



Key topics in education in Europe

Volume 3

The teaching profession in Europe:
Profile, trends and concerns

Supplementary report

**Reforms of the teaching profession:
a historical survey (1975–2002)**

General lower secondary education

Country Reports



Lower secondary education in Malta has been compulsory up to the age of 16 since 1970. Secondary education is provided by the State, Church and Independent schools. State and Church schools are free while Independent schools are fee-paying. Church schools provide education to about 30% of children in Malta. Lower secondary education lasts five years and students study about 10 subjects. Subject specialisation occurs in the third or fourth year depending on the type of school attended. All schools are legally bound to fulfil the requirements of the National Minimum Curriculum approved by the Minister of Education.

There is no overall teacher shortage in lower secondary education although it occurs in the case of specific subjects such as IT. Recruitment of teachers for state schools takes place through the central system, the 'Education Division', which is also responsible for placing them in schools. Church and Independent schools do their own recruitment, giving their heads a certain degree of autonomy over the choice of teachers.

Currently, there are two different routes to the teaching profession: the B.Ed. (Hons) degree and the PGCE. The B.Ed.(Hons) is a university-level four-year course in which subject knowledge and professional training are studied concurrently. The Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) is a 12-month course of professional training for graduates with a bachelor's degree (BA/B.Sc.) in specific subject areas.

The policy for children with special needs is to keep them with mainstream children. Facilitators, usually one per child, are provided in order to assist children with special needs in their educational programme.

There are very few immigrant children in the country. Children of immigrants usually attend state schools.

REFORMS	AIMS	CONTEXT
<p>1978: Amendment to Education Act, which restructures the style and pattern of higher education in Malta.</p> <p>Teacher training moved to university, where a Faculty of Education was created at the University of Malta. The Certificate in Education which became a BA Education degree of four years started at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, was completed at university. The degree was eventually changed to a B.Ed.(Hons) degree of five years.</p> <p>The new system required students to spend five and a half months of the year studying at University and another five-and-a-half months teaching children on a full-time basis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move teacher-training to the university; • Change the structure of university courses; • increase professional training. 	<p>Teacher training had already changed before this reform. For instance, teacher education had moved from being a two-year residential college based course run by Religious orders, to the Department of Education. The two-year course has been extended to three since 1974. In the meantime, a postgraduate course was also organised regularly for students with a BA and a B.Sc.</p> <p>The teacher union suggested that a four-year course should lead to a degree. As the board of the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) was in favour of such a development, the first degree course was offered in 1978, and called a BA Education degree. Nevertheless, it was still organised by the Department of Educational Studies of the MCAST. The group of students involved, however, moved to university training when the Faculty of Education was established the following year.</p>
<p>1987: Change in government which brought about the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - abolishment of the numerus clausus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the supply of qualified teachers. 	<p>In 1987, a change in government took place after 16 years of the Labour Party. Soon after the elections, the newly elected government implemented promised reforms concerning university entry and structure of courses.</p>

REFORMS	AIMS	CONTEXT
<p>for entry to university courses and consequently also for students studying for a B.Ed. (Hons);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - shortening of the B.Ed.(Hons) course to four years since the academic year was extended from five-and-a-half to nine months, - the PGCE was also reinstated. 		
<p>1988: Education Act, which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extended compulsory education from 6-16 to 5-16; - gave the Minister of Education the right to establish a Minimum Curriculum for all sectors of the education system, whether public or private; - recognised the professional status of teachers; - defined the compulsory qualifications required to teach: only people who had received specific teacher training or had sufficient academic and teaching experience were issued with a teacher's warrant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend constitutional provisions concerning education. 	<p>Development of the education system was a perceived need and an electoral promise of the new government, which decided to undertake a major reform of the education system.</p> <p>The National Minimum Curriculum for the different levels of education was passed as legal notices in 1989.</p>
<p>1989: Agreement between the government and the Malta Union of Teachers on the Reorganisation of Teaching Grades.</p> <p>It increased teachers' salaries significantly, and a series of allowances were also introduced for extra qualification achieved.</p> <p>Recruitment had to be done through a public notice. Merit and efficiency became criteria for promotions, instead of seniority. A new position of Education Assistant was introduced, and opened to teachers with at least five years' teaching experience. Teachers with a minimum of ten years' teaching experience, of which at least six in state schools, could apply for the post of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve teachers' professional conditions; • put teachers' salary scales in line with other professional grades within the civil service; • define a new structure of promotions; • make the teaching profession more attractive. 	<p>1984 witnessed a major event in the education system. A massive teacher strike, which lasted several weeks, took place. Since 1981, there had been negotiations between the Malta Union of Teachers and the government, concerning in particular teacher salaries and unqualified staff due to a lack of supply. The government stopped the discussions because of the economic and unemployment problems it was facing. Teachers then called on their union to take action.</p> <p>In 1987 a change in government took place after 16 years of Labour Party. Soon after the elections, negotiations with the Malta Union of Teachers were resumed.</p> <p>An agreement between the government and the Malta Union of Teachers was reached and signed in 1989.</p>

