



**TOWARDS A QUALITY
EDUCATION FOR ALL :**



**THE COLLEGE SYSTEM
EXAMINING THE SITUATION**

Mark G. Borg & Joseph Giordmania,
Towards a Quality Education for All – The College System Examining the Situation

This research was officially commissioned by the Malta Union of Teachers in 2011 and the report was presented to the MUT Council on 11 June 2012.

This report is the property of the Malta Union of Teachers who is the copyright holder. Its contents may be consulted and referred to for academic research and for policy making purposes provided that the MUT is acknowledged as the copyright owner.

All rights reserved. No part of this report may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording on any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright holder.

Disclaimer: The results of this study and presented in this report do not necessarily reflect the views or the policies of the Malta Union of Teachers.

The following citation method may be used when citing this text:

Borg, M.G. and Giordmaina, J. (2012) *Towards a Quality Education for All – The College System Examining the Situation*, Report presented to the Malta Union of Teachers on 11 June, unpublished, available: [www.mut.org.mt/files/College Research 2012.pdf](http://www.mut.org.mt/files/College_Research_2012.pdf)

**THE COLLEGE SYSTEM IN THE STATE SCHOOL SECTOR:
A STUDY OF ITS IMPACT AS PERCEIVED BY COLLEGE PRINCIPALS,
MEMBERS OF SCHOOL SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS, AND
PERSONNEL IN THE VARIOUS TEACHING GRADES**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT COMMISSIONED BY THE
MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS**

FINAL REPORT

**TOWARDS A QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL:
EVERY TEACHER COUNTS**

**PREPARED BY
PROFESSOR MARK G. BORG AND DR JOSEPH GIORDMAINA**

May 2012

FINAL REPORT

TOWARDS A QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL:

EVERY TEACHER COUNTS¹

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	PAGE 4
REVIEW OF THE KEY OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS	9
REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE	40
METHODOLOGY	61
QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	76
<u>Results</u>	
Section B: The College System	76
Section C: The Reforms	87
Section D: School Senior Management Team ..	97
Section E: Teachers, Instructors, KAs and LSA's	103
Section F: Concluding Questions	111
<u>Discussion</u>	
The College System	116
The Reforms	131

¹The authors are very grateful for the cooperation and support they received from the MUT and its School Delegates/Representatives. Thanks are also due to the Hon Minister of Education, the Directors General (DES and DQSE) for granting the necessary permission for the project to be carried out among their education personnel.

A special thanks goes to the many participants (anonymous or not) in the various stages of the project, to the several colleagues who offered invaluable advice, to the project's research assistants, and to Dr Anthony Vella (the Research Team's Liaison Officer with the MUT) .

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS: IN CONVERSATION WITH THE DGs, PRINCIPALS, SMTs, AND TEACHING GRADE PERSONNEL	151
The College System	151
The Reforms	171
School Senior Management Team	207
Teachers, Instructors, KAs and LSA's	217
Concluding Questions	232
Comments and Criticism of the Research Study .	237
CONCLUDING REMARKS	242
BIBLIOGRAPHY	256
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE	262
APPENDIX B: CHARTS IN NUMERICAL ORDER FOR EASY REFERENCE	282
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES	306
APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT LETTER AND CONSENT FORM	323

INTRODUCTION

The College Reform is perhaps one of the most ambitious in the history of Maltese Education and most certainly one which will mark the educational journey of many present and future generations of schoolchildren. It is perhaps inevitable that a reform on such a scale will also impact on all education professionals in all the teaching and school management grades across all sectors of our educational system.

Essentially the College Reform is based on the firm belief that school networking must be at the heart of a meaningful transformation of our educational system from one that celebrates the educational success of *some* children at the expense of others into one that is geared at enabling the success of *all* children. It sees school networks as the vehicle by which learning communities can be fostered that will be in a better position to address the needs of every child. Underpinning the school networks as the main organisational vehicle is the drive towards greater devolution and decentralization of state schools.

The extent to which the envisaged transformation of the Maltese Educational system yields the desired outcomes will not merely depend on how well school networks operate (i.e. on the success of the College System) but also on the successful implementation of a series of 'accompanying reforms' ranging from mixed ability teaching, to new assessment practices, to setting in the core subjects at secondary level. These 'reforms' constitute important pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, as it were. Each piece on its own may carry some importance but ultimately its real importance is derived from how well it integrates with all the other pieces so that together they convey the whole picture.

Reforms in any sector, on the one hand, are often viewed as a source of regeneration and progress. To the stakeholders (but especially to educators) reforms can be a source of empowerment as individually and collectively they actively engage in reviewing the status quo, delineate clearly common objectives

and generate novel ways of overhauling and improving practices to attain these objectives. More often than not, on the other hand, reforms are accompanied by a degree of uncertainty, apprehension and resistance among some of the stakeholders. After all, reforms tend to challenge our beliefs, how we think, and how we do things. This is especially so in education where most if not all of the professionals involved tend to feel very strong about their concept of what education should be about, how best to organize students and schools, the most effective pedagogy, how best to assess educational outcomes and so on so forth. Hence, having on board key players such as teaching personnel and school management teams is crucial for the success of any educational reform, anywhere. Indeed, the commitment of such key players is very much a necessary condition (albeit not a sufficient one) for the success of any reform in education.

In 2010, almost three scholastic years² inside the College Reform, the Malta Union of Teachers, concerned about the impact that the College System and accompanying reforms are having on schoolchildren and education personnel, requested the present researches to submit a proposal for a research project.

The terms of reference were as follows.

1. To determine the impact of the College System on:
 - 1.1 the autonomy of individual schools;
 - 1.2 the role and responsibilities of Heads and Assistant Heads of schools;
 - 1.3 the integration of students who formerly were placed in Area Secondary Schools and Junior Lyceums.
2. To investigate the views, opinions and concerns, of primary and secondary school personnel in all teaching grades on, and about, the College System and how it is operating, and the accompanying reforms.
3. To present a report outlining the findings of this research project.

² The number of Colleges was increased to the full complement of 10 at the beginning of scholastic year 2007-2008. In February 2008 the remaining vacant posts of Principal were filled to bring the complement to 10.

In July 2010, after a preliminary review of key documents and some of the research on the College Reform and related themes, the research proposal was submitted for the approval of the MUT Council. In early August 2010 the MUT, by means of its then President Mr John Bencini, formally informed the researchers that the MUT Council had unanimously approved the research proposal and that the Union will be commissioning the study.

The aim of the project was to provide a large-scale, empirically-based investigation of the impact that the College System and accompanying reforms are having as perceived by personnel in the various teaching grades (i.e. teachers, instructors, kindergarten assistants, learning support assistants - including those working outside the classroom setting such as those assigned to the various student support departments, units and centres), and the school Senior Management Teams. The views of the Directors General and the College Principals would also be solicited.

The proposed design of the study consisted of four phases as follows.

Phase 1: Review of Documentation

All key official documents on the College Reform would be reviewed with the objective of determining the rationale underpinning the implementation of the College System, as well as its envisaged operational and educational benefits. In addition, a number of studies (mainly Post Graduate Diploma long essays and Master dissertations) that have focused on specific aspects of the College Reform would also be reviewed.

Apart from serving as an informed backdrop to the present study, the information resulting from this phase would serve as a platform for Phase 2.

Phase 2: Construction and Development of Instruments

A series of focus groups would be conducted with a sample of teaching grade personnel and the school Senior Management Teams from the primary and

secondary school sectors and from across the ten colleges. These would be carried out after school hours.

The information arising from the focus groups, together with that resulting from Phase 1, would be used to formulate the prototype self-administered questionnaire to be employed in Phase 3, as well as the interview schedule to be used in Phase 4.

The first prototype version of the questionnaire would be given to a number of knowledgeable persons with extensive experience in the field of education and research for their advice regarding the content, format and presentation. The resulting prototype electronic version of the questionnaire would be piloted with a sample of subjects in the various targeted grades. Feedback from these participants should lead to the formulation of the final version of the electronic questionnaire.

The first draft of the interview schedule would also be planned for further development at a later stage.

Phase 3: Questionnaire Survey among Teaching Grade Personnel and School Senior Management Teams

All personnel in the various teaching grades and members of the school Senior Management Teams would be invited to participate by completing an electronic version of the questionnaire. Participation would be entirely voluntary and completely anonymous.

Phase 4: Interviews with Teaching Grade Personnel, school Senior Management Teams, College Principals and the Directors General

Some of the major themes arising from the questionnaire survey would serve as a basis for the interview schedule to be used in this phase. The prototype interview schedule would be given to a number of knowledgeable persons with extensive experience in the field of education and research for their feedback.

The final phase of the project will consist of about 90 interviews with a sample of teaching grade personnel and members of the school Senior Management Teams selected from across all the ten Colleges, together with all College Principals and the Directors General.

On their part the researchers committed themselves to undertake the project with the professional rigour required drawing upon their experience in the conduct of large scale studies in the educational context. In so doing, they set for themselves very stringent criteria to secure the confidentiality and anonymity of all the participants. They also resolved that the collection of data shall in no way impinge on the entitlement of the school children or disrupt the school day.

The motivation which drove this research project is grounded in the wish of the MUT and the present researchers to see the College System and the accompanying reforms attain their envisaged objective of providing all our children with a quality education; of ensuring that all children do indeed succeed. Ultimately, the researchers share the MUT's desire in seeing the findings of this study feeding back into the process of policy-making to help improve the various initiatives and to facilitate an improved implementation process along the journey of innovation and change.

REVIEW OF KEY OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

INTRODUCTION

A review of the historical development of Maltese Education shows that the ultimate objective of the implementation of Maltese Educational reforms has always essentially been to augment the country's intellectual capital; a priority endorsed by successive Maltese Governments. The National Minimum Curriculum (Ministry of Education and Employment, 1999) clearly states:

"The educational system should equip all individuals with a balanced mix of wisdom, knowledge, skills and attitudes in order for them to operate effectively in today's and, particularly, tomorrow's world of work." (p.28)

The main educational landmarks in the history of Maltese Education are:

- The Compulsory Attendance Act of 1924
- The Compulsory Education Ordinance of 1946 that made school attendance compulsory until the age of 14
- Secondary education for all in 1970 (Sultana et al., 1997)
- Reviewing the school leaving age in 1974³
- The introduction of a National Minimum Curriculum in 1989/1990 (Wain, 1991) followed that of 1999 (Ministry of Education, 1999)
- The Setting up of School Networks in 2006 (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005).

The several major Educational Reforms that have been implemented throughout the years (especially those after September 1964⁴) continue to underline the mission of the Ministry of Education as an agent of change.

³ The compulsory school leaving age was raised to 16 in 1974.

⁴ The Maltese Archipelago became Independent on the 21st September 1964.

1. MALTESE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The Maltese Education system (from Kindergarten to University shown in Table 1 below) together with its examination system followed the British model very closely (Sultana et al., 1997; Zammit Ciantar, 1993; Zammit Mangion, 1992) because of Malta's Colonial past. Three different organizations⁵ (which form the tripartite system of Maltese compulsory education) offer Maltese students the opportunity to receive an education. Education is free of charge for students attending government educational institutions.⁶ Church Schools may ask parents for annual contributions to fund school projects (Sultana et al., 1997). On the other hand, those students who attend Independent Schools are charged fees. The parents of these students are now receiving a tax relief when they submit their annual income tax returns.

2. THE MALTESE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM (PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE)

The Maltese Education System is a tripartite system of state, church and independent schools. About 30 per cent of students attend non-state schools and pay fees or make a donation. State school education is provided free of charge. All kindergarten and primary state schools are co-educational, while all secondary state schools are either for boys or for girls.

The Maltese educational system was and, in certain areas, still is, a centralized one, in that the Government has the right to establish the National Minimum Curriculum of study for the schools (Ministry of Education, 1999). Studies (e.g. Farrugia, 1992; Wain, 1991; Zammit Mangion, 1992) give evidence of the highly centralized and bureaucratic characteristics of the Maltese state educational system. The Education Division, the principal sector of the Ministry, is responsible in terms of the Education Act (1988), for the provision of an efficient and effective system of schools which, whilst ensuring education and training in areas relevant to the needs of Maltese society, affords the individual without any distinction of age, gender, belief or

⁵ State Schools, Church Schools and Independent Schools.

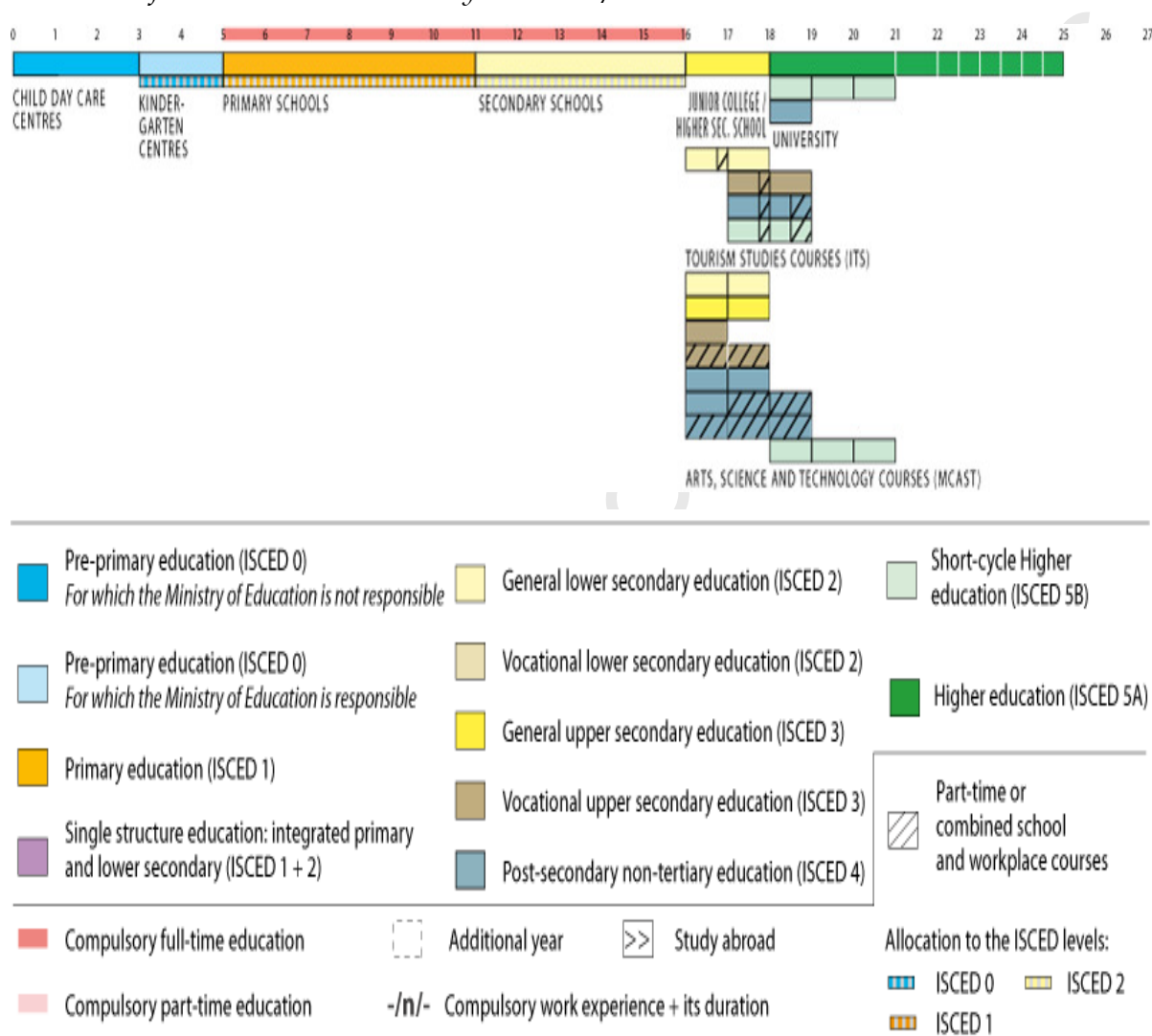
⁶ Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary state schools, Naxxar Higher Secondary, University Junior College, MCAST and University of Malta.

economic means, the opportunity to develop his/her full cognitive, affective and operative potential to prepare students for life, including their working life.

