

# **MATSEC REFORMS**

**What's in the pipeline?**

**MUT Conference**

21<sup>st</sup> November 2015

**Frank Ventura**

**MATSEC Examinations Board**

# MATSEC REFORMS - PAST

- ▶ 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.

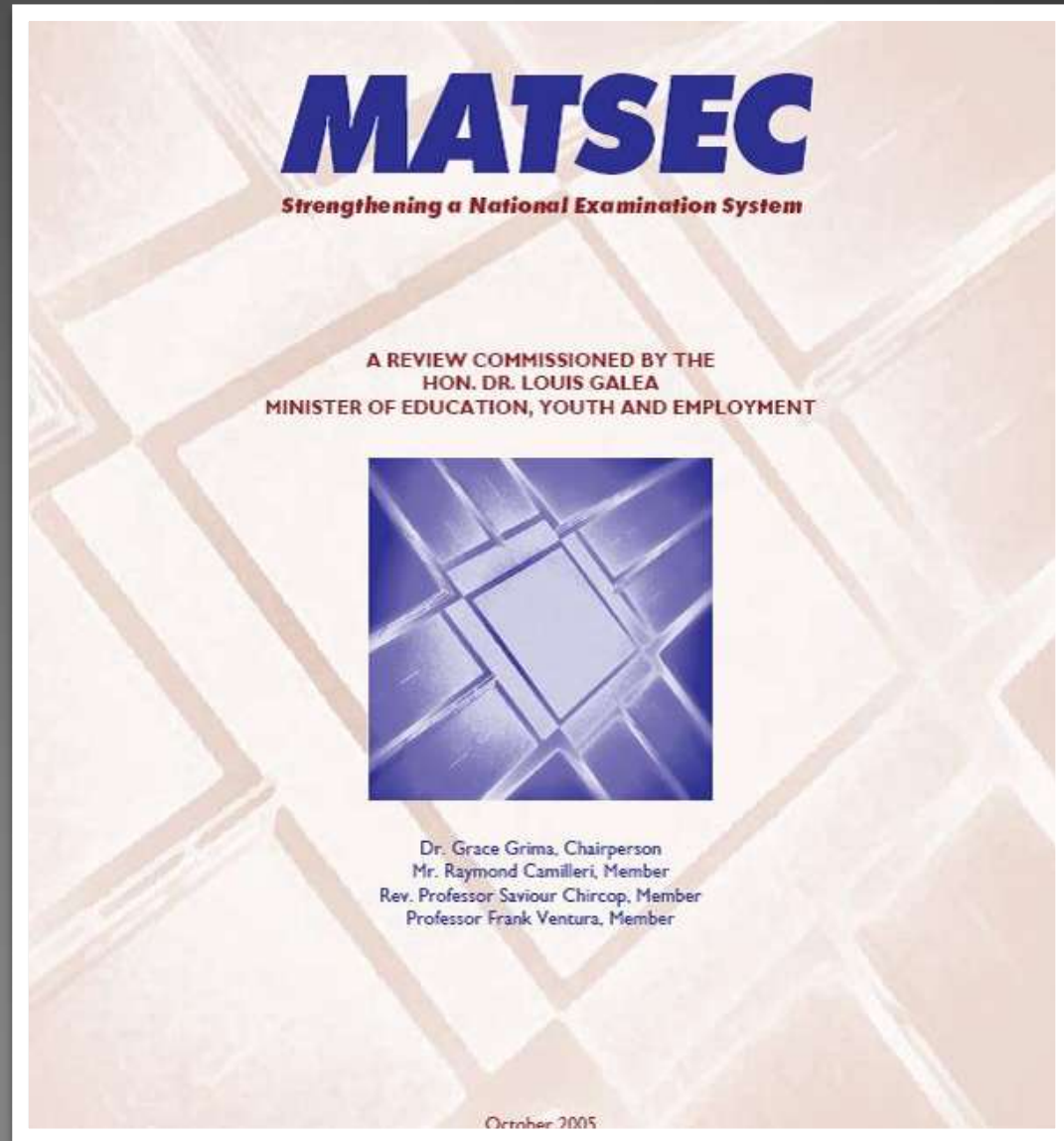
# ALL REFORMS RAISE CONCERNS

- ▶ 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**



**Independent  
Cost Centre**

**Composition of the  
Matriculation  
Certificate**

**Timeframe of  
Examinations  
& implications**

**Expertise in  
Assessment &  
CPD**

**MATSEC**  
Recommendations  
2005

**MQF Level I  
Assessment  
computerised**

**Vocational  
Subjects**

**Teacher  
involvement in  
MATSEC exams**

**Revision of  
papers reform**

**SEC Exam  
orals, SBA,  
Paper IIA/IIB**

# 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**

## **An Evaluation of the Impact of the MATSEC System on Student Participation in Further and Higher Education**

**Josette Farrugia  
for  
The Working Group on Alternatives to MATSEC  
April 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

Revision courses  
for M.C. re-sits

Allow provisional  
entry to tertiary  
level

Comparative  
analysis of AM  
& IM exams

**MATSEC**  
Recommendations  
**2010**

Examinations  
for Low  
Achievers

Introduce  
Vocational &  
Technical Subjects

Merge MATSEC &  
Examinations  
Department

Reduce the gender  
gap in participation

# 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**

# VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

- ▶ 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

More  
vocational  
subjects

# MATSEC Future Reforms

Management &  
Logistics of  
SEC, IM, AM exams

Review of  
Advanced &  
Intermediate syllabi

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

Emphasis on  
continuous  
assessment

# LEARNING OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK (LOF), LAPS AND SEC EXAMINATIONS

- ▶ 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.**

# THE LEARNING OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK AND MATRICULATION EXAMINATIONS

- ▶ 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?

# TIMEFRAMES IN PRACTICE

- ▶ **First Session** – typically extends from 10 March to 12 June
- ▶ **Second Session / Supplementary (SEC)** – typically from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> 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.

# DECISION POINTS - TIMEFRAMES

## ▶ 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 ...

# POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION BACK TO BASICS

- ▶ **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?

Independent  
Cost Centre

Benchmarking  
system separate  
from schools

Chain of  
command  
Regulation &  
Accreditation

MATSEC &  
Examinations  
Department

**MATSEC**  
Autonomy &  
Governance

Adequate  
Premises &  
Stores

Self-evaluation &  
External Audit

Management  
Information  
System

Communication  
with Stakeholders

# SOME REFLECTIONS

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

**Aesop**

***kevinmartineau.ca***

# 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*