MATSEC REFORMS

What’s in the pipeline?

MUT Conference

21st November 2015

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MATSEC Examinations Board
The MATSEC Examinations Board is not exempt from or averse to reforms.

On the contrary, when set up in 1991, its aim was to bring about reforms in assessment at two educational levels:

- at the end of compulsory schooling (age 16), and
- at the post-secondary level and admission to University.

Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) system introduced in 1994 to replace the GCE Ordinary level system of examinations and certification.

Matriculation Certificate system introduced in 1997 to replace the GCE Advanced level examinations required for admission to University.
SEC SYSTEM - REFORMS

- Examinations appropriate for 80% of the 16-year-old cohort – more accessible than GCE O-levels.
- Differentiated papers – Paper I + Paper IIA / IIB.
- Oral and Listening comprehension in language examinations.
- School-based coursework in 13 subjects.
- Two examination sessions per year: Main session in May; Supplementary session in September.
- Waiving of fees for deserving cases.
- Access arrangements for students with disability.
MATRICULATION CERTIFICATE - REFORMS

- A more holistic approach to education at post-secondary level.
- Combination of Language + Humanities + Science subjects.
- Two Advanced levels + Three Intermediate levels + Systems of Knowledge.
- Introduction of the Intermediate Matriculation level.
- Reform of the Systems of Knowledge component of the MC.
- Oral and listening comprehension in language subjects.
- Coursework component in a number of subjects.
- Practical examinations in the sciences.
ALL REFORMS RAISE CONCERNS

- Integrity and Credibility?
- Recognition locally and internationally?
- Sustainability in the long run?

Have these concerns and others been addressed successfully by the SEC and Matriculation Certificate systems of assessment?
MATSEC Review 2005

- A detailed review of the MATSEC was commissioned by the Minister of Education in 2005.
- The report included:
  - An Objectives Review
  - An Operations Review
  - An Impact Review
  - A Quality Review
  - A Review of Alternatives
MATSEC Recommendations 2005

- Composition of the Matriculation Certificate
- Timeframe of Examinations & implications
- MQF Level 1 Assessment computerised
- Teacher involvement in MATSEC exams
- SEC Exam orals, SBA, Paper IIA/IIB
- Revision of papers reform
- Vocational Subjects
- Expertise in Assessment & CPD
- Independent Cost Centre
ALTERNATIVES TO MATSEC 2010

➢ In 2010, the NCHE commissioned a study to explore alternatives to the Matriculation Certificate for admission to Further and Higher Education.

➢ International Baccalaureate
➢ European Baccalaureate
MATSEC Recommendations 2010

- Matriculation Certificate over 5 years after a two-year course
- UoM admission requirements to include other Level 4 and 5 qualifications
- Change Timeframe of Examinations: implications
- Allow provisional entry to tertiary level for Low Achievers
- Examinations for Low Achievers
- Reduce the gender gap in participation
- Introduce Vocational & Technical Subjects
- Revision courses for M.C. re-sits
- Comparative analysis of AM & IM exams
- Merge MATSEC & Examinations Department
- Comparative analysis of AM & IM exams
MATSEC REFORMS - PRESENT

- Introduction of vocational subjects within the SEC system
  - New Statute to include MCAST and Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) representatives on the MATSEC Board.
  - New syllabi in five VET subjects and on-going syllabus review.
  - New assessment system: modular with continuous + controlled + synoptic assessments.
  - New regulations for introducing and conducting new assessment.
  - Document outlining policies and procedures.
  - Formative evaluation of implementation and results.

- Implementing the new system regulating the award of the Matriculation Certificate
In 2014-15, MATSEC introduced five VET subjects on a pilot basis over three years at SEC level with syllabi developed by MCAST, ITS and secondary school teachers who had taught BTEC courses in four vocational subjects.

New continuous assessment and verification schemes are being implemented in these subjects. These involve a considerable amount of planning and attention to detail. Human resources in this area are not easy to come by.

More schools are offering vocational subjects this scholastic year (2015-16).

The development of new vocational subjects is in the pipeline.
CURRENT CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD OF THE MATRICULATION CERTIFICATE (2012)

- Students must sit for six subjects (2AM + 3IM + SoK) within a period of five years (10 sittings, May and September).
- Obtain a pass in a language, a humanities subject, a science subject and in SoK.
- Obtain a minimum of 44 grade points – maximum possible is 100.
- Candidates who sit for three or more AM levels may substitute the results of one AM subject or more for IM levels grade for grade.
- The May session is separate from the September session in which candidates can sit a maximum of one AM + 4 IM exams + SoK.
CONSEQUENCES OF THE CHANGES IN THE CRITERIA FOR THE AWARD OF THE M.C.

- University courses are **more accessible** as students can obtain passes in the required subjects one by one over a period of five years.

- Candidates who take IM and AM examinations one by one can satisfy the criteria for the award of the MC by sitting and passing in **four subjects** only. They then query the need to sit for the other two subjects if they are not required to pass in them.