Table 1

The post 2010 structure of the Maltese mainstream education system

Structure of the national education system 2011/12



© Eurydice (2010)

ISCED stands for 'International Standards Classification of Education'

The Education Act (1988) states that it is the duty and right of the State to:

- ensure the existence of a system of schools and institutions accessible to all Maltese citizens for the full development of the whole personality, including the ability of every person to work;
- establish the national minimum curriculum of studies for all schools.⁷

However, embarking on a review of the education system by transforming it into a new framework that was to make it more relevant and effective for the needs of the Maltese children and Malta, for the past two decades or so, the Ministry of Education has been promoting decentralization in the educational system so that decisions are taken at school level and action becomes more effective (Zammit Ciantar, 1996).

In 1989/1990 the Ministry published the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC). Considering that it stipulated the teaching content in all subjects (Fenech, 1994), this NMC appeared to be rather prescriptive because it stipulated what teachers should teach.

In 1994 the Minister appointed a Consultative Committee on Education, which submitted a report entitled *Tomorrow's Schools: developing effective learning cultures* (Wain et al., 1995). The participative, democratic vision synonymous with this document was followed by the publication of the NMC (Ministry of Education, 1999), which indicated the educational areas that needed to be addressed to equip the child with the skills required to appreciate the values of democracy and solidarity. The strategic plan for the NMC (Ministry of Education, 2001) not only outlined the need for new structures and approaches but also underlined the necessity for schools to synergize, collaborate and share good practice. It also

⁷ In March of 1996, the Minister of Education, Youth and Employment initiated a consultative exercise aimed at revising the National Minimum Curriculum (published in 1989/1990), and presenting a draft curriculum document to the Minister of Education. The National Minimum Curriculum was eventually launched in 1999 (Ministry of Education, 1999). A National Steering Committee, chaired by Professor Kenneth Wain, was set up to propose a strategy for the implementation of the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2001).

highlighted the importance of allowing schools and teachers enough “space for autonomous initiatives” and give the:

“Maltese learners their entitlement with the equally important objective of facilitating school-based curriculum development.” (Ministry of Education, 2001; p. 7)

The reform process that Maltese Education has been going through since 1964 has, in the last decade, reached an extremely significant stage in its journey. These reforms ensure that education in Malta will cater “for the specific needs of the student as an individual” (Galea, 2006; p. 4) and reinforce the implementation of the decentralization policy, made public in the Government’s programme when outlined by the then President of Malta, his Excellency Prof Guido de Marco, in 2003.

One appreciates that the whole notions of collaboration, cooperation, working together are words that have surfaced only recently on the local educational scene, particularly since the publication of the NMC back in 1999, when educators and decision-makers started to realise that real change can only be brought about if people start working in a different way. After the publication of this NMC (Ministry of Education, 1999), which was followed by other documents that included the document *For All Children to Succeed: New Network Organisation for Quality Education in Malta* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005) which introduced the whole notion of networking, initiated the drafting of the new amendments to the Education Act which was later ratified as *The Education (Amendment) Act 2006* (Education Act, 2006).

3. NETWORKING

The present day paradigm of networking can be considered as the most important organisational form of contemporary life, since networks are all about efforts of people working together, collaborative efforts to know what is happening, to identify issues, improve existing practice and stimulate a culture of sharing good

practices to strengthen the teaching and learning process. In educational settings, networks have been characterised as:

“purposeful social entities characterised by a commitment to quality, rigour, and a focus on standards and student learning.” (Hopkins, 2005; cited in Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005; p. 37)

Consequently, the Maltese Education Ministry identified networks as a way of bringing people together (Ministry of Education Youth and Employment, 2005). Networks have been considered learning communities because:

“they provide the mechanism for us to learn from our peers and the space to develop effective and innovative practice.” [Fullan, (2004) cited in *ibid.*, p. 37]

They can encourage educators from different school environments to collaborate in various aspects of school life, and consequently should improve the ways in which they meet the needs of all learners. To this end, collective commitment and the sharing of best practices which are disseminated amongst schools and the wider community may improve pupil achievement.

Networking facilitates horizontal and vertical linkages between schools from early childhood to Form five. This is basically the concept of the College Reform in Malta. Predetermined childcare centres, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools are tied and woven horizontally and also vertically, with the coordination of the Heads of School led by the College Principal, under the direction of the Directorates, which in turn are guided by the Permanent Committee for Education chaired by the Minister for Education.

The network is seen as the main organisational form that can give depth and scale to the process of transformation. Networking based on communication is meant to *“...mediate between centralised and decentralised structures...”* (Hopkins, 2000) and should help learning communities free themselves from central control and bureaucracy. When in 2005, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment launched the document *For All Children to Succeed* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005) it was endorsing the Government’s policy by addressing the

issues of autonomy and decentralization of state schools, and the Maltese College Reform.

4. "FOR ALL CHILDREN TO SUCCEED: A NEW NETWORK ORGANISATION FOR QUALITY EDUCATION IN MALTA"

The document *For All Children to Succeed* (ibid.) set out the Government's strategy to transform the existing educational system into one that would foster new professional personalities who will be ready to embrace any innovative changes that may be introduced, and learning communities that would provide the appropriate scenario to ensure quality education for all. This document argues that by designing the Maltese state school system around networks *all* children can be helped to succeed; that all young people can be educated for the unprecedented global society that awaits them when they come of age. It considers school networks as learning communities that can be in a better and stronger position to meet the needs of Maltese students because they will work in partnership with one another, share resources, jointly solve problems and create new practices within the specific and particular context of a group of schools forming one whole unit.

The College Reform is complemented by the structural evolution of the Education Division. *For All Children to Succeed* proposes a restructured education authority that will help support school leaders and educators for dialogue and participate in establishing future policies and methods that will enhance the teaching and learning process where it matters: within schools in general and networks in particular. To this end, this document set out a number of challenges that aimed at bringing about fundamental changes in the way people relate to and work with each other, the way decision making is undertaken, the need to establish a strong orientation to collective values, particularly a collective sense of responsibility.

This official document (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005) also proposed the retention of the Junior Lyceum exam. However, the document also

postulated that the format, syllabi and other related areas that will make the exam a graded one will be modified and that the exam will develop “into a compulsory national benchmarking exercise” (ibid.; p. xx). However, the proposal to retain the Junior Lyceum exam has been abandoned since this was held for the last time in June of 2010.

The Primary state schools are the feeder schools of the Secondary Schools and together these make up the complement of the cluster of schools within a particular College. This new way of organizing our educational system is meant to ensure that children will begin and finish their education in the same College (unless the family moves to another region) and they will move from Primary to Secondary level with the least possible tension and pressure through internal exams, control and accountability. This should ensure continuity. Policy-makers thought that this was an important educational issue for parents who wanted a clear picture of the child’s educational path from kinder, through primary to secondary.

Inevitably, there has been a certain degree of opposition and criticism to this Reform by certain parents who were apprehensive about the effects of the Reform. Some parents were, and still are, concerned about the new system of mixed ability classes, the abolishment of streaming and the introduction of setting for the core subjects at the secondary level. No amount of official assurances seems to have appeased these parents and indeed all those who have not been convinced that all children will profit from these reforms. Hence, it is not unreasonable to highlight the dire need for research (especially of a prospective or retrospective longitudinal nature) in this area to address questions such as: Is the new system of continuity from the primary level to the secondary sector working and in what way? How satisfied are the parents with the discontinuity of the Junior Lyceum Examination and the introduction of benchmarking? Will setting in a subject facilitate the mobility of students between sets from one year to another or will students placed in a set remain in the same set throughout?

For All Children to Succeed (ibid.), which is divided into five chapters, presents a number of aspects and factors within school networks and a restructured education authority as follows:

Chapter 1 presents a list of ten achievements in Maltese Education attained in the last twenty years or so and an equal number of challenges that these achievements have created. Among the fields in which Maltese Education has registered achievement and taken on new challenges are The National Curriculum, Inclusion, Governance, Early Childhood Education and the Local Communities.

Chapter 2 focuses on the Central Education Entities – the Malta Education Directorate (MED), now known as the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE), and the Educational Services Directorate (ESD) now known as the Directorate for Educational Services (DES). The chapter presents the Mission Statement of the Ministry of Education in the transformation of the Maltese Education System and the main functions of the two Directorates.

Chapter 3 addresses the proposed college networks. The areas dealt with include the relevance of Networks in 21st Century Maltese society, the factors that will foster successful networks, the focus on the child and having the right leaders and managers for the networks to work.

Chapter 4 deals with the question of ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches, the shift from centralisation to decentralisation, the benefits of networking which this shift demands and the proposed characteristics of school networks in the Maltese Islands.

Chapter 5 presents a number of School Networks Models. These different models of the proposed network organization for the Maltese education system are presented in graphical representations. One notices that all the proposed models show a common hierarchical administrative structure and a similar flow of power

and role positions for the proposed network leaders. The proposed models identify three innovative administrative posts and structures: The College Board, the College Principal and the Council of Heads. These three different structures in the administrative hierarchy of schools and colleges is a first for the Maltese education system.

4.1 The College Board

Every College was to have a College Board, but so far this is still not in place. All the members of this board⁸ shall be appointed by the Minister. Its terms of office, as provided for in The Act, are:

- Their term of office shall be for three years and the members of the Board may be reappointed for other term/s.
- It will not have executive powers but will simply be a consultative Board.
- It will support the College, on which it sits, to acquire the required services and resources.
- It will have the right to request information about the functioning and the development of the College.
- It will have the right to ask questions and clarification on educational processes of programmes conducted in the schools within the College.
- It will give direction and will help the College Principal reflect.
- It will also discuss the Business Plan and the Financial Estimates of the College before being presented to the Directorates for their consideration.

Schools are not isolated institutions but:

“exist within a context of parents, community, school districts, other educational organizations and institutions, and levels of government” (Stoll and Fink, 2003; p. 133).

In this era of change and innovation the child stands to benefit when school leaders reach out to the community beyond the boundary walls of their institutions. Schools

⁸ They will not be less than five, but not more than seven, and one of whom shall be the President of the Board.

should reap beneficial results when they network and create partnerships beyond the confines of their internal environment. Interacting and collaborating with the external community enables the “schools to maintain a firm notion of current reality” (ibid., p. 134). To this effect, the structure of the Maltese College Reform provides for this interaction because the College Boards will be composed of members from outside the school community. The Boards will not only have representatives of educators who are experienced in the field of education but also successful and committed persons from the community of that particular College. The College Board will have members from the Industry, Civil Society and other protagonists in the community. They will bring the world outside the College into the College and according to the Director General, Directorate for Educational Services, these members will serve as:

“critical friends who can constructively show us, enlighten us, as to what can be done better, what can be improved, bring new ideas, a new injection of life and energy into the College.” (Cutajar, 2009; p. 24)

Here it is pertinent to point out that the College Boards have to this day not been introduced. Considering that the College Boards are not yet in place, one may say that the colleges could very well be losing out because the collaboration with the outside school community is missing one of its most important links; a link that could very well bridge the gap that exists between the schools and the village/town community. Furthermore, the colleges will remain to some extent detached from the realities outside the confines of their schools. Just as the institution of School Councils (composed of parents and educators) was a step in the right direction, the College Boards can reinforce and develop further the existing limited collaboration between schools and the outside community that began with the inception of the School Councils. Ironically, *For All Children to Succeed* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005) underlines the concept of collaboration with parents or guardians. It recognises the benefits parents and others can gain from networking with the schools. It proposes that parents and schools partake in this networking experience because it will enhance the “child’s educational journey” (ibid., p. xx). Furthermore, considering that

schools are at the heart of all education systems, that they lay the foundations for the societies of the future, that they play a crucial role in forming the citizens of the future, the setting up of these Boards is of paramount importance because educators, parents and outsiders can work together so that the objective set by the document itself, that all children will succeed, can be reached.

The College Board will not have the power to take decisions. The power of decision making will remain first and foremost the jurisdiction of the Permanent Committee for Education⁹. Policy direction is given by the Permanent Committee for Education and this is manifested with the day to day running within the two directorates. So when it comes to general and national decisions vis-à-vis education, these are basically the responsibility of the Directorate for Education Services. Indeed, the College Board:

- cannot change a national policy and take a College onto a different route. So the board will have a clear framework within which to operate.
- will not have the power to change the direction of a particular school as they see fit. The structure and framework will be there and the College Board has to operate within that framework.
- will have the space, the flexibility and power to challenge what is going on in the schools, but within that framework of accountability as established by the NMC.

