

# Let me dream! Transforming educational futures.

A response to Les Terry, Helen Borland Ron Adams (1993) "To Learn more than I have: The Educational Aspirations and Experiences of the Maltese in Melbourne (Victoria, VUT Press).

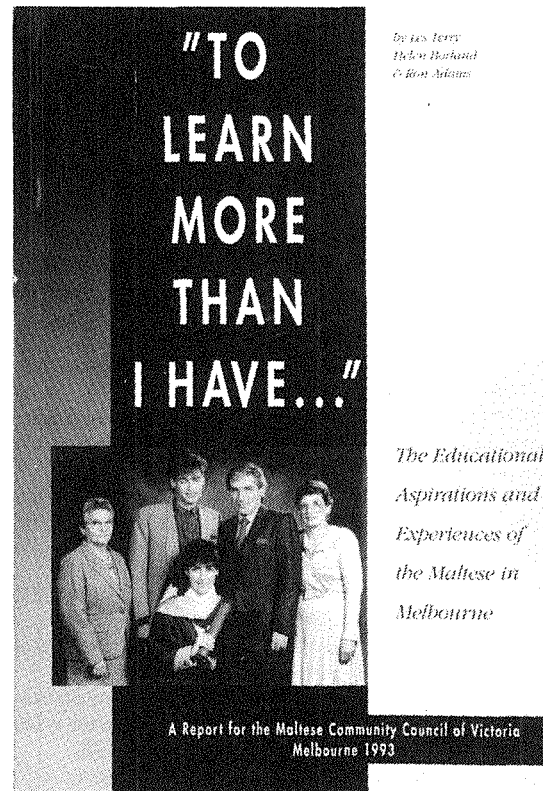
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## Introduction

The issue of under achievement in education has preoccupied educators over the past century at least. And yet, there has been little progress made in addressing the problem, to the extent that large groups of students fail to flourish intellectual in a school by environment. Moreover, whether we are looking, at the United States, Europe, or Asia the groups of students who underachieve and who drop out of the educational enterprise have a similar identify. They generally share one or more of the following aspirations: namely, they have what can be broadly called a working class background, are migrants or children of migrants, and/or come from an ethnic "minority" background.

The report I will be critically engaging with in this paper, namely *To Learn More than I have: The Educational Aspirations and Experiences of the Maltese in Melbourne* (Terry, Borland & Adams, 1993) looks squarely in the face of these facts, reflecting on the issue as it applies to one particular group of students who underinvest in education, namely children of Maltese migrants. What I will attempt to do in this paper is to weave a narrative, drawing on the Terry *et al.* study as well as on my own research and experiences in education, to make sense of the lived realities of this group of people. Needless to say, this is in my ways my story, my interpretation, informed as it might be by many interaction with people and ideas. I cannot claim to represent the voices of the subjects we are considering, namely Maltese background children in Melbourne. That would not only be pretentious, but undignified. All that I can offer are some critical reflections which could be of some use to the Maltese community in Victoria as they seek to empower themselves and their children.

My paper is structured in the following manner. I will first present some bio-data about myself. I do that to bridge the gap between me as writer and you as reader, a gap which traditionally constructs me as



expert and you as a recipient of my knowledge. Nothing can be further from the truth. Both you and I have expert knowledge to share, to reflect upon, to confront critically and, often, painfully, as we struggle to dream for better futures for ourselves and our children, in a context of social relations which are, much too often, marked by injustice and imbalances of power. I refuse to construct our interaction as yet another instance of that imbalance, and will, hopefully, speak to you in such a way that your voices, experiences and interpretations can emerge, so that finally, our story of what happens to these children in schools will be constructed democratically and cooperatively. Once I have introduced myself to you, I will then reflect with you on two key questions: "Why do Maltese-background children fail or underinvest in

\* This is a slightly revised text of an address given in November 1993 at the Victoria University of Technology, where the author was Distinguished Visiting Scholar.

schools?" As we will discover, there are many possible answers to this question, and to the one which logically follows it, namely, "What is to be done?" Lest I raise your hopes too high, only to dash them as you read through what I have written, I must immediately point out that there is no one answer to these central questions. Much in the field of the social sciences is tentative, exploratory in nature, and results of research can be generalised only with great difficulty. At best, what I can offer, in conjunction with the excellent ethnographic study of the Victoria University team, is knowledge which helps illuminate the context we are focusing upon, as well as progressive educational ideas and practices which activists have tried, with some measure of success, elsewhere.

