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THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Malta is passing through what one might describe as a crucial transitional period. This is the period between colonialism, which by its very nature stunts the sense of national identity, and the present period of independence when so many of us are experiencing both the hazards and the responsibilities of making decisions of a far reaching nature. Uncoordinated decisions, those made on the spur of the moment or for a momentary purpose, can be compared to the loose links of a broken chain. A broken chain is quite useless. You either mend it or throw it away. Similarly, unconnected decisions can only be useful when they cease to be unconnected and are instead inserted into a long-term planning policy like so many links of a long chain. We have in mind at the moment one particular link in the chain of national planning. This is education in particular.

A nation must plan along different lines of a convergent nature because they all move, or must move anyhow, towards the ultimate main aim of all planning, namely the welfare and prosperity of the people. Economic prosperity is as essential for national well-being as adequate salaries and wages are for domestic well-being. But economic prosperity takes care of only one of the many needs of society. Education, even if like so many essential social services it has to be run at a loss which is more than made up in many other respects, must be very carefully planned in order to enable every one of us to level up the society we belong to so that we may not be, to our great shame, educationally inferior to other peoples not only in Europe with its long-established traditions but also to one time African colonies which are investing heavily in Education at its three levels in order to capture the lost intellectual mastery of their country's future.

We are still waiting for a unifying policy which will integrate Maltese national education pyramidally. The test of wise, far-sighted planning will be eventually judged by its own results. Good results show good planning, bad results show bad planning. Planning will be well-directed if it succeeds in levelling up Maltese society.

The University of Malta has its own important role to play in the future of our country. Even if we are not always given credit for the experience many of us have of University education at home and abroad, (no one is a prophet in his own country – we have not advanced beyond that stage yet!), it will indeed be a sad mistake if local knowledge based on long local experience is disregarded as suspect. A really independent people needs more generous exercises in mutual trust!

As an independent people trying to stand on our feet, we must learn also to trust and support one another enough to pull together and not asunder in opposite directions.

THE EDITOR