4.2 The College Principal

The Education Act (2006) makes provision for a College Principal, a new post in the hierarchical managerial structure of the Colleges. The Principal is appointed by the

⁹ Provision for this Committee is made by the *Education (Amendment) Act 2006* Cap.327, Part II, Article 17 (1):636 (Education Act, 2006).

Minister of Education on a three year contract that can be renewed. He/she chairs the Council of Heads of Schools that make-up the College. He/she facilitates the coordination and organization of activities, programmes, projects and specialisation at both the College and school levels. The College Principal shall be:

- the Chief Executive Officer of the College.
- accountable to the Directors General for the performance of his/her functions and of the College.
- accountable to the College Board in matters that fall under the remit of the Board.
- the facilitator of the whole process of collaboration and reflection. The facilitator of the paradigm shift.

The Principal is the curricular leader within the College and is responsible for the educational journey from beginning to end within the compulsory years; that is, he/she is responsible for the education of a child entering Kindergarten and leaving at Form V. Although his/her functions are many and are listed in the Education Act (2006), the bottom line is that he/she is designated to bring together the teaching and learning community within the College.

Considering the remit of the College Principal as stipulated in the Education Act (ibid.), one gains insight into the demanding responsibilities that the position brings with it, especially that of fostering collaboration and collegiality. Networking and collaboration has to take place because they address social and personal relationships. Building this relationship and collaboration is not an easy task, especially since this necessitates a change in the mindset of the stakeholders in order for it to take place. The Principal shall:

- ensure that the functions of the College are being accomplished.
- be the mentor of the Heads of school within the College.
- create opportunities for inter-school collaboration and collaborate with local and foreign institutions.

- prepare a business plan for three years and the annual estimates of the College and its schools, and apportion the funds according to the needs of the schools.
- present reports on the activity of the College.
- preside over the Council meetings of Heads of School and draw up the agenda for these meetings.
- create partnerships with other non-State colleges or schools.
- create a paradigm shift in the way of thinking, the way of believing, the way of operating, the way of leading schools.

Although the College Principal is accountable to the Minister (since by law the Minister is responsible for the portfolio he/she has been given) there is a whole structure between the College Principal and the Minister. The Minister presides over the Permanent Committee for Education, which is there to give strategic vision to the Education sector, not solely in the compulsory area but also of MCAST and the National Commission for Higher Education. This is the forum whereby major education policy decisions are taken after consultation with the grassroots and those in areas connected with education. Then there is the structure of the two Directorates. The College Principals are accountable to both Director Generals through a communication structure. Although the College Reform is the structure for decentralization, the Education Directorates (represented by the Directors General and their Directors and other officials) will be the point of reference for direction, syllabi and other policies.

The new post of College Principal in the hierarchical structure of the Colleges is an important component in the educational system and the College Reform. The law compels the Principal to hold a monthly meeting for all the Heads of school in the College. The aim of this clause in the law was to ensure that such meetings are adhered to and not neglected. So the Principal, as the leader of a College, needs to establish good relations with the Heads, in the same way a Head needs to establish good relations with his/her SMT and teaching personnel to establish collaborative

practice in his/her school. Indeed, it is imperative for a leader to instil a collaborative spirit among his/her colleagues and members of staff. This collaborative spirit needs to be instilled just like one needs to instil a sense of respect.

The Principal has to be close to the Heads that he/she leads and is required to work with the Heads of School in the College to a point that each and every Head will no longer feel isolated in the running of the school or in the process of decision taking. The Principal has to be there for the Heads and they have to feel that they can rely on him/her for the support that they need. As a result of the Council of Heads, Heads should feel they can share ideas which have an impact not only at College and school level but also on a National Level. The networking of the schools as Colleges not only enables the bringing together of the various schools within the College but is meant to transform the role of the Head of School in that he/she is now a member of a forum where he/she participates in the decision taking on a regional level.

4.2.1 The Education Leaders Council

The document *For All Children to Succeed* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005) does not make any reference to the Education Leaders Council. This council does not have a statutory status but is recognised as an official entity where the Principals and the Directors¹⁰ within the two Directorates meet with the two Directors General. The Directors General lead the Education Leaders Council that meets to ensure:

- synergy
- that the policy coming forth from the Permanent Committee for Education is being understood as much as possible by all and in the same manner.

This forum brings together the top officials within the education sector: the Directors General, Directors and College Principals. The College Principal operates within this

¹⁰ The six Directors are for: Curriculum & eLearning, Quality Assurance, Research & Development, Student Services, Human Resources Development, and School Resources Management.

whole structure of support and accountability and has a say in all the decision making processes that take place within his/her College. The Council also offers a forum where College Principals come in direct contact with the Directors and individual contact with both Directors General. It is also said to serve as a forum where the Principals share and evaluate their College practices. Effectively, this forum should give them the space to be able to discuss their views and their situations, to grow professionally and possible way forward. Ultimately, the whole idea of actually meeting regularly to share concerns and good practices should help Principals to reinforce the model of shared leadership.

4.3 The Council of Heads

Both *For All Children to Succeed* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005) and The Education Act (2006) speak about the setting up of a Council of Heads composed of all Heads of both Primary and Secondary schools within the College. In fact, all ten colleges have a Council of Heads under the leadership of a Principal. This structure should in reality precipitate the decentralization concept because the Council of Heads, as proposed by the two official documents mentioned above, recognizes Heads as members of the Senior Management Team in the Directorates. The ideas and suggestions, together with what is discussed in the Council of Heads, are normally presented by the respective Principal at the Education Leaders Council, the committee where decisions are taken. As a result, the two documents require that Heads of School are given their due importance, responsibility, respect and a more participative role in the decision making in the field of Education in Malta.

The Council of Heads of School among other functions, shall:

- nurture a spirit of collegiality in the College while developing a common ethos and identity.
- identify the training needs of the teaching staff and plan staff development opportunities.
- ensure that the national educational policies are being effectively followed.

- create collaboration between the schools and the external community.
- ensure that schools use and share resources, facilities and services.

The Council of Heads as proposed in *For All Children to Succeed* (ibid.) can be considered as the heart of the College because the way the state of affairs are developing indicates that this process starts from the meetings of the Council. This forum creates a scenario where the Heads come together and in a collegial atmosphere introduce and discuss ideas and policies. Also, what actually happens in the various schools is meant to be discussed during these meetings. Effectively, all members should feel responsible for all the schools within the College and not merely of one's school. This new structure in the College has ushered in a new dimension to the concept of responsibility and accountability in so far that a Head of School, in the capacity of a school administrator, no longer works and lives in isolation but has acquired a new frame of mind - one of shared responsibility; in other words of shared leadership. The forum should offer a learning experience of how to work with others for a common goal.

Consequently, the tangible reality of the Council of Heads is that it can offer room for personal development because it can motivate a good Head of School to recognise the importance and validity of fortnightly or monthly administrative meeting to take stock of what is happening in the school, and then meet with individual groups over matters that relate only to their area. The matters emerging from meetings with individuals or groups are normally placed for discussion in the meetings organized for the school so that everyone can be able to offer an input. Although there may seem to be an element of homogeneity in all this, one may argue that this is not the case since every school is encouraged to retain its own character because schools are affected by the human dynamic. That is, every Head leads a school according to his/her personal values and beliefs. Thus, in this regard the schools can retain a certain degree of autonomy.

Although the Council of Heads has given the responsibility of the Head (the curricular leader within a school) a new dimension with which he/she feels responsible not merely for his/her school but for all the schools within the College, this paradigm shift may create tension, and uncertainty. Again, this area offers room for research investigating the stakeholders' appreciation of the validity of the Council or of ways of how to improve the existing functions of the Council so that the objective of educational success can be improved and sustained.

For All Children to Succeed (ibid.) also contains foreword messages that present the vision of network policy and views and direction to be taken as expressed by the policy-makers and leaders in the Ministry and the Education Division on issues of decentralisation, networking and the question of delegating more autonomy to the schools and Colleges in the future. The overall claim of the document is that school networks are beneficial to innovative reforms and change management.

5. THE EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) ACT 2006

In 2006 the Government presented a Bill entitled *the Education (Amendment) Act 2006* to amend the Education Act (1988). Its aim was to sanction and execute the radical educational reforms that were meant to help the Maltese education system change from a hierarchical, apex governed structure, to a new network organisation and delegate more autonomy to the schools and colleges. The Education Act (2006) established inter-school networking in all State Schools in the Maltese Islands, grouping them into ten regional Colleges. In so doing the reform was intended to improve the quality and standards of education in Malta.

The Education Act (ibid.) makes provision for the necessary amendments and legal framework for the following.

- The Constitution and Functions of the Directors General.
- The Teachers' Profession.
- The duty of the State to provide Education.

- The re-organisation of the existing kindergarten, primary, secondary and the then 'grammar' school-type Junior Lyceum state schools into autonomous regional colleges.
- The Establishment and Functions of the National Commission for Higher Education.
- The University of Malta.
- The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology.
- Officers and Staff of the Entities.
- Financial Provisions.
- Other Provisions.

5.1 The Constitution and Functions of the Two Directors General

The review of the education system necessitated not only finding the best possible formula to provide continuity on the child's educational journey, but also a source of accountability along that journey. Education in Malta had to undergo a radical change at both school level as well as the central level if Malta's education was to ensure quality education for all. At school level the roadmap of reform has transformed the schools on the Maltese Islands into networking clusters (i.e. the Colleges), and at central level it restructured the Education Division (at times referred to as The Centre) into two independent yet complementary entities.

The Education Act (2006) makes provisions for the constitution of two Directorates:

- The Directorate for Educational Services (DES)
- The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE)

The rationale for the constitution of these two directorates is to ensure that the operator and regulator were distinct entities. The DES focuses on the administration of schools, while the DQSE focuses on quality and standards. This means that the Education's central authority could no longer assume the dual role of operator and regulator, as it had always been the case in the past. Moreover, the restructuring of the Education Division was meant to bring the central authority closer to the

realities of the schools and at the same time strengthen the Education Division. This restructuring was also intended to involve 'The Centre' more and more in school life.

5.1.1 Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE)

The statutory mission of this Directorate, which focuses on the provision of the programmes and educational services in the compulsory educational levels provided by schools on the Maltese Islands, is fourfold:

- To regulate
- To establish
- To monitor
- To assure standards and quality.

The Act (ibid.) also stipulates the functions and responsibilities of the DQSE. In summary these are:

- Propose a National Curriculum Framework.
- Provide guidelines for the Schools' Development that will ensure a better implementation of the education policy and services – such as syllabi, examinations and assessments.
- Ensure the necessary professional training and development for the execution of the curriculum.
- Compile, analyse and research information, data and statistics as basis for the drafting and the planning of policies, strategies, guidelines and directives in education. The Directorate is to ensure that all this is made accessible to whoever may have an interest.
- Implement inspection, evaluation and external audit of educational programmes and services of the operations undertaken and of the physical environment of every school. This is to ensure adherence to the curriculum, the promotion of good practices and that the students are the focus of the educational journey so that all children will succeed.

- Evaluate and assess the operation and results of colleges and schools and their members of staff.
- Ensure that the provisions of the laws and regulations dealing with educational matters are implemented as stipulated in the law.
- Evaluate financial and economic aspects of the educational system.
- Ensure that educators apply and make the best possible use of available information technology systems.
- Receive and process licence applications for the opening of schools, advise the Minister on the existing situation and keep a register of all the schools on the Maltese Islands.
- Ensure the adherence to the national minimum conditions by all schools.
- Investigate and take the necessary steps when the suspension of a school licence is under consideration.
- Implement other matters for the attainment of objectives and the execution of duties of the State as stipulated in the Act.

5.1.2 Directorate for Educational Services (DES)

The statutory mission of this Directorate, which is recognised as the operator, is to address the administration of State schools and Colleges and supply the Maltese learning communities with the necessary professional and qualified educators at both the administrative and teaching levels. It will also provide the necessary complement of counsellors and career guidance services. This Directorate is to provide the physical resources: the building of schools that form a College and the resources that are needed for the school and colleges to achieve their mission.

The School Building Development Plan, which caters for the building of schools needed for the College Reform to have its full complement of the physical resources, is divided into two phases and spans over ten years (2006 – 2015). Between 2006 and 2010 the DES has built a number of Boys Secondary Schools, one Primary school and started the refurbishment of one existing Boys Secondary School. Phase Two of this Plan (between 2011 and 2015), envisages the building of two new Girls and three

Boys Secondary schools, as well as a number of Primary schools, apart from the refurbishment or extension of existing schools.

The mission of this Directorate as stipulated in the Education Act (2006) is to:

- Ensure that services are delivered effectively and efficiently to the Colleges and their respective schools in accordance with policy framework of decentralisation and autonomy.

However, it is relevant to point out that decentralisation seems to be limited because of certain praxis. These include the right of the Maltese Government to establish the National Minimum Curriculum of study for the schools (Ministry of Education, 1998), and more specifically to recruit, deploy, discipline and promote members of staff in State schools, and by a number of provisions in the Education Act (ibid.):

1. The function of the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE), as the regulator, whose mission is to scrutinise the educational programmes of the colleges and schools (ibid., Cap.327 Part II).
2. The ratification of the Permanent Committee for Education whose remit is to set out national policy direction and the power of decision-making vis-à-vis Maltese education (ibid., Part II).

The general function of the DES as laid down in the Act is to provide and allocate human and material resources that schools and colleges may need to fulfil their educational mission. It is to provide also all the required learning and ancillary support tools that will facilitate the educational journey of the child and the collaboration among State schools and educational institutions. Articles 10, 11 and its subsections 1 and 2 [(a) to (x)] of the *Education (Amendment) Act 2006, Cap.327, Part II* also lays down a number of other functions, twenty-four in all. In particular the DES has to:

- Provide the necessary physical structures, their modernisation and regular maintenance, for the conveyance of the teaching and learning process.

