

A GLIMPSE AT PRIVATE EDUCATION IN MALTA 1800-1919

George Cassar

The period 1800-1919 was quite an active time with regards to the development of education in Malta. Government schools were opened with a gradual but steady increase in their number from the 1840s onwards. However, there was also an increase in a variety of private educational establishments. Examining the situation of private schools in Malta must also take into consideration the people who established them and those who formed part of the staff of such teaching institutions.

Permit needed

For a private school to open its doors to pupils there was the need for a permit or a licence from the competent authorities. Going back at least to the last years of the Order of St. John's rule over Malta, a prospective school owner had, first of all, to abide by the Code de Rohan.¹ The Knights were strict as to whom they allowed to hold school classes. The law stated that, "*Non si permette a veruno di tenere pubblica scuola di leggere e scrivere, o del carattere, di grammatica, o di qualsisia scienza o arte, senza Nostro decreto: ed il contravventore incorrà nella pena di carcere per un mese, o in altra, a Nostro beneplacido.*"² [No one is permitted to hold a public school for reading and writing, for the development of the character, of grammar, or of any science or art, without Our decree: and the offender will be subject to a penalty of a month's imprisonment or some other penalty according to Our consent].

After 1800 the British perpetuated what the Order had established as law. A government notice of 1827 established that a person who wished to keep a public school had to have the express permission of the Lieutenant Governor. This order followed instructions from the King and also referred to Book V, Chapters IX and X of the Code de Rohan. However, it seems that from the time of Grand Master de Rohan things had not gone in the way they had been planned. The indication comes from the notice that stated that "...Regular Licences will in future be issued from and registered in the Office of the Chief Secretary to Government, instead of the mode heretofore used in granting such permission."³

The suspicion that not all was well with regards to the licensing of teachers may be partially gleaned from a report carried in *The Harlequin* criticising a Mr. Atkinson

1. *Del Diritto Municipale di Malta Nuova Compilazione con diverse altre costituzioni*, Malta 1784.

2. *Ibid.*, Libro Quinto, Capo Nono. 188.

3. *Malta Government Gazette*, No.866, 19.ix.1827, 239.

(a licensed teacher).⁴ This 1839 issue revealed that the need of a licence for teachers had been a requirement from an earlier time. The report also mentions the procedure as to how to obtain permission from the Government. Part of this article read that, "...the Malta Government in 1825 issued an ordinance prohibiting any person from exercising the profession of a "Schoolmaster" without having previously undergone an examination and procured a Government Licence for that purpose."⁵ Two particular elements were revealed in this article: 'an examination', indicating some sort of minute enquiry into the prospective teacher's qualities and abilities; and the attribute of 'professional' to the position of 'Schoolmaster', which may thus be indicating the possession of a degree of expertise. What seems to mar this rather positive image comes from another part of this article. *The Harlequin* praised the 1825 Ordinance as "a most excellent and wise regulation". Yet, it complained that this law had not been enforced, as otherwise it, "...would have ensured to the inhabitants of these Islands a dozen competent teachers, instead of the 70 who have been licensed during the last 14 years."⁶ All of these 70 teachers belonged to private educational establishments. To reinforce this argument one may consider the comments of J. Lawson, the Master of the Melita House Academy, who was helped by a number of Assistants. In 1838 Lawson complained that "...it cannot escape the observation of the discerning that a profession, on the exertions of which so much of the happiness of mankind depends is too frequently followed by persons totally inadequate to the important task, which in Malta, ought not to be the case." He mentioned the licence necessary to open a school and observed that, "...it was naturally supposed some sort of examination as to the ability to teach, and also into the method of teaching would have taken place." But, he asked, "...has it?"⁷

From these comments it seems that there was a feeling that the Government regulations, notices and ordinances were not serving the purpose for which they had been enacted. On the other hand, the Government continued to exercise its powers in the regulation of education and private schools as it still does today. For example, a Draft issued in 1903 proposed an Ordinance "To provide for the regulation and control of Infant Schools". In Article 3 it was stated that, "No person shall open or keep an Infant School without the permission in writing of the Head of the Government." Article 4 regulated the buildings used with regards to light, ventilation, cleansing, drainage and water supply. Article 6 provided for penalties for those who went against the provisions of this Ordinance. The offenders were "liable to the punishment of "ammenda" or of "detention" prescribed by the Criminal Laws."⁸

4. More information about this case is included further down.

5. *The Harlequin*, No.95, 2.xi.1839, 136.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Lawson, J. *Remarks on Education and The Method of Teaching*. Malta, 1838.

8. *Malta Government Gazette*, No.4667, 23.xii.1903, pp.1216-7.

These licences were obligatory for whoever wished to establish a school or carry out teaching activities in Malta. There were different types of educational establishments. These included schools set up by members of the general public in their personal capacity; schools founded and run by religious persons or bodies; and lastly, schools which were funded jointly by the Government and private individuals or institutions or, at least, strongly supported by the Government.

Public Educational Establishments

These establishments were the property and domain of private individuals who, after gaining the required permit, could carry out their educational activities. These persons included both Maltese and foreign teachers. Some were highly praised and appreciated while others were utterly criticised.

As already indicated above, there were complaints concerning certain private school teachers. Such complains may be partially illustrated through a cursory look at advertisements in periodicals featuring teachers seeking pupils to teach or a school in which to teach.

