

MAKING INROADS IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN CONTEXT: A COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE BETWEEN ITALY AND MALTA

CHRISTOPHER BEZZINA
ANGELO PALETTA
DANIELE VIDONI

Abstract – *A sense of urgency shapes our national discourse on state education. Students strive to meet new academic standards while their teachers work to improve the quality and equity of education opportunities. Yet achievement gaps persist, particularly in urban and rural schools. The demand for effective leadership is clear. We need school leaders who visualise successful student learning, understand the work necessary to achieve it, and have the skills to engage with others to make it happen. How can we prepare more individuals to meet these challenges? This paper explores what three universities – two in Italy and one in Malta – are doing to establish a programme that offers an innovative pathway to school leadership. It presents the inception of this partnership, the rationale behind the discourse that has evolved over the years, and the establishment of links between the universities and other bodies within the Mediterranean and Commonwealth contexts with the aim of preparing the next generation of school leaders needed within the Euro-Mediterranean region. The concluding part presents a number of opportunities that lie ahead and highlights the various challenges that await us as we embark on this journey.*

Introduction

Effective or purposeful leadership is generally accepted as a central component in implementing and sustaining school improvement. Evidence from school improvement literature, starting with seminal studies in the United States (Brookover et al., 1979; Edmonds, 1982) and the United Kingdom (Rutter et al., 1979), consistently highlight that effective leaders exercise a direct or indirect but powerful influence on the school's capacity to implement reforms and improve students' levels of achievement. Although quality of teaching strongly influences and determines the level of student motivation and achievement, quality of leadership matters in determining the motivation of teachers and the quality of their teaching (Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001).

In Italy and Malta, the principal is also becoming the centre of concern in educational reform (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment [MEYE], 2005). The interest in the principalship and the role principals play within a school context is growing because of the drive to decentralise ever more responsibilities to the school site, and as a result to make schools more accountable for decision-making and results. This paper presents some of the measures that are being taken in Italy and Malta to address the management development of educational leaders in general and of school leaders in particular.

The paper points out that while education authorities are devolving particular responsibilities to schools, the main form of preparation of school personnel is through short seminars and training sessions. Education institutions often react to changes around them by providing their own courses, often leading to graduate and post-graduate academic qualifications. Although the drive to increase the level of responsibility and decision-making powers at school level is indeed laudable, improvement cannot be brought about unless there is a clear understanding of the cultural context in which developments are taking place. As argued elsewhere (see Bezzina, 1999), this will help us to identify the conditions and needs that management development has to address for such initiatives to succeed. Accordingly, it presents an analytic and semi-historical account of developments in theory, research, policy and practice in school management training in Malta and Italy.

The Maltese context

Various initiatives undertaken over the past few years express a move by the education authorities to bestow greater responsibilities and authority to schools. All state primary and secondary schools have been entrusted with the responsibility of drafting their own school development plans. Such a move recognises that school improvement can be brought about by concentrating development efforts on the school, and seeing it as the major agent of change within the education system. This conceptualisation provides an alternative view to the centralised, prescriptive model of school improvement that state schools have been used to. State schools in Malta have been used to working within a system which is hierarchical, centralised and bureaucratic. As a result, teachers have grown weary through disillusionment and stress (National Curriculum Council [NCC], 2004). Teachers continuously find themselves sandwiched between a belief in democracy and participation on the one hand, and, on the other, the daily experience of a lack of structures to function as decision-makers. Over the years, schools have never been given the opportunity to develop into

vital places of learning, or sites of professional inquiry and reflective practice (Bezzina, Bezzina & Stanyer, 2004).

Moving from the shackles of dependency to one of autonomy will not be easy. One cannot talk of such moves without really understanding the culture and climate that have evolved over the years and which have led to the current situation, and which in actual fact determine to a large extent how people think and act. Present conditions and circumstances of schools could not have been planned to be more antithetical to becoming centres of inquiry and change. Among the worst of these conditions are: (i) isolation of educators (both teachers and school administrators) from one another; (ii) the fragmentation of the school day into separate subject matters; (iii) the apportionment of specific teaching time to a subject; (iv) the untenable ratio of students to teachers; and (v) the lack of time for genuine reflection, sharing and critical inquiry among teachers.