- Ensure the engagement of the professional, administrative and support personnel to facilitate the transmission of the educational programmes.
- Collaborate with the colleges and schools and reinforce inter-school and inter-college networking, collaboration and collegiality.
- Foster a collaborative mindset between teachers, students and parents by setting-up School Councils and forming partnerships with parents, the wider community and non-State colleges or schools.
- Provide the services of Counsellors, social workers, psychologists and other professional persons as required by the students and their parents or guardians.
- Allocate the necessary financial funds, always within the limits of the Annual Government budget.
- Administer state aid to non-State schools.
- Ensure a customer care service for all stakeholders in the educational sector.

5.2 The Constitution and Functions of the Colleges of State Schools

The Education Act (2006), among other educational reforms, shaped the existing local schools into networks because its architects perceived that networks support educational innovation by mediating between centralised and decentralised policy initiatives (Hopkins, 2005). It makes provision for the necessary legal framework for re-organising the existing kindergarten, primary, secondary and 'grammar' school-type junior lyceum state schools into colleges:

"...there shall be established those Colleges...which shall network within them State boys and girls schools" (ibid. Part V, Article 49:656).

The road map of the clustering of Maltese state-schools into ten regional colleges (see Fig 1 below) spreads across three stages between 2005 and 2007. Four pilot colleges were established in October 2005 and the full complement of 10 regional Colleges was in place by October 2007. In February 2008 the outstanding vacant posts of Principal were filled to bring the complement to ten.

REGIONAL STATE COLLEGES ON THE MALTESE ISLANDS

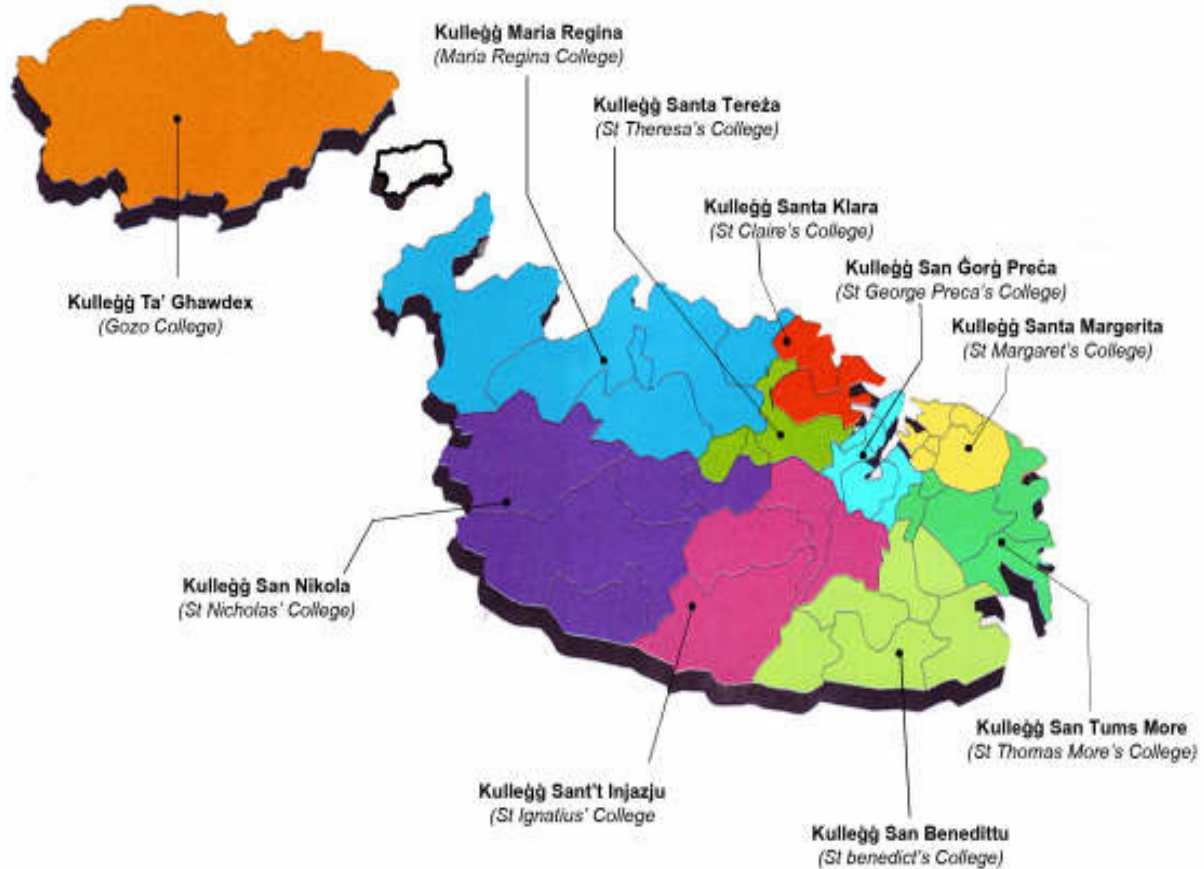


Fig. 1
The location of the 10 colleges sanctioned by *The Education (Amendment) Act 2006*

The Act also establishes that the Colleges are to be legally represented by their Principal unless the Principal appoints someone as his/her representative.

Each College has a number of statutory functions:

- Ensure the continuous and smooth process of Education to all children that have a right for this education.
- Ensure the accountability of all educators partaking in the teaching and learning process.
- Maintain high results and standards.

- Foster a culture of dialogue, collaboration and team work.
- Ensure the implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum.
- Foster a culture of reflection and internal educational auditing.
- Ensure the supply of resources, services and facilities required for the teaching and learning process.
- Ensure good conduct, discipline together with a secure and safe environment.
- Ensure the timely recruitment of the required members of staff; administrator, teachers and the necessary professional psychosocial and support staff needed to provide the required services.
- Promote collaboration with parents to form an effective home-school partnership.
- Organise an effective customer care service.
- Promote and provide facilities for the organisation of extra-curricular activities.
- Foster a culture towards change.

5.2.1 The Governance and Accountability Structures of the College

The Education Act (2006) sanctions the concept of decentralization in a number of areas, which gives the State Colleges and schools more freedom of governance. It gives each of the Colleges “...*legal and distinct personality*...” [ibid., Cap.327 Article 50 (1):C656] and provides a legal framework to the question of governance in the Colleges. Articles 52 to 57 of the 2006 Amendment to the Law make provisions for this, namely:

- a consultative College Board,
- a College Principal, as the Chief Executive Officer of the College, who is accountable to the College Board,
- a Council of Heads, formed by the Heads of all the primary and secondary schools within the college, who is accountable to the Principal,
- and that all the educators of the college involved in the educational journey of their students will be accountable for their actions and teaching.

5.2.2 Partnerships

The Education Act (2006) places the onus on the Principal of the College to establish partnerships with non-State educational institutions which may take the form of sharing resources and exchanges of experience and good practice. This implies opening up the boundaries of the State system.

The Act (ibid.) also empowers College Principals to embark on such cooperation with non-State educational institutions which will benefit the students. The law provides and creates this flexibility and space for the formation of partnerships with non-State institutions. This possibility of forming collaboration and having both State and non-State representatives in the College System is also underlined by the policy document *For All Children to Succeed*.

5.2.3 Autonomy of Colleges

Article 57 of the Education Act (2006) makes provision for a certain degree of autonomy for the Colleges. The Minister and Directorates are to continue to foster the decentralisation process (embarked upon about two decades ago) in the Colleges and their schools.

It is significant to say that this autonomy acknowledges the positive effects of this empowerment even though it may be in a limited form since this autonomy is to be granted as long as the Colleges work within the parameters of the national targets and strategies as set out in the national policy.

5.3 Government and Malta Union of Teachers Agreement of July 2007

It is not unreasonable to argue that the Malta is a highly unionized country, not least in the education sector. Clearly, Unions are there to safeguard their members and look to their needs. By implication, Unions can play an important role in the professional development of their members. In this agreement, the Union (i.e. the MUT) does not only focus on the well-being of its members and improving their conditions of work but also on their professional development. The agreement

compels the Education Authorities to fill the posts stipulated in the agreement to which both the Ministry and the Education Division were signatories.

5.3.1 Professional Development for Teachers and members of the SMT

The agreement also caters for the professional growth of members of the school Senior Management Team (SMT) and teachers. The objective of such professional development could very well facilitate the change that Maltese education is experiencing (see Bezzina and Cassar 2003; Bezzina et al., 2009). A case in point is the half day seminar on *Enhancing Learning through Formative Assessment* organised for Heads and Assistant Heads of Non-State Primary Schools organized by the Educational Assessment Unit within the Department for Curriculum Management on the 6th March 2006 (Letter Circular DCM 25/2006). Another example is the one and a half hours each week that Primary School teacher will dedicate to curriculum development. Such sessions could take the shape of various formats such as individual sessions whereby a teacher might be reading an article that could be stimulating and the teachers might be asked to give their views and reflections on this article. It could be done in a pair work activity or a group or across the same year group, across different year groups, with another school, with another College, etc.

5.3.2 Recruitment of staff

The main aim of this agreement was to facilitate the implementation of an education reform process as set out in the official document *For All Children to Succeed*. To achieve this the agreement is meant to create the flexibility, the space and the forum to seek the persons with the right skills, attitudes, values and qualities that will fill the various posts in the different sectors within the education system. The agreement makes provisions for the posts in all the educational sectors:

- Directorates - Directors General
 - a. DQSE - Directors, Education Officers, Principal Education Officers, Assistant Directors and College Principals

- b. DES – Directors, Service Managers, School Counsellors, College Prefect of Discipline, teacher-mentors in the secondary sector. Mentoring in the Primary sector is to be carried out by the Head or Assistant Head
- Early Childhood Education and Care
 - a. Kindergarten Assistant I & II
 - b. Early Childhood Education and Care Teacher
- Primary and Secondary Education
 - a. Teachers
 - b. Activity teachers
 - c. College Head of Department
 - d. Assistant Head of School
 - e. Head of School
- Inclusive and Special Education
 - a. Learning Support Assistant I & II
 - b. Teacher in Resource Centre for Students with Special Needs
 - c. Inclusive Education Coordinator
 - d. Head of Resource Centres
- Other Posts
 - a. Task Officers if the need arises
 - b. Temporary teachers

The agreement makes provisions for the Education Authorities to engage, as the need arise, professional personnel that offer psycho-social services. The mentioned personnel are: Psychologists, Counsellors, Career Advisors, Social Workers, Prefects of Discipline and Youth Workers.

The agreement also addresses the well-being of all the stakeholders involved in the education of the students, whether in schools, resource centres, colleges or at a national level. This is addressed by the setting up of the Professional Support Services for Education Personnel (Counselling and Legal Services), in accordance with the policies of the DES.

It also draws attention to the benefits that Colleges will gain from School Councils and Student Councils. School Councils will foster and reinforce collaboration between the outside communities and the schools, while the Student Councils will give the students a voice, serve as the arena for personal development and encourage the students to shoulder more responsibilities because they are the voice of their fellow students.

The agreement places the onus on the Education Authorities to consult the Union on matters dealing with issues of assessing, profiling and portfolios and the Performance Management Program of all the stakeholders covered by the Agreement.

Colleges are to have a precincts officer and supporting staff to manage technical and maintenance issues.

5.4 Government and Malta Union of Teachers Agreement of August 2010

This latest agreement (which built on the 2007 collective agreement) not only clarified various points in the 2007 document but also includes a schedule of increases in allowances. The agreement covers all State educational staff, ranging from schools' management teams to kindergarten assistants. It also focuses on the professional development of teachers, the mentoring of new teachers and even the introduction of health and safety representatives in schools.

CONCLUSION

The key official documents related to the College Reform reviewed above identify a number of targets and themes most of which can be considered as central to the success of the College System and the accompanying reforms. These include:

- Decentralisation
- Greater autonomy to colleges and their schools
- Freedom of good governance at school, college, and directorate level
- Networking (sharing of good practices in teaching, facilities, and resources)
- Interacting and collaborating with the external community
- The role of the Principal
- The role of the Head of School
- The Council of Heads
- The Directorates
- Increased range of professional roles (some of them new) [e.g. Precincts Officer, Prefect of Discipline, Youth Workers]
- Physical structures and resources
- Nurturing a new mindset among education personnel – commitment to change
- Facilitating a quality leap in how schools operate
- Internal and external reviews
- Abolition of streaming
- Mixed ability teaching
- Benchmarking
- Setting in core subjects (at the secondary level)
- New forms of assessment (e.g. profiling, portfolio)

The review of the key official documents shows that the Maltese Government and the Malta Union of Teachers are committed to the changes which Malta's education system is undergoing. Indeed, it would appear that all the stakeholders fundamentally agree with, and understand the importance of, the College Reform if our Educational System is to be relevant to present and future generations of

schoolchildren. However, while all stakeholders may agree on these general objectives, not all of them necessarily agree on how to get there. Consequently, it is perhaps inevitable that some degree of disagreement and even resistance should be encountered. Ultimately, what is important to acknowledge is that its success requires that all stakeholders have to give their all to make it work.

MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS

REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Education has no option but to change. Education of its very nature is an instrument for both the present and the future: a means to enhance social cohesion, a political instrument, a preparation for the world of work, both of a vocational nature as well as an academic one, a means to certify competencies, a means by which we give meaning and direction to life. Education gives us an identity. A changing world necessitates continuous reforms in education.

Several writers claim that it is natural for reforms to provoke an atmosphere of apprehension and resistance to change (e.g. Marris, 1975; Hall, 1999; Fullan, 2007). They argue that this is particularly so because of the possibility of imposition, misconceived perceptions about the purpose of the reforms and the timeframe in which these reforms are applied and actualized. Change challenges the status quo and requires a shift in our mindset, beliefs and practices. It was perhaps inevitable the College System and the accompanying reforms would give rise to several concerns which fed an on-going debate that has not been restricted to merely the stakeholders.

It is the purpose of this chapter to highlight the main points of the debate and the concerns that fueled it, as well as to review the available local research looking into various aspects of the College System and the accompanying reforms.

1. THE DEBATE

The College Reform and the accompanying changes have produced mixed reactions from various sectors including of course the various stakeholders. On the one hand there were those who are in full consonance with the objective of the 2006 amendments to the Education Act (Education Act, 2006) and the vision of its

architects. On the other hand there are those who are sceptical about the claim that school networks will stimulate *“more effective teaching and learning focus in classroom practice...”* (MUT Council, 2005; p. 8). Datnow et al. (2002) underline this reality when they claim:

“As a result of differential power and positionality, the definition or meaning of events by various actors can become contested terrain. Different opinions can surface over the course of actions that lead to reform.” (p. 29)

The complex character of the recommended changes and the challenges that Maltese educators have to face in changing the way they worked came to light in the School Network Reform sanctioned in 2006. The launching of the first four pilot network projects in October of 2005 brought about changes and challenges that provoked conflicting divergent stances by stakeholders, academics and the Malta Union of Teachers.