An interesting example is an advert from the Melita House Academy. In its requirement, this institute, in 1840, asked for "an articulated pupil - In addition to the routine of the Academy, he will receive private lessons, tending to qualify him for a Professor of Languages, Mathematics, etc."⁹ What the Academy seemed to be seeking was a beginner, maybe some type of monitor, to become a Professor - while he was already teaching!

Other adverts were more of the 'run of the mill' type such as: "A young Italian Lady, well acquainted with French and English - also music, desires an engagement as assistant in a school,"¹⁰ or, "Miss M. Holland, desires to give lessons in English and Italian...."¹¹ Interesting amongst the notices and advertisements found in newspapers connected with private schooling are the great number of foreigners seeking to teach in Malta along with a number of local counterparts.

Not all adverts were bare of the required information to gauge standards. Some were, on the contrary, very specific and informative, such as: "Wanted - A pupil-teacher. Good knowledge of English, Italian, Arithmetic and Geography. Thorough disciplinarian...."¹² The institution requiring this person was Mr. Flores's School. There was also St. George's School under the direction of the Marquis Giorgio Crispo-Barbaro "(*dari ta' King's School Sherborne, Dorset, l'Inghilterra*) *Direttur*

9. *The Malta Times*, No.7, 5.v.1840, 28.

10. *Il Mediterraneo*, No.1352, 18.vi.1864,11.

11. *The Malta Times*, No.2606, 3.xi.1877,7.

12. *L'Amico Del Popolo*, Anno 1, 1.vi.18803.

tal-Habbar Malti"¹³ [(previously of King's School Sherborne, Dorset, England) Editor of *Il-Habbar Malti*]. Another interesting advert was that for a 'Writing Academy'. The school was set up by Sig. Domenico Antonio Floriani, "a native of Rome, lately arrived from Turin." This teacher, in 1828, "having received permission from His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, and also the sanction of the University of the Island," announced "that he has established in the City of La Valletta, ...a Writing Academy on a superior American System never till now introduced into Europe."¹⁴

An idea about the philosophy governing these private institutions with regards to teaching methods may be deduced from the writings of the same private school teachers. For example, J. Lawson, the Master of the Melita House Academy, held that, "Reason eminently distinguishes the human race from inferior animals...." However, according to Lawson, in the Maltese educational system, "this faculty is entirely neglected." He observed that, instead, "the attention of the teachers is exclusively devoted to the *learning by rote system*...or the antiquated parochial method of *teaching by Monitors*." Lawson concluded that, as regards learning by rote, teachers would be more preoccupied about making the pupils remember facts, "than about their forming a just estimate of their consequences." Regarding the monitorial system, the Master of the Melita House Academy argued, "What can be taught by a boy, who is himself sent to school to learn?"¹⁵ What may be regarded as rather curious is the fact that in the above mentioned advert of 1840, Lawson asked for an "articled pupil" to teach while concurrently he was being trained as a teacher.¹⁶

Lawson's claim, may be confirmed and dismissed at the same time on the basis of Paolo Pullicino's first Report on education in Malta. In his analysis of private schools, Pullicino stated that, "*In essi per lo più l'istruzione dei fanciulli è mista di molti gradi di un insegnamento alquanto elevato. La maggior parte hanno i medesimi difetti delle scuole...del governo.*"¹⁷ [In them, on the whole, the instruction of the children consists of different grades of somewhat elevated teaching. The majority of them have the same defects of the government schools].

If these defects included the inefficiency of some teachers, then, *The Harlequin* had the report to illustrate such a case. Mr. Atkinson, who according to the article already referred to above, had attained a Government Licence to teach, put up an advert that "he 'is desirous to obtain a select number of Tuitions'" which according to the newspaper was "nonsensical ungrammatical trash." According to *The Harlequin*

13. *Il-Habbar Malti*, No.47, 2.v.1879,4.

14. *Malta Government Gazette*, No.922, 15.x.1828, p.327.

15. Lawson, J., *op. cit.*, 8-9.

16. See note 9.

17. Pullicino, P. (1850): *Rapporto sulla Educazione Primaria nelle Isole di Malta e Gozo*, Malta, 7.

of a musket' or he would not have asked for 'instruction as a Schoolmaster', or 'a wish to obtain a select number of Tuitions', unless, indeed, he is actually desirous of receiving instruction, an absolute necessity in our opinion."¹⁸ A further attack on some private school teachers comes from Salvatore Frendo de Mannarino. In 1898 he observed that well-to-do parents either taught their children in the pre-primary years themselves or left this task to others. In the latter case, they left it to "*Signorine o Signore, di cui ignorano i precedenti; gli studi fatti; la moralità*" [spinster or married women of whom they do not know their past; the studies that they have undergone; their morality]. Frendo de Mannarino argued that these parents were tricked by an apparent education and a rather fair knowledge of one or more foreign languages and "*prendono per oro di zecca ciò che, novanta nove su cento, non è che orpello*"¹⁹ [they take for pure gold what is, ninety nine per cent, tinsel]. According to him, these teachers were, in reality, in their great majority, servants who had obtained some kind of education from their employers and then, to rise in status and get better remuneration, "*si camuffano da Istitutrici*"²⁰ [would camouflage themselves as tutors.]