- Students in the **first year of their Sixth Form** course are taking the chance of sitting for one or more IM and AM examinations before they are well prepared for them. This practice is causing problems in the post-secondary schools and colleges.

- Complex changes required in the **Database Management System**.
Re-thinking the Aims of Post-secondary Education

Effect of LOF on Matriculation Examinations

Autonomy & Governance of MATSEC

Timeframe of examinations & implications

MATSEC Future Reforms

Review of Advanced & Intermediate syllabi

Merger of SEC and SSC&P Levels 1, 2, 3

Emphasis on continuous assessment

Management & Logistics of SEC, IM, AM exams

More vocational subjects

More vocational subjects
With the implementation of the NCF (2012), the educational context in compulsory education will undergo a radical change since teaching and learning will be based on a learning outcomes approach.

The Learning Outcomes have been developed at Levels 1 to 10 with Levels 8 and 9 corresponding / comparable to SEC level in the various subjects.

The new context raises questions on whether the LAPs will replace the SEC syllabi and how the role of the MATSEC Board will change at this level.
It is envisaged that the changes in the teaching, learning and assessment programmes at the compulsory level (MQF Level 3) will impinge directly on teaching and learning at Intermediate and Advanced levels (Level 4) possibly as early as 2020.

This developing situation raises a number of questions:

- Who will see that current gap between MQF Levels 3 and 4 is not widened making the upper level unattainable by a higher proportion of students than at present?
- Should the AM and IM syllabi be revised and re-written in terms of learning outcomes?
- A few AM and IM subjects already have a component of school-based assessment. Should this be extended to other subjects and given a greater weighting to reflect the changes at the compulsory level?
- If there is agreement on the need of these changes, who will work on them and when?
MATRICULATION EXAMINATIONS AT INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED LEVELS

Criticism:

► Some syllabi have **too much content** and content is **too difficult**.

► The **standard of IM subjects** is more than one-third of an AM subject as originally intended.

► IM Science syllabi and exams have **no practical component**.

► AM & IM qualifications are not used only for admission to University so why should **University heads of department control** the syllabi?
TIME FRAMES IN PRACTICE

- **First Session** – typically extends from 10 March to 12 June
- **Second Session / Supplementary (SEC)** – typically from 1st to 7th September, limited number of subjects examined, results need to be published before the end of September.

**Criticism**

- Exams start too early, so the final scholastic ‘year’ is too short.
- Syllabi cannot be covered adequately in the available teaching time (25-26 wks per year).
- SEC Supplementary session is discriminatory.
- AM & IM September session is also discriminatory.
TIME FRAMES FOR EXAMINATION SESSIONS

What needs to fit into the available time without clashes?

- Listening Comprehension (SEC languages) – 5 Saturdays
- Oral exams (SEC languages) – 15 full days (6 E&F, 6 M&I, 3 GSAR)
- Oral exams (IM languages) – 12 days (5E, 4M, 3 I,F, Others)
- Oral exams (AM languages) – 10 days (5E, 2M, 3 I,F, Others)
- Physical Education practical exams – 15 days (11 SEC + 4 IM)
- IM Theatre & Performance – 6 days
- AM Science practical exams – 3 days
- Written examinations (SEC, IM, AM) – 32 days (am & pm)

Constraints: variability of Easter date, possible clashes with other awarding bodies, scheduled or unscheduled national events, availability of exam halls in a.m.
Suggested Solutions:

- Precious time can be gained by schools and students if the assessment of oral and listening comprehension skills, and practical work is carried out by the schools on a continuous basis.
- Move the first session so that all examinations are held in May-June giving students and schools more time to prepare for the exams. Results published in mid-August.
- Move the second/supplementary session to November-December and offer all subjects for examination. This would avoid discrimination and give students and schools more time to prepare for the examinations.

Implications: allow provisional entry to further studies, review entry requirements, other …
What is our vision/philosophy of education for 16–18 year-olds?

- Is it a period of formation, introducing students to special areas of study, analytical and critical thinking and personal development – a developmental approach driven by the requirements of the individual learner? ...OR...

- Is it a period of concentrated study focussed on obtaining the required certification for the tertiary stage of education or the world of work as quickly as possible – a preparatory approach driven by the requirements of the next stage of education / work?
SOME REFLECTIONS

“When all is said and done, more is said than done.”

Aesop

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ADDRESSING THE

KNOWING – DOING GAP

A Co-ordinated Approach - Teamwork

- Train and support teachers and SMTs
- Address the concerns of parents and the public at large
- Obtain comprehensive political support and commitment
- Resolve Union matters – professional & trade union roles
- Focus on the technical issues – Validity, Reliability, Manageability

This approach is important to ensure the Integrity, Credibility and Recognition of the system of assessment and certification.
THANK YOU

It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.

Charles Darwin