The unfolding debate highlighted a number of concerns such as:

- Had the Maltese school communities been well informed and prepared for the challenges that the ground-breaking reforms which the government was proposing for Maltese education would bring?
- With the schools network system (then) still in its very early stages, had there been time for a proper analysis before the draft legislation was presented in Parliament?
- Can one say that the process of inundating schools with on-going changes in various educational sectors did not leave room for reflection and time to re-evaluate developments in the educational system?
- Will clustering and networking enhance collegiality or will such organisations breed internal rivalry?
- Will the reform of the networks really address the core causes of underachievement and illiteracy in Malta?

The case in favour of the College Reform came mainly from:

- those stakeholders directly involved in its implementation and ensuring its sustainability,
- some of the School Networks' Coordinators of the first four pilot network projects,
- the education authorities.

One such Coordinator wrote in one of the local dailies:

"At College 'Six', schools work in partnership to enhance staff professional development, which in turn, enhances the quality of pupil learning." (The Times, 2006; p. 48)

Another coordinator, in an interview which appeared in one of the local weeklies, maintained that:

"The initial, all-important rationale of College 'One' was to develop a culture of open dialogue among all stakeholders: pupils and students, heads, assistant heads, all teaching personnel, parents, social workers, clerical staff, minor staff, school and local councils, support services, ecclesiastical community..."

It takes a whole village to educate a child. The overarching aim was to develop a shared value system of co-operation and collaboration to enhance learning and teaching at all levels, first and foremost in each school and classroom but also in the whole community in a perspective of lifelong learning." (Spiteri, 2006; p. 39)

Other individuals and institutions publicly pronounced their scepticism about whether the objective of the networks would actually be achieved. Sceptics from different quarters of Maltese society (academics, the Malta Union of Teachers and members of Parliament) expressed their reservations about the innovative networks reform for the Maltese Educational System. In their view, simply introducing reforms and giving them legal status would not improve the teaching and learning process or actually help all children attending Maltese schools to succeed. They believed that networks would not address the core causes of underachievement in Malta. It was contended that the College Reform was predominantly an organisational reform which needed to be complemented by reforms in other areas of the Maltese Educational System. In an interview, published in July 2005, one

university professor dwelt on a number of causes hindering the fulfilment of the teaching and learning process. In his opinion:

"while clustering should theoretically enhance collegiality, experience and ethnographic research show that such organisations can breed internal rivalry."
(Busuttil, 2005; p. 28)

This opinion finds justification, to a certain extent, in the findings of a research study presented in 2007:

"Among the findings, one cannot but fail to comment about the significant differences between Senior Management Teams and teaching personnel perceptions of the networked college of which they and their school had been forming part for one scholastic year when questionnaires were administered."
(Spiteri, 2007; p. 94)

The Shadow Minister for Education, during the debate on the *Education (Amendment) Act 2006* is reported to have asked in Parliament:

"with the colleges' system still in its very early stages, had there been time for a proper analysis before this draft legislation was moved?" (The Times, 2006; p. 14)

In its preliminary views and comments on the document *For all Children to Succeed* the Malta Union of Teachers stated that:

"...proposals in the document do not provide evidence that the changes that are envisaged to be made to the present structures and leading to the setting of school networks will stimulate more value to pupils' learning." (MUT Council, 2005; p. 8)

The Union maintained that those who could have really contributed (teachers, subject coordinators and other similar education personnel) to the proposed changes in the education system were not consulted (ibid.).

In addition to sceptics there are also those educators who are neither ready nor receptive to the idea of working in a group because they are both concerned and apprehensive about the workings of collaboration and collegiality, about this new teaching strategy. They are so apprehensive about the prospect of networking that they also concede fear and terror at the possibility of joining a group (Cutajar, 2009).

Then there are those educators for whom the momentum of change may create a problem. In such cases one has to consider not only the dynamics of the human factor but also the perceptions of those concerned educators who perceive networking as daunting, not least because they believe (or are convinced) that it will curb their freedom, their individuality, and their autonomy as professionals.

This diversified scenario of innovation, change and concern offers a fertile arena for research on a multitude of aspects related to the College System and the accompanying reforms. Indeed, in the forward of the document *For all Children to Succeed* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005) the then Minister of Education Youth and Employment had stated that periodic evaluation will be a must not only for the reforms to be owned but because this will empower the relevant leaders and personnel of the new colleges to provide improved quality education.

2. RESEARCH

Several writers have shown that academic research is essential because it is an informative experience since it helps to discover new knowledge (e.g. Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Fellows and Liu, 2008; Groat and Wang, 2002). This apart, one crucial role of research in this context of innovation and change should be to purposefully inform decision-making and the implementation process. It should serve as an important tool in providing an additional opportunity for stakeholders and policy-makers to engage in critical reflection, apart from identifying and facilitating any fine-tuning that might be necessary along the journey of innovation and change.

Since 2005, the local state of affairs in educational research has been exemplified by a series of studies (mostly small scale, some completed while others are still on-going) on the College System and related themes. In many ways this innovative and radical reform offered Maltese researchers the golden opportunity to direct their expertise and skills of exploration and enquiry at the various facets of the reform, not least to

determine whether this was actually helping to provide quality education for all Maltese students.

A considerable proportion of this body of research has been carried out by student researchers pursuing a post-graduate qualification at the University of Malta or from elsewhere. Indeed, it has become the norm, as it were, among academics and students of the Faculty of Education to place any change in the existing system of education under the microscope.

This corpus of research and publications (from 2007 to 2011) that has focused on the College Reform and accompanying changes consists of newspaper articles, books, unpublished long essays, dissertations and theses. This review constitutes neither an extensive nor an exhaustive account of all the available literature. What this review purports to be is an overview of the methodology and the main findings of a not insubstantial part of this body of research which was available to the researchers.

The reviewed studies offer an interesting and varied picture of researched topics and themes, although it emerges that the theme of leadership is the dominant area of research. This theme seems to have offered researchers the opportunity to study implications for the College Principals, the school management and the teachers as they experience the changes and challenges that the College Reform initiated.

This review covers long essays for the Post Graduate Diploma in Education (Administration and Management), MEd and MSc dissertations, and on-going PhD research studies with themes linked to the on-going College Reform.

2.1 Post Graduate Diploma in Education (Administration and Management) Long Essays

The corpus of unpublished research at this level and having the College Reform as its focal point used the questionnaire as its research instrument. Both the school Senior Management Team (i.e. the Head of School and Assistant Head/s [and College Heads of Department in the case of secondary schools]) and teachers made up the sample of respondents. On a general note the research sought to establish the effectiveness of communication between Heads of School and teachers. Here are some of the major findings.

- The relationship between the Head and members of staff impacts on the success of a school.
- Shared leadership and shared responsibility is advocated, particularly in solving problems. The outcome is a win-win situation.
- The professional conduct by all members of staff (including school leaders) is essential for effective communication.
- Teachers objected to the lack of consultation; they felt annoyed that decisions, which concern them, were being taken without being consulted in any way. Teacher respondents were also annoyed at the lack of compliments for their hard work, which they claimed was not forthcoming from SMT members. They also argued that had they been consulted they would have felt more of a part of the school community.
- Teachers complained that Heads of School lacked interpersonal skills. They claimed that effective use of interpersonal skills would enable the Head to manage working relationships more effectively and should lead to more successful achievement of goals.
- Many teachers recommended that SMT members (particularly the Head of School) should focus more on internal communication relationships because this would foster a positive school climate.

2.2 Master (MEd and MSc) Dissertations

In this category, the themes were more varied. Among the areas of study one finds the following:

- The Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of Heads of School.
- Addressing leadership challenges in dealing with the challenges that teachers teaching in a Junior Lyceum will have to face.
- The impact of the College Principal on Heads of School.
- How Heads of School view collaboration between the schools and the parents.
- Learning about the effect that Learning Networks had on school leaders.
- Analysing distributed leadership.

Researchers resorted to the more traditional and effective research instruments of the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview. Some researchers used either one or the other, there were others who employed both and some used also focus groups. The mix was various. There were some researchers who used the interview technique for in-depth exploration of the themes that emerged from the questionnaire. Some also used the triangulation method, usually combining quantitative and qualitative research designs. The target samples ranged from College Principals to teachers.

Considering the theme of the professional development of Heads of School, the majority of participants believed that CPD was an integral part of an educators' holistic professional well-being. SMT respondents and interviewees were convinced that networking helps them share professional development opportunities promoting collaboration between schools. Most of the respondents and interviewees recognised the importance of capacity building for creating and maintaining the appropriate conditions for school improvement; this can be achieved by seeking to develop new forms of CPD. Heads and Assistant Heads felt they needed more on-going professional development and onsite training opportunities on leadership organized by the education authorities. Interestingly enough, although Heads were

knowledgeable about developments in CPD policy and believed that CPD should be an on-going process, not all Heads practiced CPD. Heads of School complained about the increased workload and bureaucracy since the inception of the College reform. Their work had become a race against time. They considered the time factor a huge constraint to CPD. In this regard they remonstrated that as a result of the increased workload they were suffering from burnout.

On a general note, Heads of School experienced a more personal and ameliorated relationship with their Principal. Some argued that the roles of College Principal and Head are perceived as intertwined and having blurred boundaries. There should be a better definition of each role because there is evidence of power struggle as individual Heads have felt threatened by what they perceived as impositions by the College Principal. Research has shown that the concept of Knowledge Management (as defined by the UK's National College for School Leaders publications), is relatively new and its benefits have not been completely recognised. Also, there is a lack of human resources with expertise in the field. All College stakeholders need to shift into a new mind-frame. They should be driven by a common vision of mutual benefit and agree on ways of how to nurture more flexibility in colleges and schools. College Principals and Heads of School must be competent, have sound values, willing to make concessions and ready to accept shortcomings amongst network members. Finally, on the issue of the impact of the College Principal on the Head's leadership role it was learnt that College Principals were failing to achieve desirable relationships because they were not working enough towards enhancing the Head's self-esteem and morale. If this were achieved, this will result in the Heads' further involvement for the sake of improvement.

Addressing the theme of Distributed Leadership (DL) it was learnt that leaders need to become more familiar with the various forms of DL and that this concept needs to be fine-tuned. It was deemed that DL would assist schools in being less dependent upon single individuals. On a general note, Heads and Assistant Heads were in

agreement that there was more need for onsite training on DL by the education authorities. Participant Heads of School believed strongly in team dynamics and worked closely with the SMT as a team. In this regard, other respondents argued that DL cannot be achieved through the traditional approach focusing on the key person responsible for all school matters, but must be directed on team function. Heads have to be willing to 'let go' rather than simply delegate; they must be committed to creating a team culture. Policy frameworks should focus more on team leadership rather than the individual Head or Principal. There was consensus that DL brought about new ideas and various solutions to problems on a daily basis which should result in a positive impact on learning. Many felt that because of internal and external pressures DL is not implemented effectively in schools. Almost all SMT members felt that they did not have time to discuss, provide feedback and evaluate performance due to an increase in workload and lack of staff at SMT level.

This research also showed that stakeholders had different perceptions of learning networks. It was learnt that this was due to the different roles and positions held within the network of schools. Overall there were significant perceptive differences between the SMT and teaching personnel's perceptions of the networked college of which they and their school formed part. Most of the SMT participants claimed that networking was creating new practices and putting the learner at the heart of the educational system. As a result they appealed for greater distributed leadership inside the network. Teacher participants showed trust and confidence in the SMT leadership and appreciate the SMT's dedication to promote school improvement as well as their support and strong sense of caring. However, researchers found out that the perceptions of networks of the teaching personnel were not as strong as those of the SMT. A considerable percentage of teachers did not embrace the reform and did not appreciate the benefits of the collective energies of educators inside the network. SMT participants felt that teachers still lacked the required confidence and enthusiasm in learning networks which would promote the expected teacher leadership. Perhaps as expected, teachers were reluctant to involve parents in the students' education. On the other hand, surprisingly enough, there was agreement

that educational leadership should be a collective process and not one of power. Generally speaking, the evidence tends to show that a good percentage of SMT members and teachers are effectively contributing towards network development and sharing among schools.

Both the proposals of the document *For all Children to Succeed* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005) and the Education Act (2006) foster and highlight collaboration between schools and parents. Research into this theme has been conducted in State, Independent and Church schools. Findings ranged from low-level participation in school fund-raising to in-depth involvement in school curriculum decision-making and school governance. When teachers were asked how they perceived parental involvement in curriculum enrichment, the majority (almost 66 per cent) regarded this as a threat to their professionalism (Spiteri, 2009). Some of the participants saw parents as an interference while others harboured a degree of distrust towards parental involvement. Many Heads of School were in agreement that parents are not professionally trained. They felt that because many parents tend to have a low educational background and lack professional training curriculum matters should be the sole responsibility of the SMT. The remaining one-third of teacher participants (34 per cent) regarded parents as a useful resource in the curriculum (ibid.). They believed that some parents are adequately qualified to contribute to curriculum provisions in the school. They felt that parental involvement in the school leads to student motivation and success as well as positive student behaviour. They also considered parents as a useful resource that could help in class control. Indeed, some even said that parental participation in the school's Council and school activities was crucial. Those who were pro-reinforcing parental involvement saw parents as clients. They felt that schools need to respond to parental demands and wishes. Parents should be looked upon as partners, directly involved in the provision of the educational services. In order to overcome the fear and anxiety harboured by most teachers, many participants believed that this could be addressed by means of structured training for both parents and teachers. School managers, on their part, should strive to establish a policy of parental involvement.