Any effort to improve the effectiveness of schools depends on an understanding of the dynamics of schools. This implies exploring the actions and influences of teachers, students, education officials, parents, community members, the curriculum, and the ways in which these influences operate. These initiatives, although being undertaken by central authorities, lack the necessary ethical framework, values, features and indeed the sense of mission which brings with it that burning desire to achieve stated goals. We are witnessing a wave of reforms which require a careful re-examination of the concepts of power and authority. Leadership and management need to be re-defined and a clear shift away from the traditional hierarchical control mechanisms made manifest. We need to challenge the 'boundaries of sameness', to use Walker & Walker's (1998) term, and to celebrate and value differences. As Senge (1990) points out:

'If any one idea about leadership has inspired organisations for thousands of years, it is the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create. One is hard-pressed to think of any organisation that has sustained some measure of greatness in the absence of goals, values, and missions that become deeply shared throughout the organisation.' (p. 9)

Recent initiatives have placed leadership, its basis and function, under close scrutiny. Whereas Bhindi & Duignan (1997, p. 118) speak of 'environmental complexities and turbulence' as the main reasons behind the need to review areas like leadership, organisational structures, culture and management practices, in Malta we are experiencing the same very much due to the varied initiatives being introduced by the education authorities.

Over the years, various studies (Xerri, 2000; Bezzina, 2002; NCC, 2004) have highlighted the concerns – especially of those in the schools – that school administrators still have to follow the dictates of central authorities, thus ignoring

the unique position of the school as an agent of reform. They argue that schools lack the necessary support from the centre. They feel that school management teams and the Education Division¹ were not adequately prepared for their change in roles. It is important that the role of the Division complements the changes occurring in school management. In order to meet the challenges involved in such a complex undertaking, the Division needs highly developed management and administration skills. Current initiatives to develop central authorities into two directorates (see MEYE, 2005) are aimed at addressing these current lacunae. More importantly, what is essential is that the reforms help to nurture a new way of thinking and of doing things. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (MEYE) sees networks as the way forward to provide a quality education for all children.

The Ministry acknowledges that the proposed re-structuring aims to 'reform the whole system of lifelong learning into one which is smoother and seamless' (MEYE, 2005, p. xix). To achieve this goal, it proposes networks as 'the main organizational form which can give depth and scale to the process of transformation' (MEYE, 2005, p. xix). Furthermore, networks will empower schools further in that they will be able to take decisions based on the needs of their students, teachers and the community.

The education authorities, as is clearly spelt out in the document *For All Children to Succeed* (MEYE, 2005), do acknowledge the demands that the proposed changes call for both at the individual level and the institutional level. At the same time, we have to acknowledge that the challenges call for a different way of thinking, reflecting and doing things. It is within this context that research is invaluable and helps to contextualise what can easily be seen as mere political rhetoric.

On the one hand, the *Strategic Plan* (Ministry of Education, 2001) sees the school principal as 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 ideal. The whole decentralization process must be underscored by the values of: authenticity; collegiality; leadership, interest, belonging; trust, empowerment; participation, risk taking, pride, sharing and respect.

A consultative style of management should be cultivated to ensure the nurturing of decentralization. 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. The Head of School will be required to share responsibilities through real delegation. This will involve the passing on to the management

team and other ranks key tasks that many heads are reluctant to let go. A management approach with these characteristics would ensure ownership of decision-making and enhance levels of staff motivation.' (pp. 114-115)

This is quite a tall order, especially given the studies into leadership in general and principalship in particular. Various studies have aimed to explore, among other things, the training needs of school administrators, their perceptions of autonomy and their leadership styles. These studies, to some extent, all highlight a definite departure from their traditional role, which portrayed them merely as administrators and a channel for directives by central education authorities. Recent findings show that principals are high on both the *initiating structure* and *consideration* dimensions of leadership (Behling & Schreisham, 1976), and even more so on the latter. In a study involving secondary school principals, the respondents scored highest on 'encouraging staff to be more innovative' and 'being clear about teacher direction' in the initiating structure dimension and 'taking personal interest in their staff', 'positively responding to laments' and 'embellishing the school environment' in the consideration dimension. It may be noticed that these are the items in which the personal relations of the principal with the staff could be viewed as determining in enhancing curricular effectiveness and in providing environmental or school culture development (Quintano, 1999). These findings are similar to those of another study involving principals and deputy principals in the primary and secondary sector (Abdilla & Spiteri, 1999).