Besides the above type of 'classy' tutors there were others of less regard. These were the women who took care of the schools called 'della Nuna'. Using rather harsh language, Frendo de Mannarino depicted the Nuna as "*generalmente una vecchia zitellona, la quale, con poche eccezioni, non avrà potuto, nè saputo, colle personali sue attrattive, far breccia in un cuore gemello*" [generally an old maid, who, with few exceptions, would not have been able, nor had known how, with her personal attractions, to make a breach in an analogous heart]. Therefore she would often be obstinate, bad-tempered, irritating, intolerant, and, though involuntarily, made all the little children under her care, her victims. That is how the 'Nuna' was described by Frendo de Mannarino but, as if to clear his conscience, the author remarked, "*Se non è sempre tale, è sempre però una vecchia pinzocchera, ignorante e superstiziosa*"²¹ [If she is not always so, however she is always an old, over scrupulous, ignorant and superstitious woman]. After that, he went on to announce the setting up of his own "*Asilo Infantile*".

Not all criticism was this harsh. When Salvatore Flores was going to transfer his school from Senglea to Valletta (in the premises of the former school of Sigismondo Savona), a report appeared in the newspaper *L'Amico del Popolo*. The reporter called Flores "*distinto Maestro di Scuola*" [distinguished schoolmaster] and his institute "*conosciutissimo in paese per uno dei migliori*" [recognised in the country as one of the best]. Further down in this article, Sigismondo Savona, newly appointed Director of Education, gave his opinion about Flores. Savona said that,

18. *The Harlequin*, No.95, 2.xi.1839, 136.

19. Frendo de Mannarino, S. *Proposta d'un Asilo Infantile*, Malta, 1898,3.

20. *Ibid.*4.

21. *Ibid.*5.

"a molto piacere di raccomandare quel signore quale un eccellente maestro specialmente in materie di lingua inglese. Il signor Flores fece i suoi studi in Inghilterra"²²[recommends with great pleasure that gentleman as an excellent teacher especially in what concerns the English language. Mr. Flores studied in England]. It showed the close ties between the two personalities which seemed also to hinge upon their mutual leanings towards the English language. This praise was confirmed in the newspaper *Il-Habbar Malti* which said that Flores's school at Senglea, "*dejjem bl-akbar kotra ta tfal ghala t-tagħlim tajjeb li ighallimom*"²³ [always full of children because of the good teaching he gives them].

Another educational establishment was praised through a letter to the editor signed '*Un Pater Familias*'. In this letter, Carlo Borg, the Master of L'Istituto Borg of Senglea, was acclaimed as "*un uomo che vuole e sa fare il suo dovere, ed in questo non vi ha nessun che non vi convenga*"²⁴ [a man who wants to and knows how to carry out his duty and no one can deny this]. Further on, '*Un Pater Familias*' listed a series of successes attained by students from the Istituto in examinations for admission into the Lyceum and the Royal Dockyard.

Besides those concerning Maltese teachers, other reports or articles mention foreign private school teachers who seemed to have merited the admiration and praise of others. One such case was that of Mr. Mattocks, a teacher at the Gymnasium Saint Louis of Cospicua. In the appreciation he was commended for "his general abilities and intelligence as an instructor of youth, and to his gentleness and kindness to the children who were under his charge."²⁵

The qualifications and abilities of the teachers may be gauged from the success enjoyed by private schools in the Maltese educational system. Taking the *Annual Report* of the Director of Education for 1896-97 regarding the examinations for admittance into the Lyceum, both Government and private schools presented their students. In fact, in the July 1896 session 86 candidates came from Government primary schools while 153 came from private institutions. Regarding the successes, 12 passed of which 10 candidates were from the private sector while the remaining two came from the primary schools run by the Government. In the following September another session was held, both for those who had failed in just one subject out of the three set (English, Italian and Arithmetic) and for new candidates. The passes were 14 from the Government schools (out of 73) and 34 (out of 121) from the private schools. Napoleon Tagliaferro, the Acting Director of Education, commented that, "The results given above clearly show that the majority of parents, not only allow their children to sit, but present them, for the Lyceum Entrance

22. *L'Amico Del Popolo*, No.74, 11.vi.1880, 3.

23. *Il-Habbar Malti*, No.82, 15.vi.1880, 3.

24. *L'Avvenire*, No 153, 10, xii, 1910, 3.

25. *The Malta Times*, No.1081, 26.xi.1863, n.p.

Examination totally unprepared", adding that, "The Examination cannot be said to be difficult."²⁶

On the other hand, well to do parents seemed inclined on sending their daughters, for instance, to private schools rather than to the Government's Young Ladies' Secondary School. The same Tagliaferro, in his Annual Report for 1897-98, observed that compared to the previous year there was a further reduction in the number of female pupils, "a decrease which may be partly attributed to the many facilities now presented by the enterprise of private individuals for the education of young Ladies, and of girls belonging to the class that attend our Secondary School."²⁷ Interestingly enough this particular Government Secondary School was fee-paying.

As to attendance in private schools, Pullicino as Director of Elementary Schools had calculated that, as far back as 1842, the attendance in the nine Government schools had amounted to 1296 pupils. In the same year, 2537 attended in the 135 private schools then existing. Moving on to 1858, the same Director pointed out that in 46 primary schools there were 4965 students while in the 178 private establishments there were 3832.²⁸ According to this source, the Government schools were gaining on the private schools, at least in pupil attendance.