When the education authorities embarked on the various initiatives contemplated by the College Reform it soon became evident that the leaders of Maltese schools would assume a critically important role in developing a vision for a high-quality education for every student and in implementing and supporting a learning environment that is developed and shared by key stakeholders. Ultimately, when all is said and done, leadership comes down to performance. Principals and Heads of School can demonstrate their worth not only through high profile activities such as vision setting and strategic planning, but also by the way they behave in defining moments. In effect, the majority of participating Heads exhibited a degree of tension when they maintained that considering the policy in operation made them conscious that they had to face up to new challenges. Moreover, considering that fear, anxiety, panic, curiosity and even excitement were among the feelings expressed by the respondent teachers, leaders need to invest in relationships and to allow teachers to cope with change. Most of the Heads agreed that they need to make teachers feel that without their active role in this process of change, change cannot succeed. They were aware that they need to motivate more participative attitudes among teachers. Both Principals and Heads were conscious that they need to address the concerns expressed by teachers on key aspects as:

- Mixed ability classes.
- Differentiated teaching and learning.
- Setting in a number of subjects (at secondary level).
- Different types of benchmarks.

Another recurring finding arising from most of these studies is that teachers lacked information about the workings of the reform. Indeed, teachers claimed that the lack of information is one of the sources of their frustration. Furthermore, some teachers viewed the changes that the College Reform has brought on as 'cosmetic' with no intrinsic value.

These researchers proposed a number of recommendations, including the following.

- A communication audit is needed which can analyse the nature, structure, flow and practice of communication with the school.
- The education authorities need to embark on an educational programme for the school practitioners and parents to narrow the divide that is still a reality.
- Leaders of schools need to view leadership as an outcome of interpersonal relationships based on trust and openness.
- There should be more opportunities for Heads of School and the SMTs to focus on current and future professional development programme related to distributed leadership.
- Leadership development needs to attend to issues related to cultural change and needs to create a context in which distributed leadership should be embedded.
- Education authorities need to address the teachers' lack of information, misunderstandings and misconceptions.
- Leaders need to continually remind all personnel of the network goals.
- The need to create co-leadership posts to act as a go-between position linking the network overall leader with the Heads and teachers inside the schools.
- Decentralisation of leadership roles through greater awareness and understanding of distributed leadership within a learning network.
- The schools' cultures, needs and strengths should be the point of departure for new developments.
- Recognising personalities, respecting and appreciating the individual will result in more confidence, serenity and sincerity.
- A culture of trust, collaboration and commitment has to be nurtured.
- Further research on teachers' attitudes and perceptions is required.
- There should be proper management of teachers' performance management programmes as ideal tools for a common college vision with common college objectives.
- The need for more school development planning sessions and professional development sessions because they provide crucial opportunities to discuss

and collectively reach decisions of plans of action necessary to implement changes.

- Educational leaders need to strive to bring about the desired development on all levels – personal, collective and organisational.

2.3 PhD Theses

A number of Maltese educational leaders are currently conducting their PhD studies on various aspects of the College Reform at universities abroad and even locally. One PhD thesis which is completed (Cutajar, 2012) and which will be submitted later on this year was made available to the present researchers and will therefore be reviewed here.

The overall aim of the research was:

- to analyse the nature of networking and collaboration in a policy context that required joint working within and by individual schools;
- to explore the implications for educational leadership, governance and accountability within and between the institutions involved.

The research is organized in two phases. The first phase is a case study of College 'One' and the second phase encompassed similar case studies of three Colleges in Malta and the revisiting of College 'One'. All colleges were chosen on the basis of easy accessibility enhanced by a good working relationship with the College Principals. The interpretation of the collected data is categorised according to key themes of the College Reform that are based on the following research questions of the study:

- In the context of inter-school networking in the Maltese Archipelago, what is the nature of networking and collaboration?
- In the context of inter-school networking in the Maltese Islands, what are the implications for:
 - Educational leadership,
 - Governance, and

- Accountability?

Data were collected from various sources, as follows:

- One-on-one in-depth interviews with stakeholders (central authority and educators);
- documented material namely *The Education (Amendment) Act 2006*, the document *For All Children to Succeed* and other reform related documents;
- observation sessions of the Council of Heads of the four colleges.

The data were analysed to identify key emergent themes within the main analytic categories. The interviews were conducted when the College Reform had only been in place since its pilot phase for four years and certain structures and personnel identified with school networks were not yet in place. This placed certain limitations on the data collection. Interviewed practitioners could not answer questions that addressed certain areas and issues.

The cluster of schools in which Cutajar (2012) conducted his research in the two phases (as explained above) had more or less the following similar characteristics:

- A number of primary schools that also provided space for kindergarten classes.
- Single sex 'grammar-type' Junior Lyceums for girls and boys.
- Single sex area secondary schools for boys and girls.

The main findings of this thesis are as follows.

- All the four regional colleges visited for the study (College 'One' was revisited) could be regarded as unique educational institutions within their own right because of their regional and geographical position. College 'One', was the focus of one of the three pilot projects that was launched in October 2005, while the other three colleges were in place between 2006 and 2008.

- The boundaries that separated one college from its counterparts were very real. All the four colleges were all self-contained and existed within social and cultural realities that are distinctive. They offered a comprehensive environment in which to analyse the nature of networking and collaboration in inter-school working in state-maintained Colleges in the Maltese Islands and the uniqueness of each college makes it an ideal subject of inquiry.
- When stock was taken of the existing Maltese State school buildings until December of 2010, it was observed that the application of intended school networks in the four colleges was logistically on-going and far from completion. It was envisaged that the remaining schools are to be in place by 2015.
- Although there were gaps and missing links in the administrative structure and practices of the College, all interviewees were exceptionally supportive and receptive. Although across the sample there were diverse opinions about the College Reform and the collaborative practice that it kindled, there was without exception a consensus that collaboration was beneficial. Cutajar (ibid.) summarised it as enriching and effective because it reinforced the teaching and learning process and placed the students' holistic well-being at the centre of every educational activity.
- There was concurrence among all the interviewees that although the College Reform was still in its early stage, it was considered a move in the right direction because it had institutionalised and refined the crude form of inter-school networking that used to be in practice. Respondents also felt that the reform encouraged and empowered inter-school collaboration and collegiality, enhanced the parents' collaboration and reinforced partnerships with the wider village community.

- The responses of other members of the sample showed a difference of perception. They contended that on a general note the inception of the College Reform and networking was not new to their schools. It only continued, institutionalised and refined the crude form of the networking system that was in practice. Consequently this scenario brought mixed reactions. Some simply saw this to their advantage because they felt that their past practice gave them a head start, others were more cautious and admitted that it was *“too early to judge the reform and to say whether it was beneficial or not”*, while other individuals felt that it was threatening an already successful system. They felt apprehensive and suspicious because they were seasoned and felt secure in their set ways of doing things at school.
- Some Heads and all interviewed teachers admitted that collaboration among schools has, at this point, not yet been achieved because the system and timetable does not provide the space for teachers to meet, discuss, share and learn. They could only meet once every three months for the School Development Plan meetings. Although the law makes provision for the space of one and a half hour weekly sessions during which teachers from different schools can meet to discuss, the reality when the interviews were conducted was that this was not yet in place.
- Although, broadly speaking, considerable gains had been made one also needed to acknowledge that these gains could possibly be threatened by that section of education personnel who very often had felt that they had not been involved or consulted as much as it would have liked to in the on-going reform process. These personnel felt that policy-makers seemed to have forgotten that reforms and the development that comes with them is a living and dynamic process and that adapting to change may very well take time. One has to acknowledge also that having felt secure in the old system may result in some degree of reluctance to adapt to a more decentralised system that could create more space for collaboration but which could make the

College stakeholders feel vulnerable having to give up that security in which they have lived for so long in their isolated world.

- The interviewed policy-makers were of one mind when they recognised that while some individuals are born leaders some others are not so good and that this makes all the difference between a school that is run first class and another which has huge problems in spite of all the financial and human resources invested in the school. They were also in agreement about the mammoth responsibility of the selection board to identify those college and school leaders most suitable for the job.
- The responses that addressed the qualities that leaders need to have seemed to show a certain amount of consonance among respondents, particularly that leaders at all levels must adapt to change. Furthermore, interviewed teachers were in agreement that both the College Principals and Heads of School need to be persons of integrity, individuals with vision, have the aptitude to set goals, be exemplary in nature and, above all, be firm yet diplomatic and ready to empathise. Certain interviewees insisted that they did not see this in their school and college leaders.
- Across the sample there was consensus that as educators responsibility has to be felt internally. That all educators (whether at 'The Centre', at the helm of a college or a school, or in the teaching grades) have to feel responsible for each other. Everyone needs to work together - directorates, colleges and schools. All stakeholders have to feel responsible for the overriding objective of helping every child to succeed and ensuring that every child matters.
- Other summarized interviewees' remarks focused on the significance of collaboration and collegiality, and how this sustained the existing form of individual responsibility while at the same time fostered a new culture of collective accountability. They all considered themselves members of a team

working for a common goal and equally accountable for the success of the child.

- The College Reform also introduced a Council of Heads for every college (a committee that has a statutory structure) and the Educational Leaders Council (a consultative body that does not have a statutory structure). Both bodies are considered as a living example of a new form of culture of collaboration and collegiality.
- Almost all teachers complained that the new systemic structure and the modus operandi of the Heads of School was more or less a replica of the old 'top-down' model. It emerged that very few are those Heads who consulted teachers and discussed with them matters that concern school policy. It also emerged that very few Heads of School adopt the Distributed Leadership model in the day to day running of the school.
- It also emerged that Heads of School also felt that the 'top-down' model is still a reality. They complained that the agenda for their Council of Heads meetings is more or less prepared by the Principal and that there is very little consultation about the agenda. They presume that the Principal brings to the meeting policies discussed at the Education Leaders Council.
- All the participating Heads appreciated more the function of the Council of Heads in every College. They agreed that the Council did not only bring all the Heads of that particular college together but decided on the way forward for that college collaboratively. The majority of them contended that collaboration was crucial in sustaining change and the on-going execution of educational policies as laid down in the *Education (Amendment) Act, 2006*. They understood that each and every one of them was no longer on his/her own but all formed part of a larger group of primary and secondary Heads

led by a College Principal. Each and every one of them is leading his/her school within a college context.

These findings underpin the importance of the primary theme of networking and collaboration and the three secondary themes of educational leadership, governance and accountability as core aspects of the College Reform. They also provide insights into how networking and collaboration, nurtured by the right leadership and governance, and reinforced by an accountable mentality, can sustain the establishment of school networks in the Maltese Islands (Cutajar, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The review of research on the College Reform has highlighted several other themes in addition to the ones arising from the review of key documents as indicated above.

These include:

- Increased bureaucracy
- Accountability
- Increased workload
- Collaboration and sharing among schools
- Shared leadership and shared responsibility
- Distributed leadership
- Team work among SMTs
- Capacity building
- Shortage of staff at SMT level
- Professional training and development
- Rate and pace of delivery of reforms
- Lack of consultation
- Not enough time for teachers to meet, discuss, share and learn (networking)
- Not enough time for SMT to carry out curricular work
- Coping with change
- Transparency of Council of Heads meetings

- Improving the school's internal communication relationships
- Relationship between the Head and the College Principal
- Parental involvement
- Partnerships with the wider village community

One way of obtaining some indication as to what extent the College Reform is on target and the impact that this is having is to continue to listen to what the major stakeholders have to say. Principal among these are schoolchildren themselves, their parents and the education personnel who ultimately are the ones who are at the forefront of the implementation of the College Reform. One may even argue that whereas the views and opinions of all stakeholders are important, those harboured by educational personnel are crucial for the success of any reform irrespective of its nature or scale. In the absence of a large scale study which investigated the views, opinions, and concerns of education personnel in regard to the College Reform, the present research project aimed at providing a vehicle which enabled all educational personnel to express their views on the College System and accompanying reforms in a context that safeguards their anonymity and confidentiality.

METHODOLOGY

1. AIM

The main aim of this research project was to look into the impact that the College System and the accompanying reforms are having as perceived by personnel in the various teaching grades and the school Senior Management Teams. It sought to investigate the views, opinions and concerns, of primary and secondary school personnel (MUT members or otherwise) on, and about, the College System and how it is operating, as well as on the various accompanying reforms. The views of the Directors General and the College Principals were also solicited to secure as broad a perspective possible from all the internal stakeholders.

Specifically, the research sought:

- 1 To investigate the views, opinions and concerns of personnel in all teaching grades and the Senior Management Teams in primary and secondary schools, as well as all other personnel not posted in schools on, and about:
 - (a) the College System and how it is operating, and
 - (b) the various accompanying reforms.
- 2 To explore in-depth some of the salient findings arising from (1) above with the two Directors General, the ten Principals and a sample of personnel in all teaching grades and the school Senior Management Teams.

2. QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

2.1 Focus Groups

A series of nine focus groups were conducted with a sample of teaching grade personnel and members of Senior Management Teams from the primary and secondary school sectors selected across the ten Colleges. Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous. Sessions were held after school hours in one of the

researcher's office and each session lasted between 90 to 120 minutes. To enable participants to talk candidly and freely as much as possible care was taken to ensure that no two participants in the same focus group came from the same college. The only exception was the focus group held in Gozo where logistical constraints required that participants came from the same college.

After the focus group facilitator introduced himself, the purpose of the research project generally and specifically that of the focus group session was explained. Participants were assured that the proceedings will be treated with the strictest confidence and that no one other than the researchers would be privy to their comments and remarks. They were also reminded that participation in the focus group was entirely voluntary and that anyone of them could choose to terminate his/her participation at any time.

A set of questions based on the points ensuing from the review of the key official documents and the research literature were formulated to enable the facilitator give some structure to the sessions. Ultimately, participants were free to express their views and/or concerns on any aspect of the College System and the accompanying reforms. The facilitators could not help noticing the general willingness of almost all the participants to talk openly and candidly about any aspect. Unless any of the focus group participants objected, sessions were recorded and the salient parts transcribed. In addition, the facilitator took notes of the points that were being made.

The information arising from the focus groups, together with that resulting from the two reviews mentioned above, were used to formulate the prototype self-administered questionnaire as well as the first draft of the interview schedule to be used in the final phase of this study.

From the focus groups it also transpired that many of the participants persistently referred to the College System and accompanying reforms (such as mixed ability teaching, benchmarking and new assessment practices), as 'the reforms'.

2.2 The Questionnaire

At a first stage the draft version of the questionnaire was given to a number of knowledgeable persons with extensive experience in the field of education and research, and who are very familiar with the on-going reforms, for their advice regarding the content, format and presentation. At a second stage, the resultant version was entered into the electronic *SurveyGizmo* facility and piloted among 20 persons selected from across the various grades and sectors. Their feedback resulted in important additional modifications and the formulation of the final version of the electronic questionnaire.