In the Abdilla & Spiteri (1999) study, the majority of school administrators want to take a more professional leadership role, with the majority of respondents wanting to support the teachers' professional development, to help teachers develop the curriculum, and to involve them in whole school development planning. A study on primary school principals conducted in the early 1990s (i.e., prior to the introduction of current initiatives) explored, among other things, the training needs principals felt they ought to receive (see Bezzina, 1995). The following were the main ones highlighted: (i) staff appraisal and professional development; (ii) personal professional development; (iii) evaluation; (iv) relationships; and (v) leadership. In another study, secondary school principals identified the following areas which they felt need to be addressed: (i) staff development of teachers, including induction, motivating, supporting and evaluating; (ii) professional team building; (iii) enhancing an efficient communications system with all stakeholders; and (iv) monitoring and supervision of the quality of teaching and learning (Quintano, 1999, p. 56). It is noteworthy that the list is highest on the *leadership and human relations* category of tasks as identified by Goodwin (1968) and Morgan, Hall & Mackey (1983). This is exactly the contrary to what has been found in England (Evans, 1986), but

coincides with the staff development issues which New Zealand principals of secondary schools identified as being their weak areas (Wadsworth, 1988). These results show that while principals are slowly becoming more task-centred, due to the fact that schools are being given more responsibilities and are being held accountable for what happens at the school site, they are also having to spend more time working with and through people.

The proposed networking system aims to strengthen these aspects. Hopkins (2005; cited in MEYE, 2005) describes networks as:

‘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 and 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.’ (p. 37)

Networks aim to bring people together, allowing members in the same school, between schools, across boundaries, to come together. Within this context the challenge is that of creating an ‘intentional learning community’ (Lieberman, 1996) in which educators discuss their work and tackle issues in an atmosphere of trust and support.

This implies that the way we view leadership, power and governance is challenged. The hierarchical system we have been used to in the Maltese islands has helped develop various cultural tensions that cannot be ignored or eliminated through centralist policy initiatives alone (Bezzina, 2005). The process of networking has to be explored as a means to address such tensions which have determined the way we view things, our thoughts and practices.

Within such a context the importance and relevance of the professional development of school leaders takes on added significance. These developments and their implications on leadership development spearheaded this move to work with a neighbouring country.

Before exploring this initiative, we will now move into a review of the Italian context.

The Italian context

The Italian and the Maltese experiences are in many ways similar. Starting from a hierarchical, centralised and highly bureaucratic system, both countries have experienced a move toward decentralisation, resulting in the transfer of more

responsibility and authority to schools, which have thus become the major unit of change in the education system.

In the specific case of Italy, school management is the most wide-ranging profession comprising management qualifications in the country's public administration sector. In 2006, it has been calculated that the profession includes 10,517 principals who, on average, are over 62 years of age. This high average age has led to inherent problems of generational turnover. Their management training has become a critical issue because of the elevated number of people involved and, above all, because of the cultural background of principals, whose skills are rooted mainly in the teaching profession (Paletta & Vidoni, 2006). Ten years after the introduction of management in schools, the acquisition of managerial skills is still looked upon with suspicion (Romani & Serpieri, 2004), not only due to history and ideology, but also due to the uncertainty surrounding autonomous schools.

From a legal and organisational perspective, schools are formally autonomous, but if a school does not ably manage its chief resources – human, financial and material – its autonomy becomes a blunt weapon, and is in fact often used by principals as a justification for a lack of interest in investing in managerial skills development (Paletta, 2004).

Principals need in-depth knowledge of the cultural organisation of their school, and hence, need to have been a part of the teaching profession for a sufficient period of time. However, seniority and being a good teacher do not suffice for someone wishing to become a principal. Principals who bring about change within a school and have a clear vision for development need to capably combine three diverse types of skills: professional, leadership and managerial (Paletta, 2005).

The following sections focus on the legal and historical developments that have led to the current legal structure and to the training methods used for principals in the acquisition of general management skills, with particular focus on strategic management.

