and evaluates his/her methods of teaching and learning and the teaching and learning programme/s within the National Curriculum;
13. Advises and co-operates with the Head of School, Assistant Head, other teachers and Education Officers in the preparation and development of courses of study, teaching materials, teaching programmes, methods of teaching and assessment and pastoral care arrangements;
14. Participates in further personal training and professional development as a teacher, including the participating in in-service education and training courses.
15. Maintains good order and discipline amongst students and safeguards their health and safety at any time and place when students are under his/her care;
16. Participates in staff, group or other meetings for the better organisation and administration of the school or meetings related to the school curriculum or pastoral care arrangements;
17. Contributes to the professional development of new teachers and student-teachers according to arrangements agreed with the Head of School;
18. Provides the necessary information and advice and makes the necessary requisitions and arrangements in connection with the teaching of the subject/s assigned to him/her;
19. Ensures the safe custody of equipment normally used by him/her during lessons and sees to its regular servicing and maintenance;
20. Attends school assemblies;
21. Registers the attendance of students under his/her care;
22. Shares in any possible and reasonable way in the proper management, organisation, order and discipline of the school;



APPENDIX III: THE COUNCIL OF HEADS

The Council of School Heads will be composed of all the Heads of Schools comprising the College. The Council will be chaired by the Principal. The Council will:

1. Nurture a spirit of collegiality in the running of the college, while developing a common ethos;
2. Identify training needs of the school communities and plan staff development opportunities that can be delivered across schools;
3. Share experiences of school self-assessment exercises and tap into expertise across schools for further development and improvement;
4. Share experiences of School Development Plans, Performance Management Programmes and school policies with the participation of the school community;
5. Discuss issues of common interest and concern;
6. Hold occasional meetings with providers of external resources and services to reflect about effective school leadership issues, outcomes of particular approaches and new insights that can be integrated into revised practises;
7. Work with appropriate authorities, experts and providers to determine how to promote home-school-community linkages;
8. Encourage and facilitate the development of project proposals in partnership with schools across Europe and other parts of the world;
9. Encourage and support real opportunities for parents to become active school partners and promote lifelong learning amongst the community;
10. Celebrate and reward good practices that evolve across the College;
11. Ensure the sharing of resources amongst the College schools, and develop partnerships to provide particular support or technical assistance.



APPENDIX IV: GUARANTEE OF VESTED RIGHTS OF SERVING PUBLIC OFFICERS

The Ministry of Education will be discussing this document with all stakeholders, including the Unions representing employees of the Division of Education. Any issue related to vested rights and conditions of work will be the subject of appropriate negotiations between the Government and the Union concerned. It has always been Government policy to legally guarantee the vested rights of serving public officers. The Ministry of Education has from the very outset made it clear that such rights as are at present enjoyed by the employees of the Education Division will be guaranteed by law. The principles guiding this matter have already been established in special legislation regulating different public entities and will be repeated here for ease of reference.

a. Status of Public Officers

Public officers presently serving with the Education Division will continue to be considered and treated as public officers even though they will be detailed for duty under the administrative authority of the proposed central education entities or Colleges, and will retain the rights and privileges of their substantive grade with government.

b. Pay

No public officer will be so detailed that the remuneration and conditions of service are less favourable than those which are attached to the appointment under the Government currently held by that public officer.

c. Pension

In the case of pensionable officers (pre-1979 engaged public officers), service with the proposed new education entities of a public officer detailed for duty with such entities, is reckonable service with Government for the purpose of any pension, gratuity or benefit under the Pensions Ordinance (Cap. 93) and the Widows' and Orphans' Pension Act (Cap. 58), and of any other right or privilege to which that public officer may be entitled. Such pension will be computed on the salary of the substantive grade.

d. Promotion and Transfers

A public officer so detailed will not be precluded from applying for a promotion or a transfer to a department of Government in accordance with the terms and conditions of service attached to his/her appointment with Government.

e. Permanent Employment

Each of the proposed entities may offer to any officer, detailed for duty with such entities, permanent employment at agreed remuneration, terms and conditions, provided that these are not less favourable than those enjoyed by such officer at the date of such offer, and provided that acceptance of such an offer by the said officer is voluntary.

f. Pension of Permanent Employees

In the case of pensionable officers (pre-1979 engaged public officers), service of a detailed officer who accepts permanent employment with an entity shall be deemed to be service with the Government for the purposes of the Pensions Ordinance and the Widows' and Orphans Pensions Act.



g. Appointment of New Staff

The appointment of new officers and other new employees of the proposed central entities and Colleges shall be made by the entities concerned subject to the provisions of the Constitution and of any other relevant law. The terms and conditions of employment shall be determined by Government according to established parameters and practice.

h. Detailing of Public Officers

Detailing is the legal procedure by which the Management and Personnel Office, in the Office of the Prime Minister, may from time to time direct any public officer to be detailed for duty with the central entities or Colleges in the appropriate capacity. Service with the central entities or Colleges will be deemed service on grounds of public policy.