By way of obtaining an indication of the reliability of responding, two of the questions were formulated in a positive as well as in a negative form. The two versions of each question were placed as far apart as possible in the questionnaire. After scoring and reverse coding, results yielded a Pearson and a Spearman reliability coefficient of 0.9. At a second stage a small number of volunteers accepted to complete the same version of the questionnaire twice over with input time of 10 days between the first and second self-administration. This yielded reliability coefficients (Spearman's rho) ranging from 0.75 to 1.00, with a median coefficient of 0.92, attesting to the consistency of responding. At a third stage the ratings were inspected to determine their consistency across the two sets of responses in terms of the 'agreement', 'disagreement', and 'neutral' categories. This yielded an inter-session consistency of 94 per cent.

In addition, the reading of the questionnaire items by the group of knowledgeable persons and by a second group of potential participants indicated that the items making up the questionnaire were clear and unambiguous to both groups, thereby attesting to the questionnaire's face validity. With regard to its content validity, the two groups confirmed that the range of questions is such that it covers the vast majority of the issues/themes under study as well as related themes. A tally of questions addressing each issue/theme substantiated this.

Consisting of 139 questions, the final version of the questionnaire was not a short one. On average it took between 30 to 45 minutes to complete properly. It was perhaps inevitable that a questionnaire evaluating the several and multi-faceted 887 aspects of the College System and accompanying reforms (which are central to our educational system and to all education professionals without exception), should be one that is substantial and which required considerable thought in its proper completion. To facilitate the completion of the questionnaire respondents could avail themselves of the *SurveyGizmo* facility of stopping at any time and resume at a later date after receiving a personal code to be able to resume completion.

The questionnaire was organised in six sections as follows:

Section A: Biographical Information - completed by ALL respondents

Section B: The College System - completed by ALL respondents

Section C: The Reforms - completed by ALL respondents

Section D: SMT - completed by members of the SMT

Section E: Teachers, Instructors, KAs and LSAs - completed by personnel in the various teaching grades

Section F: Overall Comments - completed by ALL respondents.

Depending on one's grade (which one entered in Section A) the electronic survey automatically took the respective respondent through the appropriate questions. A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix A.

The questionnaire came with an introduction setting out the aim of the research project. Participants were reminded that participation was entirely voluntary and completely anonymous, and that all responses would be treated in strictest confidence by the researchers. It is pertinent to point out that although *SurveyGizmo* allows several forms of electronic identification to be recorded (such as IP addresses) it was decided at the outset that the researchers' commitment to safeguard respondents' anonymity precludes them from keeping such records. In so doing the

researchers sought to ensure that participants would be given the opportunity to express their views and concerns in the safety of assured complete anonymity. The issue of anonymity was discussed both with the MUT and the focus group participants. It transpired that there was general agreement that anonymity was crucial if the veracity of responses was to be secured and the risk of a low response rate was to be avoided.

The questions making up Sections B to F are essentially of four types. Questions about:

- specific aspects of the College System and accompanying reforms and their impact;
- the process of implementation of the reforms, including staff development and professional training;
- the extent to which participants were in favour of specific reforms;
- the participants' perceived general well-being at work.

Section A collected information about the respondent's gender, age, experience in education (i.e. teaching and/or administration), employment grade, the sector in which they are based, and the college they form part of.

Section B consisted of 37 statements on various aspects of the College System to which all respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. Responses were on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*.

Section C focused on specific educational reforms that are accompanying the College Reform. Participants were requested to indicate how they felt about these reforms and their implementation by indicating their level of agreement or disagreement to 36 of the 39 items in this section. As in the previous section, responses were on a 5-point scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. The penultimate

question in this section was a multiple mention type item while the last question was a conditional open type.

Section D was directed at the members of the School Management Teams (SMTs) and consisted of 19 statements primarily dealing with their role. In line with the above, responses were on a 5-point scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*.

Section E sought the views and opinions of teachers, instructors, kindergarten assistants (KAs) and learning support assistants (LSAs) by indicating their level of agreement or disagreement to 25 statements. The last five questions in this section were directed at teachers and instructors only. Responses were on a 5-point scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*.

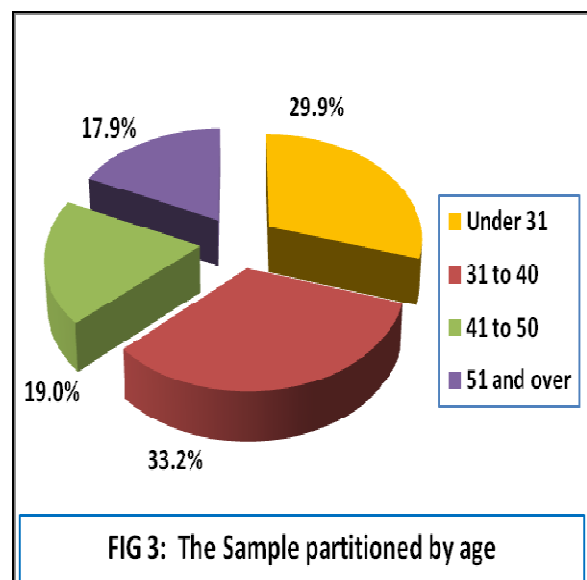
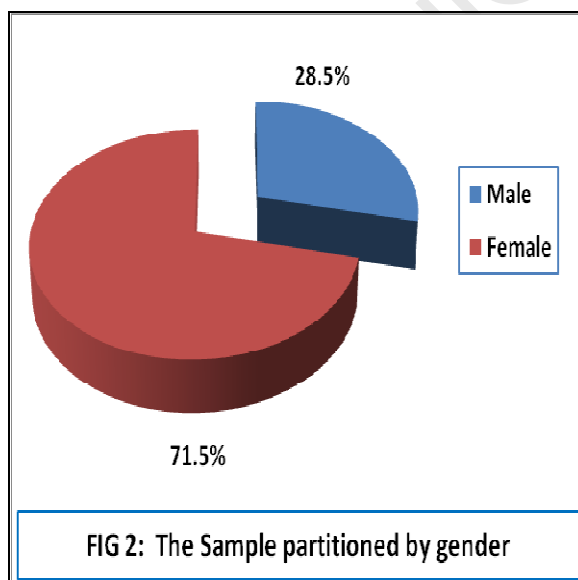
Section F was directed at all the respondents and consisted of 14 questions. The first eight questions in this section sought to determine the extent to which respondents were in favour of specific reforms. Responses were on a 5-point scale ranging from *Not in Favour* to *Strongly in Favour*. The next 3 questions were directed at respondents with more than 5 years experience in education. Following the notion of subjective well-being (see Diener, 2009), the first two items give an indication of whether respondents' are in agreement or disagreement that compared to five years ago they are now *more happier* and *more satisfied* in their work. The third item looks into the perceived work pressure. Responses were on a 5-point scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. The next two questions consisted of a series of positive and negative statements to which respondents were requested to indicate the one that best encapsulates how they felt about the College System and accompanying reforms. Each had an additional question of the conditional type. The last question was an open-ended one inviting respondents to raise any final comments if they so wished.

2.3 The Sample

The entire population of Teaching Grade personnel and school Senior Management Teams in the state primary and secondary school sectors was invited to participate. In addition, all personnel in the Special Educational Needs Resource Centres, the ICT Department and the various support units and centres were also included in the target population which amounted to 5139 personnel.¹¹

In all, a sample of 1474 completed a useable questionnaire. This constitutes a response rate of 28.7 per cent. One must bear in mind that is a proportion of the entire population of over five thousand potential participants and that the resultant sample as a whole is, in absolute terms, statistically large.

Figures 2 to 6 give a breakdown of the sample in terms of its major demographic characteristics. More than two-thirds of the participants are females (Fig 2); 63 per cent are less than 41 years of age (Fig 3); more than three-fourths of them have been in teaching for 20 years or less (Fig 4); teachers/instructors made up just under 70 per cent of the sample (Fig 5), and the majority (58 per cent) come from the secondary school sector (Fig 6).



¹¹ Based on data supplied by the Directorate of Educational Services.

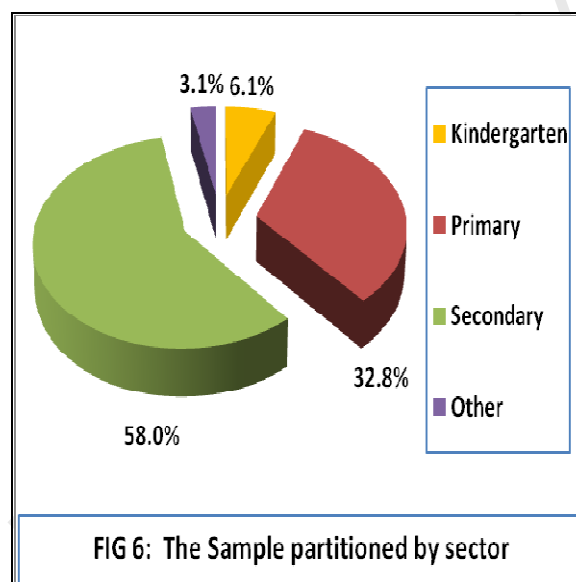
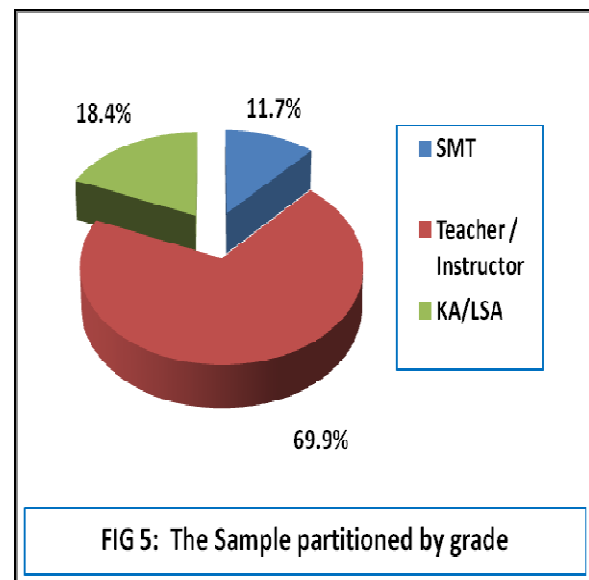
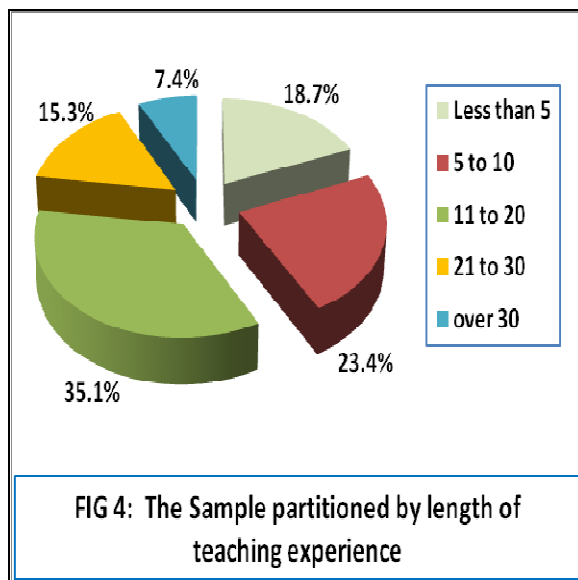


Table 2 gives a breakdown of the population and sample figures in terms of grade. It is clear from this table that more than one-third of SMTs and of Teachers/Instructors participated in the survey. The relatively low participation rate by KAs and LSAs (14.9 per cent) strongly impacted on the overall response rate, effectively reducing it to 28.7 per cent. There may be various reasons why the response rate from the KAs and LSAs group was disappointingly low. One may argue that many aspects covered by the questionnaire do not impact on them directly such that many did not feel the need to express their views.

Table 2
Population and Sample figures
(*N* and *n* respectively) in terms of grade

Grade	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	%
SMTs	388	172	44.3
Teachers/Instructors	2931	1031	35.2
KAs/LSAs	1820	271	14.9
Total	5139	1474	28.7

2.4 Procedure

In late 2010 a meeting was held with the two Directors General about the proposed project where an overview of its stages was presented. The collaboration of the two Directors General (DES and DQSE) in allowing the researchers access to school personnel was also sought. In early 2011 the required clearances from the University Research Ethics Committee and the two Education Directorates (a copy of the questionnaire was forwarded to the Department of Research and Development within the DES) were secured. A press conference was held by the MUT in late May 2011 where the questionnaire survey was announced.¹² It was unofficially launched a few days later during the MUT's General Conference after it was presented to delegates. The methodology of the survey was also discussed during that meeting and several valuable suggestions were taken on board. It was formally launched on June 6 and although initially participation was possible till June 17 it was subsequently decided (following several requests) to extend the closing down date by an additional week.

¹² This means that the collection of empirical data started almost four scholastic years since the full complement of 10 Colleges was reached in October 2007.

By the launch date a cover letter outlining the aims and objectives of the project and instructions as to how to access the electronic questionnaire was sent out to each member of the target population through the respective state schools and other locations. The letter also included a dedicated contact telephone number as well as an e-mail address by means of which participants could contact the researchers on any queries or difficulties they might have had in properly completing the questionnaire. Information about the survey was also published on the MUT website. In between dates the MUT sent out several mail-shots to its members encouraging them to participate in the survey. They were also asked to encourage their non-member colleagues to do the same. MUT School Delegates/Representatives also played an important role in this by encouraging and reminding their colleagues (MUT members or otherwise) to participate in the survey.

Once a respondent finished completing the questionnaire the responses were recorded electronically in a database created by the SurveyGizmo facility to which access was restricted to the research team. No forms of electronic identification such as IP addresses were retained so as to secure complete respondent anonymity.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data base was downloaded for analysis in SPSS format. Since some of the 1474 usable questionnaires were not entirely completed it was decided that the responses for any of sections B to G would be carried forward for analysis if the participant completed the entire section. Thus, for each section, the base (i.e. the number of respondents) will remain constant for the analysis of all the questions in that section. In addition, questionnaires which did not have either section A or B completed were not included in the data base.