The legal set-up

Traditionally, the rationale behind the state's massive involvement in education has been the need '... to remove all economic and social obstacles which, by limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, prevent the full development of the individual and the participation of all workers in the political, economic, and social organisation of the country' (Article 3[2], *Constitution of the Italian Republic*²). The Constitution states further that 'The Republic lays down general rules for education and establishes State schools for all kinds and grades'

(Article 33[2]). The legislator interpreted the disposition in a strictly bureaucratic fashion, so that the Ministry of Education defines at the national level the rules for most of the aspects of school life, such as on recruitment, career development, salaries, definition of the school curriculum, school accountability, financial management, administrative procedures, strategic planning and school development. In this situation, the role of the principal is residual to the competences exclusive to the minister, having to make sure that the school operators apply correctly the laws and the strict administrative procedures.

As a direct provider of education, the state has obtained basic results such as universal literacy. However, the strict focus of the state on bureaucratic procedures is responsible for the system's inherent weaknesses. In fact, in the past 50 years, industrialisation, population growth, and the subsequent diversification of the individual's needs have led to a situation where a unique national provider cannot give an effective answer to such needs. Such an outcome was not confined to education; rather, it was general and – most of all – was common to most of Europe. The result led to a re-evaluation of the welfare state paradigm that shaped the constitutions of most European nations, and required an alternative approach to the role of the state in providing public services. The subsidiarity principle was the solution. The principle – embedded in Article A(2) of the *Treaty on European Union*, signed in Maastricht, 7 February 1992 – presents a discretionary role of the individual as a decision-maker. It intends to ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen and that constant checks are made as to whether action at community level is justified in the light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level³.

The Bassanini reform (Law 59/1997), which tried to work the subsidiarity principle into Italian legislation, asserts the need to simplify the public administration by giving specific functions and duties to the regions and the provinces. The reform consists of a number of laws regarding the provision of all public services. With regard to school education, Law 59/1997 was the first step toward a system that provides the individual school with a legal personality and gives the school manager actual influence in tracing the route the school is to follow to achieve excellence and equity. Specifically, Article 21(1) of this law indicates that 'the functions of the central and the peripheral administration of public education [...], granted the uniform national fruition of the right to education and the elements common to the entire public school system that the state defines with regard to management and planning, are progressively given out to the educational institutions, giving them juridical personality'⁴. The Article foresees a new set-up in which the school staff, rather than being a simple executive, has the possibility – and the responsibility – of intervening directly in the management and planning of the school and of the 'educational offer'.

Article 1(2) of the Legislative Decree 59/1998 specifies the primary role of the school manager as someone who ‘... organises the activity of the school on the basis of formative efficiency and effectiveness criteria, and is the reference for the relationships with the labour unions’⁵. The constitutional reform of 2001 secured these concepts in the amendments to Article 117, which indicates that the individual school – and not, as it was before, the central government – is the unit of reference of the Italian school system. Sentence 13/2004 of the Italian Constitutional Court further specifies this vision, and affirms that ‘in relation to school planning and administrative management of the service, the state only decides on the fundamental principles’⁶. The Moratti reform (Law 53/2003) foresees a system in which the government sets the rules, controls the quality of the services offered, and funds the demand for services. Providers are accountable for the actual quality of the services they provide, and individual citizens can choose among different options and are responsible for their decisions.

These legal principles produce a system in which school leaders have increasing freedom of action, and therefore need to develop their professional skills in order to obtain better results than leaders who strictly follow strategies planned at national level.

The new structural set-up of the Italian school system designed by the Moratti reform is undoubtedly ambitious. However, in these first three years of implementation, the reform has not brought about the aimed-for changes, especially because the devolution of responsibility to individual schools has not been followed up by adequate training of the school managers in terms of their new roles and assigned responsibilities. The following two sections show how Italian school managers are, *de facto*, being overtly prudent in relation to innovative practices in their institutions.

Strategic management in Italian schools

An action research project, which was carried out in the Italian region of Emilia Romagna in collaboration with the Regional Education Office, sought to determine the training requirements of schools for strategic management. Following an initial selection process, the project concentrated on eleven schools (differing in type) to develop carefully a strategic management training model.

The study aimed to identify whether the *Piano dell’Offerta Formativa* (POF) (i.e., the Training Offer Plan), was helping schools to strategically plan the way forward for themselves. According to Italian law, the plan was to serve as a guideline for the school and its members. Each plan would identify the area to be tackled, the aims and outcomes, the implementation process, the resources needed, the time frame, and the evaluation/review processes.