### **Bio-data.**

I am a lecturer at the University of Malta, with research, lecturing, and publications experience in Malta, the U.K., France, the United States, Italy, New Zealand, and now Australia. I have received awards for my work, and in some ways I could, I suppose, be considered to be the fulfillment of the dream expressed by many parents interviewed in the Terry *et al.* study. My parents, both Maltese, are proud of me, and their dream of having one of their children "make it" in the professional/academic world has come true.

But for a long number of years, that dream was quite close to a nightmare, for my parents and for myself. Let me explain, for some of my experiences connect, I believe, with the way school life is lived by the underachieving students who constitute our present focus, and the dark threats I highlight from the tapestry of my past are, for these students, the woof and the wrap of their daily existence.

I remember the rude transition between primary and secondary schools, feeling lost and inadequate because Maltese was no longer used as the medium of instruction. Fields of knowledge which I had grasped now slipped away from me into the mists of a language I was not comfortable with. In the meantime, my class mates, sons of the professional managerial elite, whose home language was English despite the fact they were Maltese, zoomed ahead. I was considered to be, and soon considered myself to be, "slow", less intelligent, a problem student. I remember that catch-all word used so often to distract me, "describe". And of course, I was considered to be totally responsible for that failing - a mind which, somehow, failed to focus on the important issues at hand. In the second year of secondary school, waiting for that magical birthday which was to transform me

into a "teenager", I can still feel the pain and humiliation of failing most of my test paper, and my parents being told that I was not coping, and that I should perhaps be transferred to another school.

I got over that, and struggled, with the help of my parents who, incredibly enough, believed in me and not in the Jesuit fathers, to master English, and to beat everybody else at the cruel game called "schooling" to come first in subsequent years. At University I faced fresh challenges: being apprenticed to British academics who often looked down on, or perhaps worse, did not even acknowledge our difference, taking their world of meanings and their cultural and linguistic frameworks to be the unquestioned referents to which all of us were supposed to approximate. Of course, we never did win that unequal game, and I remember the times I wanted to ask questions, debate, challenge, but the communicative context in which these activities were to take place was alien, and therefore, for most of us, quite inaccessible. A first class honours in English got me a scholarship, only to be told in Britain that my way of speaking that language was quite incomprehensible, and that I had to modify my accent. Of course, when I finally made it to New Zealand, others there were claiming that their way was **the** way to speak the language!

Educational failure, the linguistic medium of instruction, and the relationship between these two have been very much at the core of my experiences of schooling, as they are at the core of the issues considered by the report I am responding to. They remain central to me as I watch my sons start their journey through educational systems, struggling with a linguistic legacy which is both enriching and challenging. My wife is French. She speaks her language to my two sons; I speak English. They learn Maltese from me, my grandparents, and at school. They are becoming familiar with Italian through television. How they survive and do not give up on language - and on us - is beyond me at times. But they, and the personal experiences I have drawn upon are useful in considering the two key questions we have before us.

### **Why do Maltese-background children fail or underinvest in schools?**

Let us turn to the first: Why do Maltese-background children fail or underinvest in schools? As I indicated earlier, this is a complex question. The Victoria University research team has done well to emphasise that we cannot reduce the answer to a

simplistic, reductionist one where "Maltese culture", however that is conceived, is to account for the empirical facts under consideration. The members of the research have done well to insist on a qualitative research methodology which provides us with a fine-grained picture of the complex way in which class, gender and ethnic backgrounds and histories interact dynamically to determine life chances for groups of people. We do need to know the boundaries of the problem - and statistical data will tell us the extent of the under-representation of ethnic minority students in senior schools, for instance. But we also need to know the geography of the problematic terrain we are exploring, and to do that we have to cross borders, as it were, by talking with students and parents as they go about constructing their understandings of the complex realities they experience in different social sites, and particularly in schools.