From the various sources mentioned above, teachers in private schools seemed to be of all sorts. However, one cannot neglect the fact that some educational establishments did possess an impressive array of qualified personnel, especially by the standards of those days.

Taking one of the best, if not the best, educational establishment run by a private individual, one cannot but notice highly qualified teachers on the staff at Flores's College. In 1896, for Latin and Italian, there was Professor Dott. A. Rolla; for English, Professor R. Barber, M.A. and Professor M.J. Dillon, B.A.(R.U.I.); for Mathematics, Professor G. Caruana-Scicluna M.D.; for French, Professor Monsieur Victor Serre De Lus, Diplôme de L'Academie de Grenoble "France". The expectations from students of this college were also quite high: 75% was Excellent while less than 60% Unsatisfactory.²⁹ Previous to this, in 1893 there had been teachers like

26. *Annual Report by the Director of Education on the State of the University, the Lyceum, and the Secondary and Primary Schools for the Year 1896-97*, Malta, 1898, 11.

27. *Annual Report by the Director of education on the State of the University, the Lyceum, and the Secondary Schools, and the Technical and Manual Schools for the Year 1897-98*, Malta, 1899, 13.

28. Pullicino, P. *Sesto Rapporto sulla Educazione Primaria nelle Isole di Malta e Gozo*, Malta, 1860, 5.

29. *Flores's College, Valletta, Report, Mid-Summer, 1896*, Malta, 1896, 5-40.

Professor Dr. Luigi Abello from the Università di Torino for Italian and Dr. Temistocles Zammit, Esq. for the Physical Sciences.³⁰

Other schools seem to have had particularly successful teachers. That of Mr. L. Billion situated at Sliema, in 1911 had 13 passes into the Preparatory School at the Lyceum.³¹ L'Istituto Borg, on the other hand, in the examination of November 1910 for admission in the Royal Dockyard had four of its students who passed with honour and four who qualified by gaining the required pass mark. These were amongst the 228 who sat coming from the different educational institutions. Furthermore, it was reported that another seven students had been admitted to the Dockyard the previous April and another group had gained admittance into the Lyceum by passing the July and September sessions of the Lyceum Entrance Examination. The writer of this story in *L'Avvenire* concluded thus: "*Abbia il Signor Borg una vera stretta di mano con preghiera di continuare sempre ad istruire i figli nostri coll' attenzione, collo impegno e collo stesso zelo addimostrati fin' oggi*"³² [May Mr. Borg be given a real handshake accompanied by a plea to always continue to teach our sons with the attention, with the diligence and with the same zeal shown up to this day].

Besides praise for their efforts, teachers in these schools needed also the financial remuneration necessary for their livelihood. It is rather difficult to deduce their whole weekly or monthly compensation for the work they carried out. One indication may be the fees they charged pupils. For example, Mr. Howard had a school in Valletta and by 1873 had been a teacher for more than fifty years, forty-four of which had been in Malta. He taught English, Geography, Arithmetic, Writing and the rudiments of Italian and French. His fee was 8s 4d a month. To supplement his income private lessons in any of the mentioned subjects were given at the residence of the interested pupils.³³

Sigismondo Savona, while still a teacher (he had been trained at the Royal Military Training College, Chelsea) also had a private educational establishment. In 1861 he wanted a class of not more than twenty students. He was prepared to teach them English, Italian, Mathematics, History, Geography and Penmanship. For those who needed it, Latin could also be included. His fee was £3 per quarter. However, if there were two or more pupils from the same family he would charge them £2 5s per quarter.³⁴

In 1862 Giuseppe Luigi Zarb, of the Ginnasio San Giuseppe in Valletta, charged

30. *Flores's College, Valletta, Report, Mid-Summer, 1893, 1893, 7 & 12.*

31. *L'Avvenire*, No.335, 24.vii.1911, 2.

32. *Ibid.*, No.153, 10.xii.1910,3.

33. *The Malta Times*, Supplement, 29.iii.1873, n.p.

34. *Ibid.*, No.939, 21.ii.1861, n.p.

5s monthly for the first and second classes. For the third class where, besides the Italian and English languages, French would also be taught, the fee would be 6s 8d a month. As in other cases, private lessons were also offered.³⁵

Mrs. Lewis who was assisted by what she termed as "able Teachers", in 1838, ran a school for "Young Ladies". The subjects she offered were English, Geography, History, Plain and Fancy Needle Work, Writing and Arithmetic. For all these subjects she charged a monthly fee of 10s. If one wished the Italian and French languages to be included with the above, an extra 5s were charged monthly. For Music, a charge of 10s every month was the additional fee requested.³⁶

Religious Private Establishments

Besides the already mentioned educational establishments, Malta had a good number of schools operated by religious institutions. The majority was run by the Roman Catholic Church through secular or regular clergy as well as by nuns. Other schools belonged to the Anglican Church and the Free Church of Scotland.

The Roman Catholic Church, comprising the greatest majority of the Maltese population, held that she should exert control on all schools, both government and private, due to the omnipresent problem of religion. In an address to the Royal Commission of Inquiry in 1837, the clergy presented a set of grievances, one of which (number II) was about the teachers who were given permission to teach in Malta. The clergy lamented that the Professors of the Sciences and the Preceptors of the schools were not all Catholics. Therefore, they argued, these teachers would teach Maltese students principles that went against the Catholic Religion. The remedy they offered was that, "*Non si permetta a veruno di dare istruzione letteraria di alcuna sorta, qualor precedentemente non faccia professione della Fede Cattolica*"³⁷ [No one should be permitted to give literary instruction of any sort, if beforehand he did not give proof of his Catholic Faith]. This is indicative of the necessity felt by the Catholic Church to have her own schools.