The study helped to highlight that, in its present format, the POF was described as a list of services offered. It describes the courses offered, the timetable and other aspects related to the organisation of the school services. It often also included the objectives it aimed to reach. When the objectives were included, they were merely presented as a list covering all the possible areas of intervention. In some cases, they were simply copied from the POF of the preceding year.

The objectives of the POF, when present, did not focus on the critical areas of school development. Schools were merely focusing on the administrative and logistical aspects of school life rather than on the substantive matters behind school improvement. In fact, there was limited attention to strategic planning and the implementation and review of the identified objectives.

Evidence from the Sivadis Project⁷

Another study, the Sivadis Project, which was carried out by the Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema di Istruzione (2005) (i.e., the National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System), provided additional empirical information on the development of strategic management. The study focussed on 176 'self-evaluation files' in which school principals outlined an assessment guide comprising context, objectives, actions and indicators. Despite the evaluation showing that there was a general improvement compared with the review conducted in the first year, there are still a number of critical points that need to be addressed. The following are the three main ones:

1. The objectives are defined in a vague manner. As a result, it was difficult to appreciate the responses given and how these objectives were related to the strategic plan.
2. The schools were still focusing on administrative matters rather than on matters related to quality education (e.g., curriculum design, development and implementation, teaching and learning, and evaluation).
3. The principals' work was still not aligned with the school objectives.

In brief, the action research project carried out in the selected schools of Emilia Romagna and the evaluation of the Sivadis Project gave rise to cogent empirical evidence. Generally speaking, the weakness of school management in Italy seems to lie in the missing alignment between strategy, organisation and performance. The POF consists of a long list of projects. However, it cannot be considered as the framework holding the initiatives together. For external parties and collegial

bodies within a school (i.e., the school board and the teachers' association), it is at times impossible to comprehend the strategy behind the decisions taken. This does not help to create a cooperative organisation of social actors. Without strong leadership, a school can be sidetracked by individual initiatives, resulting in a loss of resources and human energy. Performance evaluation ought to jumpstart the strategic management of a school, but the lack of clearly defined objectives and of improved services hinders the creation of an organisational learning process.

Critical questions still need to be raised and answered. These include: How can principals alter the current situation and launch an effective process of organisational change? Is change possible without an adequate model of incentives and without the support of stakeholders?

Facing up to the challenge – a joint effort

The authors are of the opinion that a concerted effort to institutionalise the professional development of principals would serve to provide the appropriate skills and competences necessary for them to take the schools forward. One way of aligning the changes being mandated by law in both Malta and Italy so that they can have maximum effect on schools and the quality of education provided is through training programmes for school leaders and aspiring leaders. The authors are of the opinion that educational leaders in general and principals in particular can benefit through a specialised programme that can help them address their needs. For this reason, the authors have come together to discuss the possibilities that exist or may develop as we tackle these issues.

The various studies surveyed have highlighted the needs of school principals. Leaders need to acquire traditional management skills in resource allocation, finance, cost control, planning and other areas, and they should be proficient in methodological tools, which may help them improve their effectiveness. Moreover, we also expect them to demonstrate the qualities that define leadership, integrity and character – areas such as vision, passion, sensitivity, insight, understanding, commitment, charisma, courage, humility and intelligence. We also expect them to be friends, mentors and/or guardians. Yet, what stands out is that we need leaders who are, as Duignan (1998) puts it, 'full-blooded creatures who are politically and spiritually aware, credible, earthly and practical' (pp. 21-22). Although people may be trained to become effective leaders, most leaders, unfortunately, find themselves in leadership positions without being adequately trained or prepared. Leadership also requires a practical component which leadership courses often tend to neglect. A lot of work can and needs to be done

at this level. In many countries training is not a requirement for appointment as a principal. However, various initiatives have been identified providing programmes for aspiring principals. While some systems operate mandatory courses, others are available but not compulsory (see Table 1). At the same time, various post-graduate courses are run mainly by universities (see Bezzina, 2001; Tomlinson, 2001).

While the programmes reviewed have their own particular slant and bias, one can identify similar trends and initiatives. The main aim behind the programmes is that of improving the quality of school leadership and management. They are rooted in school improvement, are based on national standards, take account of a candidate's previous achievements and experiences, and are rigorous in nature.

The programme-designs reviewed tend to focus on:

- a move away from purely academic programmes to more professional ones;
- a greater focus on relevance and applicability;
- a greater involvement of participants;
- exposure to a variety of learning opportunities (e.g., case studies, individual/pair/group work);
- a hands-on approach, reflection and action;
- mentoring and coaching.