The results of the research team coincide with those of many others carried out over the past three decades the world over, and suggest that there is nothing particularly or intrinsically "wrong" or "deficient" with students of Maltese origin, even when these feature highly in the "low retention" and "low participation" statistics of the State. Of course, there could be collective experiences and recollections that the Maltese have brought with them from their homeland which influence their perceptions of education. One cannot, for instance, ignore the potential influence of the fact that secondary education for all was only introduced in Malta in 1970, and that tertiary education has always tended to be exclusive and elitist (Sultana, 1991, 1992). These and other experiences, however, will not suffice to explain the statistics presented in the Terry *et al.* report. Let us look at the way such statistics have been explained in the past, and the political and educational implications of each position.

### Students as deficient

For a long number of years - roughly between the end of the 19th century when social Darwinism and the theories of race and intelligence were first being formulated and given scientific legitimation, and the 1950s - differential achievement in schools was explained by pointing the finger at the monadic individual (Bisseret, 1979). He or she failed because he or she was intellectually deficient when compared to a number of others who made up the "norm". On this basic understanding of intelligence was constructed an educational edifice which differentiated between the more and the less able students. Intelligence tests, school exam results, teachers' reports and so on

legitimised this set-up, until research pointed out that there were curious, regular patterns in the statistics reporting on the social ascription of those who achieved and those who failed at school. Those who failed were, very often, from working class backgrounds, and/or from ethnic minority group (Jencks *et al.*, 1973; Halsey, Heath & Ridge, 1980.) The contention of some was that these groups were somehow deficient in intelligence, either because of poor genetic stock of that particular race, a deprived cultural environment, poor diets or poor parenting. We can easily understand how useful such theories were to those who sought to legitimise their colonial, imperial, class policies by referring to "objective", "scientific" findings!

Such constructions of the problem to explain differential achievement carried with them a logical "solution", namely compensatory programmes which sought to make up for the deficits of the child or its environment. "Head Start" in the U.S. is only one example of such programmes, all of which have generally failed. That failure is to be explained by the theory on which such programmes were based, as we will see below.

The Victoria University team contest aspects of this deficit view explicitly, and, in my view, correctly. While they do not problematise the issue of "race", which today, even from a biological, genetic view, is questionable given the mobility and interchange between different stocks of human beings, they do question the way we think of ethnicity. Their approach lays the foundation for a more sophisticated and democratic understanding of culture, seen as an ensemble of tools of discourse that groups employ towards exchanging information, states of consciousness, forming bonds of solidarity, and forging common strategies of action (Bowles and Gintis, 1988, p.22). Cultures, in this sense, cannot be deficient, except from the pretentious outlook of the dominant culture which posits itself as an invisible norm by which other ethnicities are judged, often as deviations.

The Victoria University research confirms studies carried out by many others, including myself with working class parents in Malta, namely that parents, whatever their class location, are generally interested in their children's education, and make great efforts to provide support, or to use family and other networks so that such support is given (Sultana, 1992; Wolfendale, 1992). Working class, ethnic minority parents might not always know how to do this in effective ways, and their knowledge of the way the school works is not always complete. But often these

deficits are socially constructed, in that schools and teachers do little to familiarise such parents with the expectations of the system. Needless to say, few schools go out of their way to debate educational matters on parents' own terms.

## Modern Psychology and intelligence

I would like to take this further. The ideology of meritocracy - that those who have intelligence and ability, and who make the effort succeed at school work and life generally - is so deeply entrenched that few stop to problematise it. This to the extent that parents and children often end up blaming themselves for their lack of success (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). There is always a degree of responsibility that we carry for what happens to us in life, of course. But life-chances are far from being equitably distributed, and sociological research confirms what everyday observation of life around us points out, namely the extent to which society organises life to the benefit of the few privileged and to the detriment of the many others. The latter, identified by their class, gender and ethnicity, have to carry burdens which make a mockery of the meritocratic myth, for we do not all run the same race under the same conditions. Let us then not be too quick to condemn our children who soon realise the extent to which the dice are loaded against them, and loose heart. Let us instead use our frustrations, anger and disappointment creatively and constructively by looking at the system which, I will argue together with the Victoria research team, is the root cause of children's failure.