A cursory look at the *Malta Blue Book* of different years would, at once, reveal a number of schools set up and run by religious bodies. Amongst the Catholic ones there were the Bishop's Seminaries and Conservatories (Notabile, Cospicua, Floriana, and Rabat, Gozo); Jesuit schools and colleges (St. Julian's, Notabile and Valletta) and others such as those run by the nuns.³⁸

35. *Il Mediterraneo*, No.1250, 12.vii.1862, 12.

36. *Malta Government Gazette*, No.1433, 23.v.1838, 215.

37. NLM LIBR. 1241, *Reclami del Clero della Diocesi di Malta sino tutto il 1836*, f.3.

38. *Malta Blue Book* from 1851.

The Bishop's Seminaries consisted of the Minor and the Major Seminaries. Up till 1858 both were to be found together at Notabile. There were teachers and professors and the mode of teaching was "according to the Ecclesiastical System."³⁹ It was in 1858 that the above-mentioned Seminaries were split up. The Rampolla-Simmons agreement of 1889-90 caused the Minor Seminary to adopt the Lyceum programme though Tagliaferro, the Director of Education, in 1895 had to report that this Seminary was not yet up to the required standard.⁴⁰

The Jesuit Order also had a number of schools under its charge. Of significance is the great controversy they created when the Jesuits were to come to Malta to open their schools. In 1842 the local Government accepted the opening of a Boarding School - *Convitto* - run by the Jesuits. However, *Il Mediterraneo* enquired why the Jesuits should be the teachers. "*I Gesuiti oggi non conoscono più in là dell'arte del missionario. Non celebri letterati; non eruditi storici; non antiquari; non legisti; non matematici. Dunque perchè preferire maestri Gesuiti.*"⁴¹ [The Jesuits today do not know more than the art of the missionary. They are not celebrated men of letters; nor learned historians; nor antiquarians; nor legists; nor mathematicians. Therefore why prefer Jesuit teachers].

In 1844 *The Malta Mail* published a letter by 'a Catholic Subscriber' in which the Jesuits were defended against attacks appearing in *The Malta Times*.⁴² The letter asked what was the object "for thus polluting with such streams of fulsome trash, the liberty of the public press...?" According to the writer, "those effusions were dictated by some needy school-master, who fearful of the decay of his business, in the event of a Jesuit's Seminary being established in Malta, is inventing in his own dark imagination, and circulating absurdities, beyond the power of belief..."⁴³

In 1846 *The Malta Times* called the Jesuits "...an useless, pernicious, worn-out and worm-eaten body..." Questions were asked such as "...where and under whom did they respectively study and for how long? What are their degrees and attainments? ... What do they teach and by what methods? ..." ⁴⁴ Such was the atmosphere against the Jesuit teachers at the resumption of their educational career in Malta. Later on, this controversy subsided and the Jesuits as teachers remain in Malta to this day. As a partial testimonial to this may be quoted what the Principal Secretary to the Government said during the Prize Day of 1883 at St. Ignatius College. "*Penso, e son certo voi penserete lo stesso come me, che il Rettore di*

39. *Ibid.*, 1851, 316-7.

40. Bonnici, A., *History of the Church in Malta*, Vol.III, Malta, 1975,160.

41. *Il Mediterraneo*, No.202, 8.vi.1842, 8.

42. *The Malta Times* had mentioned or attacked the Jesuits at least in the issues between 4.vi.1844 and 24.ix.1844.

43. *The Malta Mail*, No.105, 5.vii.1844, n.p

44. *The Malta Times*, No.152, 13.i.1846,2.

questo Collegio ed i suoi assistenti meritano ringraziamenti ed incoraggiamento per gli sforzi che vanno facendo a beneficio dell'educazione della gioventù Maltese."⁴⁵ [I think, and I am sure you are of the same mind, that the Rector of this College and his assistants merit our thanks and encouragement for the efforts they are doing for the benefit of the education of Maltese youth].

Another religious Order running a school was that of the Augustinians. The name of this establishment was Free Elementary School of the Augustinians. In 1851 its director was the Rev. Padre Maestro Gaetano Pace Forno who was assisted by eight English and Maltese brothers of his Order. The school had been opened in 1848 for boys from six years upwards and in 1851 it had 200 pupils. It was situated at Valletta.⁴⁶ A report, in *The Malta Mail* of 1851, indicated the school to be a success as in the annual examinations the pupils did very well when answering in English. This "gave a clear indication of the pains and care which must have been bestowed on their education." *The Malta Mail* asked why other Orders, such as the Dominicans, had not opened schools emulating the Augustinians.⁴⁷

Sixty years later this same school seemed to be going as strong as when it began. In fact, in 1910, *L'Avvenire* reported another occasion of this school - the Prize Day. In its comment the newspaper remarked that the school was of incalculable benefit to the lower classes of the population. Again the concluding comment was interestingly quite similar to the 1851 issue of *The Malta Mail*. The reporter sent "*i dovuti elogi ai Revdi Padri che la mantengono, specie gli instancabili e detti Precettori, non possiamo che esprimere il desiderio di veder erette simili scuole in altri conventi*"⁴⁸ [the due praise to the Reverend Fathers who maintain it, especially the tireless Teachers, we cannot but express the desire to see the setting up of similar schools in other convents.]