NOTES



FOR ALL CHILDREN TO SUCCEED



A NEW NETWORK ORGANISATION FOR QUALITY EDUCATION IN MALTA

Appendix 2

Permissions Received

Directorate for Quality Standards in Education

DIRETTORAT GHAL KWALITA' U STANDARDS FU-EDUKAZZJONI FLORIANA VLT 2000 MALTA		DIRECTORATE FOR QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN EDUCATION FLORIANA VLT 2000 MALTA
Request for Research in State Schools		

OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

19 October 2010

Professor Carmel Borg
Chairperson
Graduate Studies Committee
Faculty of Education
University of Malta

This is to confirm that I am aware that Maria Montebello is applying to pursue
doctoral studies at the University of Malta.

I have reviewed her thesis proposal and I am willing to act as Principal Supervisor.

Sincerely,

John P. Portelli

John P. Portelli, Ph.D.
Professor



Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
151 College Street
Toronto, ON, Canada M5S 1V6
www.oise.utoronto.ca

B. Tutor's Approval (where applicable)

The above research work is being carried out under my supervision.

Tutor's Name: Prof John P. Portelli Signature: 

Faculty: Centre for Leadership and Diversity Theory and Policy Studies OISE, University of Toronto

Faculty Stamp: 

C. Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education - Official Approval

The above request for permission to carry out research in State Schools is hereby approved according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the University of Malta Ethics Committee.

Raymond Camilleri
Director
Research and Development

Date: 07/02/2011

Official Stamp

Assistant Director
(International Research)

Conditions for the approval of a request by a student to carry out research work in State Schools

Permission for research in State Schools is subject to the following conditions:

1. The official request form is to be accompanied by a copy of the questionnaire and / or any relevant material intended for use in schools during research work.
2. The original request form, showing the relevant signatures and approval, must be presented to the Head of School.
3. All research work is carried out at the discretion of the relative Head of School and subject to their conditions.
4. Researchers are to observe strict confidentiality at all times.
5. The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education reserves the right to withdraw permission to carry out research in State Schools at any time and without prior notice.
6. Students are expected to restrict their research to a minimum of students / teachers / administrators / schools, and to avoid any waste of time during their visits to schools.
7. As soon as the research in question is completed, the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education assumes the right to a full copy (in print/on C.D.) of the research work carried out in State Schools. Researchers are to forward the copies to the Assistant Director, International Research, Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.
8. Researchers are to hand a copy of their Research in print or on C.D. to the relative School/s.
9. In the case of video recordings, researchers have to obtain prior permission from the Head of School and the teacher of the class concerned. Any adults recognisable in the video are to give their explicit consent. Parents of students recognisable in the video are also to be requested to approve that their siblings may be video-recorded. Two copies of the consent forms are necessary, one copy is to be deposited with the Head of School, and the other copy is to accompany the Request Form for Research in State Schools. Once the video recording is completed, one copy of the videotape is to be forwarded to the Head of School. The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education reserves the right to request another copy.
10. The video recording's use is to be limited to this sole research and may not be used for other research without the full consent of interested parties including the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.

Statement of Consent

I hereby give my consent to the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education to process and record personal and sensitive data being given herewith in order to be able to render me with the service I am applying for. I fully understand that:

- a) by opting out my application cannot be processed;
- b) authorised personnel who are processing this information may have access to this data in order to supply me with the service being applied for;
- c) edited information, that would not identify me, may be included in statistical reports.

I know that I am entitled to see the information related to me, should I ask for it in writing.

I am aware that for the purpose of the Data Protection Act, the Data Controller for this Directorate is:

The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education
Floriana, VLT 2000

I have read and understood this statement of consent myself

This statement of consent was read and explained to me

Signature: [REDACTED] ID number: [REDACTED] (Data subject)

Signature: _____ ID number: _____ (Reader if applicable)

Date: 1-2-2011

Data Protection Policy

The Data Protection Act, 2001 regulated the processing of personal data held electronically and in manual form. The Directorate for Quality and Standard in Education is set to fully comply with the Data Protection Principles as set out in the Act.

- a) The Directorate will hold information you supply in accordance to your request to carry out research in State Schools and / or Directorates' documents.
- b) The information you give may be disclosed to other Departments of the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, who may also have access to your data.

Your rights:

You are entitled to know what information the Directorate holds and processes about you and why; who has access to it; how it is kept up to date; what the Directorate is doing to comply with its obligations under the Data Protection Act, 2001.

The Data Protection Act, 2001 sets down a formal procedure for dealing with data subject access requests which the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport follows.

All data subjects have the right to access any personal information kept about them by the Directorate either on computer or in manual files. Requests to access to personal information by data subjects must be made in writing and addressed to the Data Controller of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. An identification document such as a photocopy of the Identity Card, photocopy of passport etc. of the data subject making the request must be submitted with the request. Such identification material will be returned to the data subject.

The Directorate aims to comply as quickly as possible with requests for access to personal information and will ensure that it is provided within reasonable time, the reason will be explained in writing to the data subject making the request.

All data subjects have the right to request that their information be amended, erased or not used in the event the data is incorrect.