Some of you might still be thinking: but surely it is the children's fault, or that of their parents, if our students fail. If only they were more intelligent, or more motivated, or made more efforts, they would become the "best professors in Australia", to cite what one of the parents told the Victoria research team. Let me then share with you a simple idea which should help dispel these thoughts, a simple idea which is nevertheless revolutionary in its implications. Modern psychology, which has learnt a lot from the advances in knowledge and understanding made by sociology, today no longer holds the traditional conservative and limited view that there is a limited "pool of talent" in a sea of mediocrity, there is no "normal" curve of distribution where a few are brilliant, and most fall in the middle range of ability.

It is moreover argued today that we barely develop a tenth of our intellectual ability, and that the unfolding of human capacity is limited mainly by external circumstances - such as social hierarchy and

cultural attitudes - rather than by the grey matter we carry internally. "Given the right motivation which", argue Brown and Lauder (1991, p. 15) "is socially determined, at least 80% of the population are capable of achieving the intellectual standards required to obtain a University degree... This view is supported by comparative evidence which shows significant differences in the proportion of students from different advanced industrial societies participating in higher education." Such differences need to be explained in terms of the social, cultural, and institutional differences between nation states. It is often "social hierarchy and the world views associated with it that restricts the unfolding of human capacity, and not the limitations of natural endowment" (Sabel, 1982, p.244). In this context, for example, how are we to explain the fact that 40% of all Maltese background children enter Universities in neighbouring New Zealand? (Dalli, 1993, television interview).

I am not arguing that there are no differences in intelligence, or in types of intelligence, or in learning styles. Some will learn some things faster and more thoroughly than others through the use of one type of pedagogy. Rather, what I am arguing is that we know so little about intelligence that it would be foolish for us to go about measuring it (remember the Jesuit fathers who tried to do that to me, and, may I point out, failed!). It would be equally foolish to underestimate children's ability to learn. A student who fails to learn in one particular situation, with a teacher using a particular pedagogy, will "miraculously" grasp the concept in another situation, within or outside of school. In other words, children flower in different ways, but all have it in them to bloom. That is the key lesson taught to us by Vygotsky who, unlike Piaget, thought of failures in learning as failures in pedagogy rather than deficits in learners.

Unfortunately, however, school systems are generally organised on the premise that few are capable of significant practical and academic achievements, of creative thought and skill, and of taking responsibility for informed judgements. Rather than focusing on the individual's attributes - intellectual, cultural or otherwise - to explain underachievement and underinvestment, we need instead to look at the institutional and social contexts in which the learning process is taking place.

## The institutional and social contexts of learning

If we are to explain, therefore, why Maltese background children in Melbourne are underinvesting

and underachieving in schools, we cannot, I have argued, talk about deficits in intelligence, in parents, or in ethnic cultures. Rather, we need to talk about deficits in the institutional contexts of learning, in the inability of monocultural schools to develop what Bob Walker (1988), in his superlative study of similarly underachieving students in Sydney, refers to as "touchstone discourse", that common ground of communicative openness where students' class and ethnic experiences, language, lifestyle, values, and preferred learning style are not only recognised and acknowledged, but valued and catered for.