Regarding the pay enjoyed by teachers in religious schools, this is rather difficult to identify, as regular clergy who gave their services for free generally ran such establishments.

One educational establishment that did furnish official salaries was the Bishop's Seminary. Up till 1838 there were six masters and a Rector. The Rector got 120 *scudi* while the lecturers earned 60 *scudi* and the other teachers got 40 *scudi* a year. Further to this, the students who finished the courses in the subjects offered in the Seminary had to fill one of the teaching posts gratuitously for two years. Dr. Luigi Fernandes, the parish priest who drew up the above information for the Royal

45. *Amico del Popolo*, No.583, 7.viii.1883, 2.

46. *Malta Blue Book*, 1851, 316-7.

47. *The Malta Mail*, No.471, 11.vii.1851, n.p.

48. *L'Avvenire*, No.24, 11.vii.1910, 2.

Commissioners, concluded by stating that, "It must also be noted, that the above persons have their daily maintenance in the Seminary."⁴⁹ By 1851, according to the *Malta Blue Book*, these rates of pay had changed. The Rector now received £8 6s 8d while the Professors' salary was £7 10s. Only the Professor of Rhetoric got £5 16s 8d. The teachers were paid £5 yearly, while the teacher of Gregorian Singing got £1 13s 4d. No other school belonging to the Roman Catholic Church included any details regarding the payment of its teachers in this *Malta Blue Book*⁵⁰ nor is there in any other.

One denomination that had a school in Malta was the Anglican Church. This was the Protestant Collegiate School situated at St. Julian's Bay. In 1862 its master was Reverend Miles.⁵¹ The date of the opening of this school was revealed in an 1845 advert in *Il Mediterraneo*. A notice indicated that on 1st February 1846 this school would open for pupils. The Visitor was the Bishop of Gibraltar and the prospective pupils had to include with their written application a certificate of health and age. Samuel Gobat was the Vice-Principal.⁵²

This school complex also comprised the Malta Protestant College. The Rev. R.G. Bryan M.A. was the Vice-Principal while G.S. Willis Esq. was the Headmaster. In an 1849 advert it was announced that the fees charged to pupils were £10 a year for those in the School and £15 for those in the College.⁵³ The School was to cater for general instruction⁵⁴ but in the College, even Protestant Theology was taught.⁵⁵

The importance given to the teachers' religion was evident in a number of cases when individual teachers introduced themselves to the general public. In Catholic Schools it was sometimes stated that the particular school followed the Roman Catholic Faith as an integral part of its teaching and on which it based its principles. So did other denominations. When in 1848 "an English Lady" announced that she wished to receive "three or four young ladies to educate with her own family" she did not omit to state that she was "a member of the Established Church."⁵⁶ Another prospective teacher, in 1879, stated at once that he was a Clergyman, who had graduated from Cambridge and "for many years accustomed to prepare [students] for the Army, Civil Service, Universities and Public Schools."⁵⁷

49. *Royal Commission of Enquiry - Copies or Extracts*, Part II, London, 1838, 57.

50. *Malta Blue Book*, 1851, 316-7.

51. *Ibid.*, 1862, 278-9.

52. *Il Mediterraneo*, No.388, 31.xii.1845,13.

53. *Ibid.*, No.580, 5.ix.1849, 11.

54. *Malta Blue Book*, 1853, 274-5.

55. *The Malta Mail*, No.323, 8.ix.1848, n.p.

56. *The Malta Times*, No.298, 31.x.1848, 3.

57. *Ibid.*, Second Supplement, 6.xii.1879, 12.

Yet another religious denomination which had a school in Malta was the Free Church of Scotland. Its school was also in Valletta. It first appeared in the *Malta Blue Book* as a school for Commercial and Classical Education in 1851⁵⁸ but by 1877 had changed its instructional objectives to general education.⁵⁹ The school was first opened in 1843 and its first teacher was the Reverend George Wilson. According to the advert in *Il Mediterraneo*, this teacher "had many years' experience in Public Teaching, according to the system followed in the leading Educational Institutions in Scotland."⁶⁰ An announcement of 1854 in *The Malta Mail* communicated the fees set by the school. Boys under eleven years of age paid thirty guineas per annum while those over this age paid thirty-five.⁶¹

By 1874 the school had passed under the direction of Mr. Gavin. This teacher, who, according to *The Malta Times*, had well maintained for his school the high reputation which it enjoyed under his predecessor, the Rev. George Wilson", had a problem with the Government. At that time the Government rewarded teachers who had successful candidates in public examinations. According to Gavin, the student who had come first in one of these examinations, Paolo Sciortino, had been a private student of his for fifteen months prior to this examination. Gavin thus claimed that, as he had taught this student English, Italian and Mathematics, he deserved the reward for this success.⁶²

In his reply, the Chief Secretary informed Mr. Hugh Gavin that, according to the information derived from the Rector of the University, the student Sciortino had been "a regular and permanent student at the Lyceum, attending the various classes at almost all hours of the day." Therefore, though Gavin might have been right to claim success in connection with this private student, on the other hand, on the basis of the normal attendance at the Lyceum, "His Excellency [the Governor] can only recognise him [Sciortino] in that capacity." Thus Gavin got nothing except a pat on the back for having such a good school.⁶³

Private Schools with Government support

A third type of educational establishments included those schools which were originally set up as private ventures but which at some point or other obtained a grant from the Government to help them along or keep them open.

