

<b>Illiteracy at 7</b>	<b>Diskors ta' l-Istudenti</b>	<b>Strengths and Weaknesses of Small Islands</b>	<b>Trade Schools in Gozo</b>	<b>Theses by Gozitan Students</b>
<b>Profile: Joe Xuereb, sculptor</b>	<b>Aspects of Health of the Gozitan people</b>	<b>Tourists in Gozo</b>	<b>Il-Gwardjani Lokali</b>	<b>Book Profile: The Maltese Migrant Experience</b>
<b>Book Profile: The Placenames of the coast of Gozo</b>	<b>Mini-Medicine in Gozo</b>	<b>Poems</b>	<b>Typing Maltese Characters</b>	<b>Front Cover</b>

The history of Trade schools in Malta goes back to 1972 when the Government of the time introduced Vocational Schools to provide young workers with skills in a particular trade, and also to provide an alternative for those students who could not cope with the standard academic curriculum

At first, these schools formed part of the Lyceum Complex, but by 1981, they obtained greater autonomy, with their own Head of School. Currently there are three Trade Schools in Gozo, two for boys and one for girls.

While all the three schools have certain aims in common, such as the fostering of a level of academic subjects (e.g. English, Social Studies, Mathematics, General science, etc ), they, however, provide for a certain degree of choice in trade subjects and careers. One of the schools for boys teaches Mechanics and Woodwork. The second school for boys (which was opened in 1978) caters primarily for Building, Horticulture and Agriculture. The School for Girls teaches primarily crafts including Needle craft, Tailoring , Embroidery, Lace-making, Home economics,

Weaving, etc.

Over the years the number of students attending Gozo Trade Schools varied from around 100 students in 1973 to a peak of nearly 246 in 1984. Since then the number has dropped back so that in 1993 the number was just above 110. As J Rotin (1993) has said, "the period between 1987 and 1989 was the time when Trade Schools were most popular among secondary school students."

It is of interest to see what proportion of the total student population in Gozo actually opts for a Trade school education. Between 1973 and 1993, the number of students attending Secondary Schools in Gozo ranged from 462 ( in 1973) to a high of 749 in 1974. By 1993, the number was 599.

The proportion of Trade School students to the total population has also varied considerably, rising from 21% of the total Secondary School population in 1973 to a high of 35% in 1984. Since then this proportion has dropped considerably and almost consistently year by year, so that by 1993, the proportion was only 18%.

The proportion of boys to girls during this period has also seen considerable fluctuations. At first there was a preponderance of boys: in 1973, three quarters of the students were boys. However, by the late '70s, girls had caught up, so that in 1979, 65% of all students were girls. Of more recent years, between 1989 and 1993, girls have begun to form a smaller proportion , and no more than a quarter of the students are female

The study described in this dissertation was carried out both at a quantitative level, involving the analysis of two separate questionnaires given to students, as well as a qualitative study involving more in-depth interviews with students and guidance teachers from the Girls' and Boys' Junior and Secondary, Boys Private Secondary schools, Trade schools as well as parents. The aim of these interviews was to assess the vocational commitment of these students as well as their views on the education they were expecting and actually getting.

### **Student Views of their Trade Schools**

How much do they like attending school? This study shows that a considerable proportion of students (up to 50%) did not have a positive attitude to their schools, giving as their reasons the facts that there are

too strict rules, too many subjects to learn, and their wish to start work as quickly as possible.

Subject Choice: The vast majority (84%) did seek vocational guidance in the choice of subject they studied. Advice was sought mainly from parents (54%), and from guidance teachers (20%), while a small proportion were influenced by advice from brothers and sisters, as well as friends. This is contrary to what one is led to expect. M.E. David (1993) for instance states that "... children determine their preferences on the basis of where their friends will be going or where their sister or brother attends. This in turn is determined by a strong and understandable desire for some continuity to give a sense of security in their new school."

It would appear that most students have a positive assessment of their achievement with the subjects chosen and only a small minority (5%) believed that they were doing poorly at school

### **Examinations:**

It is still an unfortunate fact that examinations and certificates "form the basis for the allocation of individuals to occupational statuses (Haralambos & Haralambos 1991). There has, however, been widespread concern that passing examinations may become the main aim of the educational process. In the view of the National Minimum Curriculum, they should rather "be utilised to assess how much children have learnt and as a tool for the children to show their talents." Over 84 % of the students interviewed stated that they were intending to sit for further examinations, primarily in order to be in a position to pursue further schooling, or because they felt that they wanted to do so.

According to R.G.Sultana (1992), about a third of all students are academically oriented and are placed in the Junior Lyceums, another third, the less successful are placed in the Secondary schools, while the other one-third, the low-achieving and de-motivated students find their way into Trade Schools. In fact the vast majority up to 86%) of the Lyceum and Secondary school students interviewed had never considered frequenting Trade Schools, and many of them had never even discussed Trade schools at their School, although this topic was more often discussed in secondary schools. This would imply that these

students would only rarely be encouraged to take Trade Schools as an option.

Integrating the Trade School subjects within the Secondary School system would perhaps make it easier to take up these subjects. In fact there was a considerable interest in this suggestion, and a majority of students indicated their desire to take up subjects such as macrame', tailoring , pottery (girls Secondary Schools) or mechanics, agriculture, woodwork, electronics (boys Secondary Schools).

And yet, there is no question in the minds of students that trades are important professions - 97 % of secondary school students think that this is the case, giving as their reasons the fact that trades "bring progress to the country", or that they "are important to industry" or even that "crafts are a necessity for women"(!)

The unfortunate fact remains that Trade Schools are not popular with young students in general and are seen in a somewhat negative light by the public at large. It would appear that one of the largest tasks facing our society is to encourage this aspect of education, removing the stigma that still lingers on choice of a trade as opposed to a more academic career at a Lyceum or equivalent school. In a policy paper published in December 1992, the Minister of Education formulated several guidelines for Trade Schools, including delaying the entry to Trade Schools to the third year of the general secondary education, and delaying specific trade skill training for another two years.

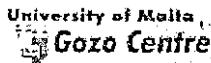
We believe that Gozitan Trade Schools do offer possibilities to students to identify themselves in society like other students - that is help them to reach their goals and aspirations. We also believe that Gozitan students should make their voices heard so as to make society understand that they chose to go to the Trade school in order to learn something that will serve them well in the future.

[See original Thesis housed at the Gozo Public Library, Victoria for further details. including full references cited]

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