I would like us to consider these issues not only coldly and rationally, but also to get angry and emotional about them - as much as I would get angry and emotional if somebody were to hurt my boys physically. For schools which do not value their students, which fail to recognise, let alone develop the potential that lies in children, are guilty of one of the worst forms of violence, what Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) have referred to as "symbolic violence". This is the violence perpetrated by systems which unilaterally impose themselves, representing as they do the dominant frame of reference, on one and all. You either accept that curriculum, that pedagogy, those world views, that language, or else you are labelled a failure. It is violent because, so powerful are the people who do the labelling, that we end up internalising those labels, and become deeply convinced that we are, indeed, not capable. It is a powerful form of violence because the rules of the game are set by the system itself according to its own criteria, and thus it becomes difficult to resist. I can easily get angry and emotional about this because I too was a victim of this labelling. My five year old boy, who has to juggle four languages and who has to do a lot of integrating before he can handle reading and writing, has also been labelled a "slow learner" by his caring, if misguided teacher. But it is not sufficient to get angry and emotional. It is important to channel these feelings constructively and strategically so that schools do become those places where our children can develop and fulfil their potential.

Our strategies for change have to be based on a thorough understanding of how schools work, for it is only then that we can find those cleavages that allow us to enter and make our voices heard. It is impossible, of course, to make that kind of analysis in this context. I do think it is appropriate, however, to make a few suggestions.

(1) First, I suggest that we need to understand

that schools are bureaucratic institutions, with all the good and bad associations that the word "bureaucracy" can conjure up. They process people, often impersonally, and have set rules and procedures which have a tendency to fossilise over time, and which acquire a legitimacy and solidity that hardly ever seem to need justification. Like other bureaucracies, school are organised hierarchically, and the bearers of the roles in this hierarchy often find themselves burdened by a ready-made "script", so to speak, of actions, values, judgements and so on. Innovations, creativity, spontaneity, responsiveness to new situations and groups are all limited by this fact.

If the Maltese, or any other ethnic/class group are to make their voices heard in such a bureaucracy, they would be well advised to have a guide - preferably from among them - so that interests are truly represented and safe-guarded. Such a person or persons would act as mediators with the state's department of education, the school's principal and teachers. These persons would know the language spoken by the bureaucracy, have an intimate knowledge of how the system works, and have status and power to be heard. These mediators would be path openers: ultimately, their role would be to make it easier for emarginated groups to acquire "voice".

(2) My understanding of schools is guided by another important factor. Schools are not only bureaucracies - they are bureaucratic organisations which, consciously and/or unconsciously, represent specific social and political interests. They are, as the Victoria research team represented them, selecting and stratifying mechanisms, inclusive of some groups and exclusive of others. They are communities that are socially constructed in specific ways, generally by the more powerful interests in the local and national community who thereby seek to satisfy their own agendas. These powerful interests are, I would argue, class-based over and above all else, although class interacts in complex and dynamic ways with gender and ethnicity, so that most social institutions can be characterised as valuing white, male, middle class ways of being.

But it is also important to remember that schools, like other social institutions, are sites of struggle and contestation, where different interests clash as each group tries to establish its agendas and its programs, to promote its understanding of the world and to gain access to scarce resources. Of course, this struggle is violent because power is differentially distributed among the various groups. As the Victoria University

research team quite rightly ask, why is it that the Maltese community has not succeeded in establishing their agendas in schools, despite its size and long-standing presence? Precisely because of this power imbalance. But also perhaps, because of the lack of understanding as to where to direct frustrations and anger at. Rather than children failing in schools, I suggest we have schools failing children. Rather, therefore, than looking internally and guiltily at itself, the Maltese community should use its ethnic ascription, as it has done back in its homeland, to generate cohesion and focus which, if used capably and wisely could, with the help of the kind of mediation I suggested earlier, penetrate a notoriously impenetrable institution. We do this out of a sense of justice, using a language of rights that the state acknowledges, even if it so often betrays.

(3) A third point I would like to make about my understanding of schools is intimately linked to the previous point, and that is that these institutions are connected to the wider social order, to the rest of society. When young people attend schools, the larger context surrounding them comes to play in a complex manner. If we are to understand why some students do not invest in schools, we have to understand the way they construct their understanding of the usefulness and relevance of that schooling for them. This is where their class, ethnic and gender identities play an overwhelmingly important part and if we are to transform educational futures, we also have to work closely with these students and their parents - as Les Terry and his associates have attempted to do - in order to see what they value.