According to Paolo Pullicino, the first four principal primary schools before

58. *Malta Blue Book*, 1851, 316-7.

59. *Ibid.*, 1877, 214-5.

60. *Il Mediterraneo*, No.274, 25.x.1843, 13.

61. *The Malta Mail*, No.634, 28.vii.1854, n.p.

62. *The Malta Times*, No.2410, 31.i.1874, 3.

63. *Ibid.* See also National Archives, Rabat, CSG 01/3791/1874, Rector of the Univ. to Chief. Sec. to Govt., 10.i.1874.

1838 were located at Valletta, Zejtun, Senglea and Rabat (Gozo). As the then Director of Primary Education stated, three of them were originally set up and maintained by private contributions. However, later on, the Government took them over and financed and directed them itself. And there began "*una nuova e più estesa organizzazione...*"⁶⁴ [a new and more extensive organisation] in primary education.

These schools were the so-called Normal Schools. They were run by the Normal School Society, which in its Sixth Report stated that the school population was on the increase, both the boys and the girls. In fact, "the applications for admission are very frequent, and beyond what the localities of the Schools can properly accommodate."⁶⁵

Regarding the premises, even basic amenities had been lacking, and the Report revealed that "...space, light, and ventilation, was in every way deficient...." If it had not been for "the continued protection afforded by the Government of these Islands to this Society..." the school could not have become decent by gaining new premises.⁶⁶

The Report also referred to the establishment of another Normal School at Zejtun under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Luigi Camilleri. It seems that this teacher was quite successful as he was "answering the expectations formed on that head; and it is hoped that this example may, in the progress of time, lead to other detached Schools throughout the Island."⁶⁷

The method of teaching, which the Society considered as very satisfactory was, "the system of mutual instruction" and this same source revealed that the Government set up its own school at Gozo on equivalent lines to those of Malta.⁶⁸

The Report concluded that without the Government's help the benefactors' donations fell far too short of the amount required for maintaining these schools in an efficient way. The Master's salary paid to him in 32 months was 2400 *scudi* in addition to an extra allowance of 60 *scudi*. The Mistress was remunerated at 1035 *scudi* for the same period.⁶⁹

In 1833 another General Meeting took place and the *Malta Government Gazette* reported this occasion. The commentary reveals that "At one o'clock the

64. Pullicino, P. *Prelazione al Primo Corso di Metodologia nella Università di Malta*, Malta, 1850, footnote, 4.

65. Normal School Society 1829: *The Sixth Report of the Normal School Society of Valletta*, Malta, 7.

66. *Ibid.*, 8.

67. *Ibid.*, 9.

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.*, 10-2.

Great Room [at the Auberge de Provence] was crowded to excess; and perhaps it has seldom presented to the philanthropic mind a more gratifying scene."⁷⁰ It seems that the foundation of the Schools in 1819, and the work they carried out, had been very gratifying to the lower classes. The subjects taught were English, Italian, Writing and Arithmetic. This applied also to the girls who had an English mistress for the English language.⁷¹ Yet, the chronic financial problem was a headache. "It is well known that its main support is a liberal annual subsidy granted by the Government."⁷² The grants given in 1838 to the Normal Schools were: for that in Valletta, £250; for that in the Three Cities, £100; that of Gozo got £50; and another Public School at Notabile got £8 6s 8d.⁷³

A school which also ended up partly financed by the Government, and which had its fullest backing, was the Malta Infant School. Its establishment came through an idea of the Queen Dowager Adelaide, widow of William IV. This establishment was under her patronage and had the sanction of the Government of Malta.⁷⁴ Situated in Valletta it was to have the same system of education as that in use in Great Britain. The aim of the school was "...philanthropic, and conducive to the great interest of the country." It accepted children from two to eight years of age, each child paying one penny a week.⁷⁵

In connection with this penny a week payment, there cropped up the problem as to who should be allowed to attend the school. Some held that if one could pay he should be allowed to attend but *Il Mediterraneo* commented that this was a charitable school and only the poorer children should be admitted. In a final comment the newspaper observed that, "If hereafter it should be attempted to place the school (Malta fashion) as a burden on the public revenue, very good care will be taken to exclude the children of persons in easy circumstances."⁷⁶ The consequence of the attendance of poor children at the school was, that the poor school masters and mistresses in it suffered. *Il Mediterraneo* affirmed that rich people should not be allowed to send their children to this school for one penny a week. Otherwise the newspaper would take up the cause "for the poor school masters and mistresses, who have given their best days to the horrible, infernal drudgery, of teaching, looking after, and day nursing little children."⁷⁷

The above-mentioned help by the Government did come. It took the form of an allowance of £100 to the School. Only £17 17s 11d came from fees. The teachers' salaries for the year 1844-45 altogether amounted to £176 11s 7d. There was also

70. *Malta Government Gazette*, No.1150, 13.ii.1833, 54.