Most initiatives pertain to the Anglo-Saxon world, but – on the basis of the recent reforms that have led to the legal frameworks outlined in previous paragraphs – Malta and Italy are also focusing more and more on the issues of autonomy and leadership. Moreover, both countries share the same Mediterranean culture and institutional evolution characterised by the tendency to decentralise more responsibilities to the school site and, as a result, to make schools more accountable for decision-making and the results achieved.

Bringing these activities together so as to favour staff and student mobility, as well as the sharing of technological expertise, is the challenge for the future and for the practical settlement of a real culture of leadership. The programmes aim to challenge course participants to address theory and praxis within the contexts they work in, thus allowing us to review how such professional development courses can influence, and be influenced, by national mandates such as the one on networks in Malta and decentralised practices in Italy.

TABLE 1: School leadership and management programmes

Provision for Aspiring Principals		
International Centre	Mandatory	Optional
Australia (Victoria)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Australia (NSW)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Canada (Ontario)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ██████████ ██████████	
Cyprus	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Short Course	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Master's course
Greece		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hong Kong	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Course (30 hours)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Master's course
New Zealand		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Israel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ██████████	
Italy		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Singapore	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ██████████ ██████████	
Spain	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ██████████	
Sweden		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Turkey	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ██████████ ██████████	
USA (Chicago)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Master's course	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
USA (North Carolina)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ██████████ ██████████	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ██████████ ██████████
USA (Ohio)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
USA (Pittsburgh)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Malta	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ██████████ ██████████	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Master's course
England & Wales	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ██████████ ██████████	
Scotland	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ██████████ ██████████	

The country either has one programme which is mandatory or else optional or both

Notes

1. The Education Division represents the administrative arm of the Maltese government in educational matters concerning curriculum development, examinations, planning and infrastructural development, operations, further studies and adult education, and student services and international relations.
2. The Constitution can be viewed at <http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/leggi/costituing.html>
3. Specifically, the Article reads: 'This Treaty marks a new stage in the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen' (for full text of Treaty see <http://www.eurotreaties.com/maastrichteu.pdf>).
4. Law 59/1997 can be viewed at <http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/970591.htm> (text in Italian).
5. Legislative Decree 59/1998 can be viewed at <http://www.cgilscuola.it/leggi/DM59-98.htm> (text in Italian).
6. Sentence 13/2004 of the Italian Constitutional Court can be viewed at <http://www.istruzioneer.it/allegato.asp?ID=159527> (text in Italian).
7. The Sivadis Project (SI.VA.DLS – *Sistema di Valutazione dei Dirigenti Scolastici*) is a system for evaluating headteachers.

Christopher Bezzina is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, where, among other things, he co-ordinates the BEd(Hons) and PGCE teaching practicum and runs courses in classroom management. Dr Bezzina is also course leader of the master's programme in Educational Leadership. He is involved with a wide range of schools on school development and school improvement initiatives. He is also involved in various European bodies and is member of various international educational institutions. His research interests include professional development of teachers and school leaders, school development and school improvement, and school evaluation. His e-mail address is: christopher.bezzina@umedu.mt

Angelo Paletta is associate professor of Business Administration at the Faculty of Economics, Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna (Italy), where he is, among other things, the course director of the master's programme in Management of Educational Institutions. He is also president of the Centre of International Studies in Educational Governance, Accountability & Management (EGAM). His e-mail address is: angelo.paletta@unibo.it

Daniele Vidoni works for the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning (CRELL) of the European Commission. His work currently focuses on alternative structures of educational governance, the creation of school accountability systems, managerial models and incentive systems. He is presently completing a PhD in the Economics of Education at Boston University (USA). His e-mail address is: daniele.vidoni@jrc.it