A few examples will suffice. One aspect which I felt the research team could have focused more upon is the centrality of class, over and above ethnicity, in the formation of educational and career aspirations. Students from working class backgrounds - and the majority of participants in the research project come from such an occupational group - use material from their close and extended family life as well as from their experience of being Maltese in Australia, and of being male or female within that context - in order to make sense of their past, present, and likely future.

Many working class students and their parents, for instance, consider schooling irrelevant anyway - they prefer the apprenticeship route because that kind of learning by doing makes sense to them, and being on the job places them closer to the point where hiring is so often effected. Uncertainty about material resources for instance, can lead working class students

to grab the first employment opportunity that comes their way, especially when the labour market is tight and the economy in recession (Sultana, 1989). There is also plenty of evidence to suggest that working class attitudes to work and to careers is based on the belief that it is best to gain access to a particular job and then, in the words of one of the students interviewed in the Terry *et al.* study, "work my way up" (p.51). Long-term investment in a game called schooling appears even less enticing when credentials no longer guarantee jobs, let alone good jobs. As sociological research has shown, credentials are only a first step in the penetration of lucrative sectors in the labour market. The importance of other qualities, such as class, gender, ethnicity, skin colour, networks, increases in proportion to the burgeoning number of students with credentials (Ashton and Maguire, 1980; Sultana, 1990). Society, in Australia as in most other countries, is after all predicated on hierarchy, and cannot possibly function if the vast majority of students are successful at school. How then would it sort, mark, park and store this unlimited pool of talent? Indeed, Fine and Rosenberg (1983, p.259) argue that "many adolescents who leave school are academically and intellectually above-average students, keenly aware of the contradictions between academic learning and lived experiences, critical of the meritocratic ideology promoted in their schools, and cognisant of race/class/gender discrimination both in school and in the labor force".

My contention is that young people from the margins are aware of this, even though they perhaps do not articulate such processes in the same way as I and other educational theorists have done. They note that the odds are heavily stacked against them, and prefer to "drop out", as we call it, before they are in fact dropped. The following reminiscence from my school days illustrates some of the processes of exclusion that working class, and ethnic minority students experience:

"There was a word which cropped up in a reading lesson during the first year of secondary schooling at the Jesuit college. The word was "sponge", and I read it as "spaunje", which is the way my mum used to refer to it. Everyone laughed. From then on, I was always very careful as to what aspects of my home background and culture I shared with my friends. If I wanted to become somebody in that school, I had to renounce my home, my roots, much that was myself."

Indeed, the observation of classroom proc-

esses - which could be a next step in solving the puzzle as to why Maltese background students underachieve at school does tend to demonstrate the extent to which students from working class and ethnic backgrounds find their realities, languages and dignities undermined. This is not simply a question of the professional quality of teachers present, but the relation between teachers and the dominant classes and cultures in the larger community. It is these kinds of experiences which lead students to develop educational and occupational career dispositions and career strategies. As Harvey (1985, p.275) has pointed out for the Australian context, such experiences force students to "initiate a process of differentiation and to choose early school leaving in order to retain control over their future. Some of these students continue to strive for academic success but become early school leavers in order to avoid even more demanding courses which would further undermine their sense of dignity. Others develop a deep alienation from school and adopt resistance and withdrawal modes of accommodation while waiting for the end of compulsory schooling to come".

### What is to be done?

The challenge of changing the situation reported in the Terry, Borland and Adams study is not easy. On the plus side we have a state, Victoria, where the issues of multiculturalism and bilingualism are on the agenda, and where there are serious attempts to cater for minority ethnic groups in schools. Of course, there is always an assimilationist agenda in much multicultural discourse, which is why we must start talking of critical or resistant multiculturalism, and of the right for "difference" rather than "diversity" in schools (McLaren, 1992). But in today's global climate of conservatism and "new" right resurgence, that is no mean achievement, and every effort must be made to consolidate and extend such politics of diversity. The Terry *et al* report notes that such politics have been more successful with some ethnic groups, and less with others, including with the numerically strong community of Maltese in Melbourne. This, rightly, gives us all cause for concern. While the Maltese share with other ethnic groups the marginality that class and minority ethnic status imposes, we still need to inquire more deeply into the specificity of their situation.