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*, 55

73. *Ibid.*, No.1492, 25.iv.1838, 163.

74. *Il Mediterraneo*, No.158, 4.viii.1841, 13; No.96, 31.vii.1841, 381.

75. *Ibid.*

76. *Il Mediterraneo*, No.164, 15.ix.1841, 9.

salaries for the year 1844-45 altogether amounted to £176 11s 7d. There was also a small amount of money for the payment of a teacher's sea passage.⁷⁸

Initially, it seems that the establishment of this School was opposed on two counts. One was on religious grounds, the other on account of rivalry. Regarding religion, it was true that the School had been set up by Adelaide, who had also financed the Anglican Cathedral of St. Paul's at Valletta, so by deduction could be considered a Protestant school, but in reality, the pupil population was not at all wholly Protestant. In 1847 Rev. M. Margoliouth, who was a Jew, wrote a letter to a relative in which he described the School. He remarked that the mistress was "an expert young woman and not a little conceited; she brings on the children remarkably well." The school population was of about a hundred pupils, the majority being Maltese Roman Catholics. There were also four Jewish children.⁷⁹ The problem of religion seems to have been overridden as, in 1851, Mr. Watson, the Master of the Infant School, was one of the examiners of the School of the Augustinian Convent of Valletta.⁸⁰

The question of rivalry was one that came to the fore with the setting up of new educational establishments. A highly competitive market was created partly due to the small population of Malta and the even smaller school population since the number of families rich enough to afford an education for their children was limited. Thus, no school could bear to lose its pupils to any new establishment. Rivalry could be deduced both within and between schools. Having rich and poor in the same school, according to *The Malta Times* "cannot be avoided, since all the children pay and all have a right to enter the school." The paper stressed that in England it was the same. In connection with the competition with other schools, the newspaper argued, "there is no remedy for this.... Shall a whole generation suffer because one person loses some half-dozen scholars?"⁸¹ Due to this rivalry in the private school sector, a continuous tug-of-war between the different educational establishments ensued.

A final comment regarding the Malta Infant School concerns teacher training. In 1850 the number of young men and women "the latter in particular, for the purpose of acquiring the art of teaching children, which is by no means easy," was lacking. Complaining of the scarcity of a sufficient number of good infant schools in Valletta, *The Malta Mail* reported that it had information that the director of the Infant School, Mr. Watson, "would gladly take charge of a class of pupil teachers." The ages required would be between 15 and 20 years.⁸²

78. *Malta Government Gazette*, No.1596, 25.vii.1845, 41.

79. Margoliouth, M., *A Pilgrimage to the Land of My Fathers*, Vol.1, London, 1850, 203.

80. *The Malta Mail*, No.471, 11.vii.1851, n.p.

81. *The Malta Times*, No.103, 5.ix.1841, 365.

82. *The Malta Mail*, No.412, 24.v.1850, n.p.

83. *Malta Government Gazette*, No.1647, 7.viii.1848, 105 and continues to appear in issues

A school, which appears in the yearly expenses of the Government, is an English Protestant School situated in Valletta. This school was granted "a sum equal to the amount to be derived from private contributions not exceeding £100, to which amount this grant is limited."⁸³

Another school that had by its nature, to be supported by the Government of Malta, was H.M. Dockyard School. This was established in 1858 by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for the children, boys and girls, of all the employees of The Dockyard and Naval Establishments in Malta and included an apprentice school. The first teacher was a Mr. Sullivan who, it was claimed was "an excellent schoolmaster." The fee was sixpence a month for the use of stationery, books, slates, and other educational material. The method of teaching was to be "that adapted by the National Society in their schools, and in those of Her Majesty's Dockyards at home, as nearly as found practicable." One of the schoolmaster's duties was to keep a journal, recording the attendance and observations on the progress, conduct and character of each pupil.⁸⁴

In 1867 the Dockyard School required an Assistant Master. In an advert it was announced that he would be paid £50 per annum. He should be between 25 and 45 years of age. For selection one could send Letters of Recommendation-Testimonials and other correspondence beforehand for a Committee to select eligible candidates. Those chosen would have to sit for a competitive examination in Arithmetic, Writing from Dictation, "and the usual routine of school requirements."⁸⁵

As an annual treat, the Dockyard School took its pupils on an excursion. In 1880 H.M. Tug ship Escort took the students to Fort Chambray, at Gozo "under the superintendence of the Dockyard Schoolmaster" and played games there. The trip, "though a very pleasant one to those who could enjoy it, a great number of both old and young, were sea sick, while others were very much frightened and vowed they would never go again."⁸⁶

Private education in Malta was quite widespread and along the 1800-1919 period consisted of a large number and a great variety of educational establishments. Along with Government schools, private educational establishments provided a wide spectrum of teaching and learning at all levels, from the youngest to mature students, and proved to be of great benefit to a relatively large number of Maltese as well as to foreigners visiting or residing in Malta. The teachers in all these schools enjoyed like benefits, as well as suffering from similar handicaps experienced by their colleagues in Government schools.

83. *Malta Government Gazette*, No.1647, 7.viii.1848, 105 and continues to appear in issues following this date.

84. *The Malta Times*, No.818, 19.x.1858, n.p.

85. *Ibid.*, No.2090, 12.xii.1867, n.p.

86. *Ibid.*, First Supplement, 5.vi.1880, p.6.