References

- Abdilla, M. R., & Spiteri, A. (1999) *The Attitudes and Perceptions of Maltese State School Administrators on Autonomy*. Diploma dissertation, Faculty of Education, University of Malta.
- Behling, O., & Schreisham, C. (1976) *Organisational Behavior: Theory, Research and Application*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bezzina, C. (1995) *The Maltese Primary School Principalship: Perceptions, Roles and Responsibilities*. PhD thesis, School of Education, Brunel University, London, UK.
- Bezzina, C. (1999) *Opening Doors to School Improvement: An Introductory Handbook*. Malta: MUT Publications Ltd.
- Bezzina, C. (2001) The professional development of headteachers in Malta: trends and development, *The International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 15(3), pp. 138-144.
- Bezzina, C. (2002) *A New Vision for Educational Leadership: The case of Malta*. Paper presented at the 27th Annual Conference of the Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE), 24-28 August, Warsaw, Poland.
- Bezzina, C. (2005) From centralisation to decentralisation: the real challenges facing educational reform in Malta, *Journal of Maltese Educational Research*, Vol. 4(1), pp. 80-95. Available online at: <http://www.educ.um.edu.mt/jmer>
- Bezzina, C., Bezzina, N. R., & Stanyer, R. (2004) Exploring beginning teachers' perceptions of their preparation and professional development in Malta, *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol. 9(2), pp. 39-70.
- Bhindi, N., & Duignan, P. (1997) Leadership for a new century: authenticity, intentionality, spirituality and sensibility, *Educational Management and Administration*, Vol. 25(2), pp. 117-132.
- Brookover, W. B., Beady, C., Flood, P., Schweitzer, J., & Wisenbaker, J. (1979) *School Social Systems and Student Achievement: Schools Make a Difference*. New York: Praeger.
- Duignan, P. (1998) *Authenticity in Leadership: The Rhetoric and the Reality*. Paper presented at the 23rd Annual Conference of the Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE), 24-30 August, Limerick, Ireland.
- Edmonds, R. R. (1982) Programs of school improvement: an overview, *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 40(3), pp. 4-11.
- Evans, K. (1986) Creating a climate for school leadership, *School Organisation*, Vol. 6(1), pp. 61-69.
- Fullan, M. (2001) *Leading in a Culture of Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Goodwin, F. J. (1968) *The Art of the Headteacher*. London: Ward Lock.
- Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema di Istruzione (2005) *Progetto Sivadis 2 – Monitoraggio della sperimentazione* (Final report).
- Lieberman, A. (1996) Creating intentional learning communities, *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 54 (3), pp. 51-55.

- Ministry of Education (2001) *Strategic Plan*. Malta: Author.
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (MEYE) (2005) *For All Children to Succeed: A New Network Organisation for Quality Education in Malta*. Malta: Author. Available online at: <http://www.education.gov.mt/networks.htm>
- Morgan, C., Hall, V., & Mackey, H. (1983) *The Selection of Secondary School Headteachers*. Milton Keynes: Teachers College Press.
- National Curriculum Council (NCC) (2004) *Quality Education for All: The Realities and Challenges facing Boys' and Girls' Secondary Schools in Malta*. Malta: Secondary Education Focus Group, National Curriculum Council, Ministry of Education.
- Paletta, A. (2004) *Il Governo dell'Università: Tra Competizione e Accountability*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Paletta, A. (2005) Performance measurement for strategic management of educational activities, *International Journal for Education Law and Policy* (Special Issue, October 2005), pp. 77-101.
- Paletta, A., & Vidoni, D. (2006) Italian school managers: a complex identity, *International Studies in Educational Administration*, Vol. 34(1), pp. 46-70.
- Quintano, A. (1999) *Professional Leadership by Secondary School Headteachers in Malta*. Diploma dissertation, Faculty of Education, University of Malta.
- Romani, I., & Serpieri, R. (2004) Le competenze della leadership scolastica: la spirale delle proprietà emergenti. In L. Benadusi & F. Consoli (eds.) *La Governance della Scuola: Istituzioni e Soggetti alla Prova dell'Autonomia*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P., & Ouston, J. (1979) *Fifteen Thousand Hours*. London: Open Books.
- Senge, P. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. Sydney: Random House.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2001) *Leadership: What's in it for Schools?* London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Tomlinson, H. (2001) Recent development in England and Wales: the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH), *International Studies in Educational Administration*, Vol. 29(2), pp. 50-60.
- Wadsworth, T. (1988) A school leaders' professional development project. The first year: progress in researching the professional needs of secondary school headteachers, *School Organisation*, Vol. 8(3), pp. 315-330.
- Walker, A., & Walker, J. (1998) Challenging the boundaries of sameness: leadership through valuing difference, *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 36(1), pp. 8-28.
- Xerri, J. (2000) *School Leadership: The Malta Experience*. MEd dissertation, Faculty of Education, University of Malta.