Language is only one of the starting points, and I would caution the community about the bewitching effect of language, in the sense that it generally subsumes other important issues and can even distract from more central problems (Corson, 1992, p.65).

The link between language, identity, and educational achievement is an important if complex and messy one. Much has been written about this issue, and we have moved away from a view which thought of bilingualism, for instance, as detrimental to the child's cognitive and educational development, to one which sees it as generally advantageous, as long as certain conditions are met. While during the first half of this century, the mother tongue of a child from an ethnic minority background was considered to be an obstacle, and that that language should be ignored at school if not actively eradicated, today we are insisting on the importance of consolidating that mother language. Indeed, there is a growing consensus that the child's early education should take place through the medium of its mother tongue, and that the dominant language should not be introduced before the age of eight or nine. This, it is argued, helps build the child's academic selfconfidence and identity, besides laying a language foundation which cannot otherwise be guaranteed. As Corson, reviewing a large number of research reports on the subject, has argued, it does seem "very important that the minority child's first language is given maximum attention up to the stage of middle schools so that skill in using it to manipulate abstractions develops and so that it can be used to perform the cognitive operations necessary for acquiring a second language" (1992, p.58). Unless we do this, an unjust situation could arise where we expect minority children "to perform equally well in an educational setting without the linguistic wherewithal necessary for competing on an equal footing with others" whose first language is the dominant language (Corson, 1992, p.50).

The language situation for the Maltese in Melbourne seems to be rather complex, with different groups claiming quite different things about their sense of identity, and their ability to handle both Maltese and English. It would be foolhardy of me to try to ignore such differences and to suggest a language policy for the whole Maltese community. But perhaps the time is ripe for this community to come up with a policy of language use for itself. If that is going to happen, the community must be guided by a sophisticated understanding of the way language interacts with education. For instance, it appears clear from the report that Maltese is used only, or predominantly, in the home. That could mean that since Maltese is not a language of wider communication, Maltese background students may arrive in schools with their first languages relatively under-developed in certain school-linked contexts, styles and functions of use. At the same time,



their knowledge of English could be limited to a small range of functions, often related to passive activities such as television viewing and the like. These and other similar complexities need to be addressed seriously and systematically as the Maltese community tries to look for answers and formulate a language policy.

But that language policy has to connect not only with schools, but also with the status of the Maltese, as an ethnic, migrant group, in the larger Australian community. A strong sense of identity does not only grow from a recognition and affirmation of linguistic cultures, but also of a commonly articulated vision of a community's rightful place in the body politic. Bilingual teachers can be eventually placed in schools; students can, in time, be offered a schooling which connects with their language and cultural experiences; schools can, as a result of struggle, open up to facilitate the participation of ethnic minority parents. But while these will be improvements, they are only battles to be won in a larger war to be fought for general emancipation. Indeed, these battles and others are milestones along the way of a more equitable distribution of power and resources in Australian society. If our visions are not wide enough for this, we could discover that our activities are doomed to failure. Our adolescents, for instance, will be less motivated to use Maltese if they, as Maltese, do not feel a sense of pride. Social pressures will pull them towards a use of the dominant language to the extent that they can use it, and these pressures may frustrate schools' attempts to use the minority language for instruction (Corson, 1992, p.59).

I conclude my paper, therefore, by reaffirming my belief that it is the Maltese community which needs to generate internal cohesion, alliances with other ethnic minority groups, and organised grass roots activism in order to become more in charge of the schooling process. It is in that way that the entire programme of schooling becomes directed towards elevating the status of the community and questioning the role of schooling in that process. In this process, the Maltese will have a leading role since they are the experts about their own situation. The Terry, Borland

and Adams study provides some of the understandings and ammunition required to engage in political mobilisation in earnest. I hope that my response to their excellent study will similarly go some way in further empowering the Maltese community to transform its educational and civic futures.

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