REFORMS	AIMS	CONTEXT
<p>Assistant Head of School.</p> <p>1994: New Agreement between the government and the Malta Union of Teachers.</p> <p>It modified teachers' salary scales. It also abolished the post of Education Assistant, which became that of Education Officer, and introduced compulsory in-service training for teachers every two years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep teachers' salaries in line with those of other professions; • make the teaching profession more attractive; • increase and update the knowledge and skills of teachers. 	<p>This agreement updated the one signed in 1989. Later, in 1998, another agreement involving a new salary adjustment was also signed. This agreement did not involve only teachers but applied to the whole public service.</p>
<p>1999 (1): Specialisation is offered in initial teacher training.</p> <p>Two B.Ed. (Hons) tracks, one leading to a teaching degree for primary level, the other for secondary level were run for the first time. Students opting for the secondary level track now have an opportunity to choose two subjects rather than one, as was the case previously. There are, however, restrictions in the choice of subjects, in order to counter a shortage of teachers for some courses and a surplus in others.</p> <p>Other changes are an increase in the amount of content knowledge compared with that of previous courses, and higher entry requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the specialisation and knowledge of teachers; • counter a shortage of qualified teachers in certain areas. 	<p>In 1992, the Nationalist Government was elected for a second term in office. The then Minister of Education wished to implement a policy of decentralisation in line with other ongoing actions in the field of local development. In 1994, a consultative committee on education was set up and produced a document called <i>Tomorrow's Schools</i>.</p> <p>One of the problems highlighted in the document was that of untrained teaching staff in schools, which represented 29% of the teaching corps. There was a surplus of teachers in certain subjects and a shortage in others. As a result, the government decided to award a stipend to students on the PGCE course in areas of shortage.</p> <p>The Faculty of Education also felt the need to review its courses. A working group was created and, in 1996, published a project called <i>Tomorrow's Teachers</i> containing a number of proposals. A first outcome of this review was this reform.</p> <p>A review of the current National Minimum Curriculum was also initiated.</p>
<p>1999 (2): The revised National Minimum Curriculum, which defines the teaching values, principles and competencies, was published by the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>The document states that teachers must: be academically prepared, espouse democratic principles, promote social justice among students and the school system, develop the potential of every individual, consider themselves as cultural workers, contribute to the development of education in Malta, collaborate with parents and other participants in the educational process and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the values, competencies and responsibilities of teachers for the future of education in Malta; • define basic requirements for the education of students. 	<p>The context of this reform is the consensus on education in the two main political parties in Malta. The review of the education system initiated by the Nationalist government in 1994 through the setting up of a consultative committee on <i>Tomorrow's School</i> has been taken up and brought forward by the Labour government in 1996-98, and again by the Nationalist government since 1998.</p> <p>The principles of this reform of 1999 are quality education for all, respect for diversity in learning and development, provision of an approach stimulating analytical, critical and creative thinking skills, an education relevant for life and a stable learning environment.</p>

REFORMS	AIMS	CONTEXT
be continuously involved in self-development.		
<p>2001: Agreement between the Malta Union of Teachers and the government. This document is considered an addendum to the 1994 agreement. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - progression from scale 9 to 8, and subsequently to scale 7, on satisfactory service after 8 years of service rather than 10; - appointments to the grade of teacher are to be effected from the date the school year begins, or from the date of actual employment as a teacher, rather than later in the year; - teachers shall be required to participate in three sessions of two hours each after school, spread over the scholastic year. Attendance is remunerated at overtime rates; - teachers will now be required to attend in-service courses once a year rather than once every two years; - teachers over 57 years of age and with 30 years of experience may opt for a 25 % reduction in their teaching load in order to assist in the implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt the work of teachers to National Minimum Curriculum exigencies; • improve the work conditions of teachers; • enforce their professional development. 	<p>The National Minimum Curriculum published in 1999 placed new demands on the teaching profession. In response to these additional responsibilities, the Malta Union of Teachers put pressure on the government to review their working conditions.</p> <p>The implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum requires a total of 26 million Malta liri. The current Cabinet has approved an MTL 6 million budget for the next four years, despite facing a great financial deficit problem reflecting its commitment to implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum.</p> <p>Two Foundations have been created: the Foundation for Educational Services and the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools. The first will concentrate mainly on supporting children at risk, while the second will deal with the building and refurbishment of State Schools.</p> <p>A steering committee was appointed by the Minister of Education. Eighteen working groups were set up for different themes. The reports of each working group were presented in a National Conference on the Implementation of the Curriculum in June 2000. The steering committee then submitted a strategic plan for the implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum in December of the same year. The strategic plan was published in 2001.</p> <p>The National Curriculum Council (NCC) was set up in 2001 with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the revised National Minimum Curriculum. A number of focus groups targeting specific areas of concern have been set up, with the task of facilitating implementation of the curriculum within the specific area of the group. It should be fully implemented by 2005.</p>

Ongoing topics of debate

The main concern within the education sector remains the implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum. A strategic plan was published in 2001 and the National Curriculum Council (NCC) set up in the same year to oversee the implementation process and, eventually, to monitor compliance with the National Minimum Curriculum. The 15 Focus groups set up are currently working within their specific area of concern while also liaising with the other Focus groups.

The first group of graduate B.Ed. (Hons) teachers specialising specifically for primary and secondary education are in their final academic year of study and will graduate in November 2003. Academic staff at the Faculty of Education are currently evaluating the course.

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