The analysis was carried using the SPSS v19 facility. Charts were produced using the Microsoft Excel facility. With regard to the open ended questions, these were analysed using Atlas.ti The Knowledge Workbench Visual Qualitative Data Analysis Version Win 5.0

3. ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

3.1 Interview Schedules

It was decided that the purposes of the present study would best be served with the use of 'standardised open-ended interviews' (Cohen et al., 2007), also referred to as 'fully structured interviews' (Robson, 2007). This can be described as a highly focused interview. In designing such interviews the exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order. The advantage of this system is the 'increasing comparability of responses' (Cohen et al., 2007). Thus by using this approach it was relatively easy to see what the views of the Directors General, the College Principals, the Senior Management Team, the Teachers and the KA/LSAs are on specific questions. It is also an effective system to obtain information, with the possibility of probing more into specific topics. Tuckman (1972), cited in Cohen et al. (2007), describes the interview as:

"By providing access to what is 'inside a person's head' [it] makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs)." (p. 351)

Some of the major themes arising from the questionnaire survey and elements drawn from the review of key documents served as a basis for the interview schedule. In actual fact, four interview schedules were developed for use with:

- the Directors General
- the College Principals
- School Senior Management Teams
- Teachers. Instructors, KAs and LSAs.

While certain elements ran throughout the four schedules others were particular to specific interviewees. The interview questions were formulated on specific issues arising out of the questionnaire survey to elicit qualitative data which should shed

further light on some of the salient findings. Questions were all designed in the same manner: a statement followed by a question. Questions were set in a way that they could be answered in an unstructured manner

The prototype interview schedules were given to a number of knowledgeable persons with extensive experience in the field of education and research, and who are very familiar with the on-going reform, for their advice. Their feedback led in a number of modifications and the development of the final versions of the four interview schedules (see Appendix C).

3.2 Interviewees

In all 90 one-on-one interviews were carried with a sample of Teaching Grade personnel and members of school Senior Management Teams selected from all the Colleges, together with all College Principals and the two Directors General. Participants from the various teaching grades and the school SMTs were selected at random across the ten colleges. Care was taken to secure a degree of balance between the number of interviewees from the primary and secondary sectors. A break-down of participant numbers by grade and school level is set out in Table 3.

Table 3
Participants in the one-on-one interviews
in terms of school sector and grade

Grade	Primary	Secondary	Total
KAs/LSAs	5	4	9
Teachers/Instructors	22	22	44
SMTs	13	12	25
Principals			10
Directors General			2
Total			90

3.3 Procedure

Although the assistant researchers recruited to carry out the interviews had experience in interviewing they were nevertheless given a set of guidelines drawn up to help ensure a degree of uniformity in the conduct of these sessions across interviewers. The team conducting the interviews was briefed prior to the commencement of this stage of the research. The chosen interviewers were knowledgeable about the area of education in general, as well as of the results and their interpretation in the quantitative section of the research. None of the interviewers worked within any of the Colleges, thus making sure that while they could interact and communicate with the interviewees about the subject, they were not prejudiced about the question at hand through their personal experiences within the College System or with any of the accompanying reforms. It was also decided that anything said after the 'formal' interview (anything 'off the record') was not to be recorded and used in this research.

Potential interviewees were first sent a recruitment letter/information sheet which upon acceptance was followed by a consent form which was then completed at the beginning of the interview (see Appendix D for a copy of both documents). In the case of the Directors General and the College Principals the respective interview schedule was mailed to them prior to the interview, on their request.

On the researchers' part it was highly desirable to record all interviews (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). However, since a number of Principals as well as a small number of SMTs and teachers preferred not to only a written account was retained. This limited the research to focus on *what* was said, and not to the *way* it was said (Bryman, 2004).

Interview sessions lasted between 45 to 90 minutes. Interviews were held in such a way so as not to encroach on student entitlement or disrupt the school day.

Before the start of the session, the interviewer handed the interviewee an information sheet as well as a copy of the consent form. Once these were read and explained both parties completed the consent form. All interviewees were assured that the responses would remain confidential and anonymous.¹³

Once the most salient parts of the interview were transcribed these were translated into English and forwarded to each respective interviewee for his/her consent regarding the veracity and potential use by the researchers. In some cases the transcript was modified as requested the respective interviewee.

3.4 Transcriptions and Analysis

As pointed out above, since ninety interviews created a huge amount of data it was decided to transcribe only what the researchers considered to be the most significant parts of the interview.

"The critical task in qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data you can, but to 'can' (i.e. get rid of) most of the data you accumulate. That requires constant winnowing, including decisions about data not worth entering in the first place, regardless of how easy that might be to do. The trick is to discover essences and then to reveal those essences with sufficient context, yet not become mired trying to include everything that might possibly be described."
(Wolcott, 2001; p. 44)

¹³ This proved difficult in the case of the Directors General since there is only one person in each respective office.

One has to keep in mind that in transcribing an encounter considerable data are lost, particularly the visual and the non-verbals. The researchers felt that for the purpose of this study it was better to capture a wide spectrum of ideas rather than to focus in greater depth on a much smaller number of interviewees, particularly when it was important to capture the perceptions in all the ten colleges.

The transcripts were coded according to question and to respondent.¹⁴ This made it relatively easy to see what the opinions of the various interviewees were on one particular issue. So for example on the issue of 'competition' the question: "49% (n=1474) agreed that the College System has given rise to unhealthy competition among colleges [Fig 28]. Why do you feel that this is the case? Who do you think is responsible for promoting this unhealthy competition?" was asked to the Directors General, the College Principals, the Senior Management Team and the Teaching Grades. This facilitated a comparative analysis.

The goal of this part of the research was to substantiate and discuss at some depth some the salient findings arising from the questionnaire surveyed. Data are presented in such a way that one can see commonalities, differences and similarities between the points of views of the Directors General, the Senior Management Team, the Teachers as well as the LSAs/KGs. It should help the stakeholders (particularly the MUT and the education authorities) to see "*through the eyes of the people being studied*" (Bryman, 2004; p. 279).

¹⁴ Coding used is as follows: DG1 and DG2, P_1 to P_10 (College Principals), SMT_P_1 to SMT_P_13 (SMT - Primary Sector), SMT_S_1 to SMT_S_12 (SMT- Secondary Sector), T_S_1 to T_S_22 (teacher in the secondary sector) T_P_1 to T_P_22 (Teachers in the Primary Sector), LSA/KA_P_1 to LSA/KA_P_5 (LSA/Kindergarten Assistants in the Primary Sector), LSA/KA_S_1 to LSA/KA_S_4 (LSA/Kindergarten Assistants in the Secondary Sector).

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The results of the questionnaire survey are organised in terms of the questionnaire sections. To facilitate understanding and strengthen coherence, the questions in each section are in turn reported by theme.

It is pertinent to point out at the outset that the margin of error of the present findings associated with the overall sample size (i.e. SMTs, teachers/instructors, KAs and LSAs) is about ± 1.9 per cent at the 95 per cent confidence level. That is, we can be 95 per cent certain that a finding obtained from the present sample will also occur in the population within an interval of ± 1.9 per cent. This is slightly larger (about ± 2 per cent) in regard to those parts of the questionnaire solely directed at teachers/instructors and to all the teaching grades (i.e. teachers/instructors, KAs and LSAs). With regard to that section of the questionnaire solely directed at SMT's this rises to about ± 5 per cent, primarily due to the very small population size of 388. Thus, caution needs to be taken in the interpretation of findings where these are not polarised; that is, where the percentage responses of agreements and disagreements are close together. Where this is not the case (that is, where there is a clear polarisation of findings) the actual results speak for themselves.

Section B: The College System

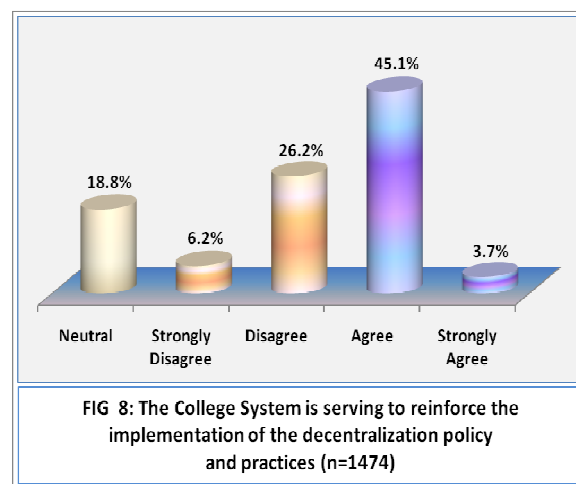
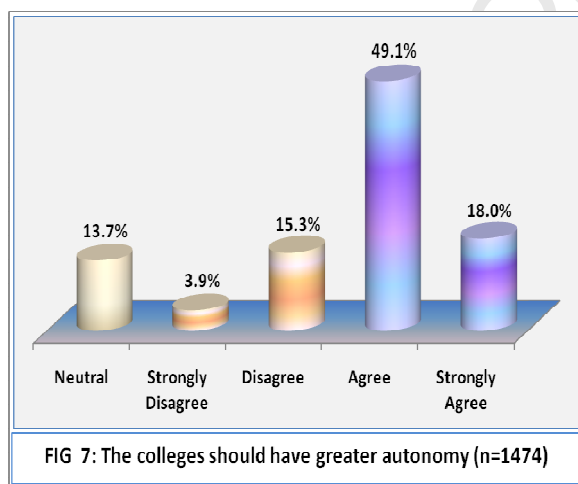
A total of 1474 respondents completed all the questions in this section. Results are organised in seven themes as follows:

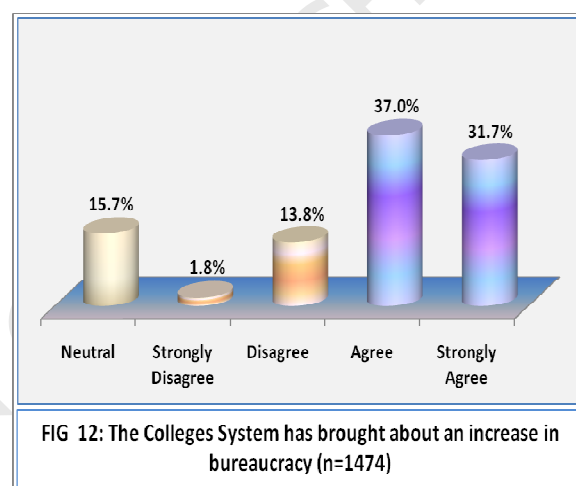
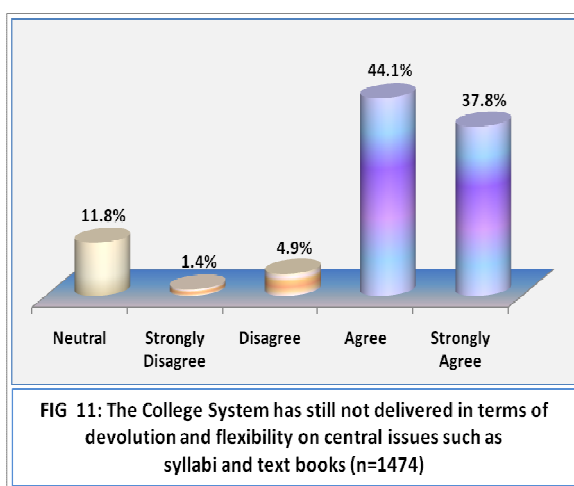
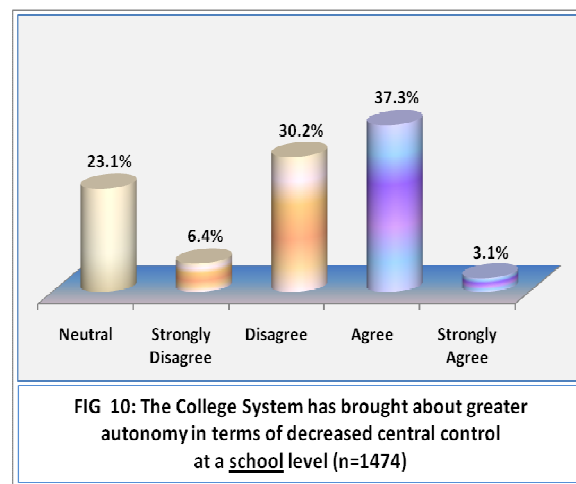
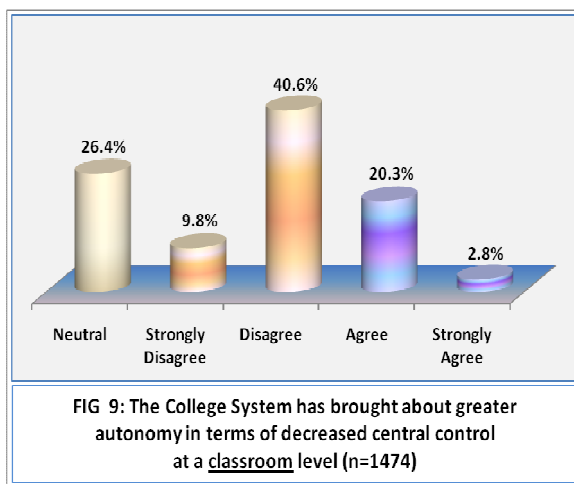
- Decentralisation
- Governance
- Logistic Collaboration and Cooperation
- Curricular Collaboration and Sharing of Good Practices
- Competition

- Impact on Personnel and Operations
- Impact on Student Entitlement

Decentralisation

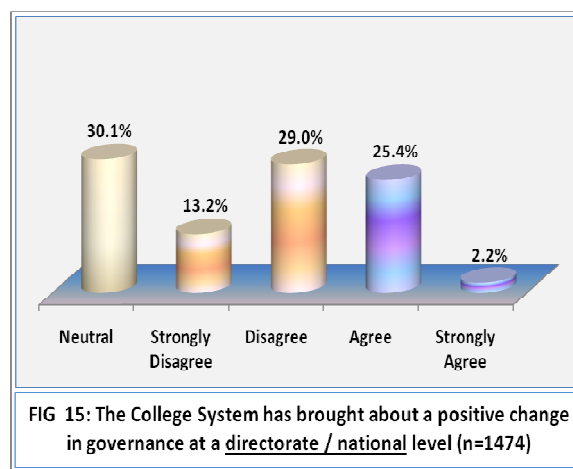
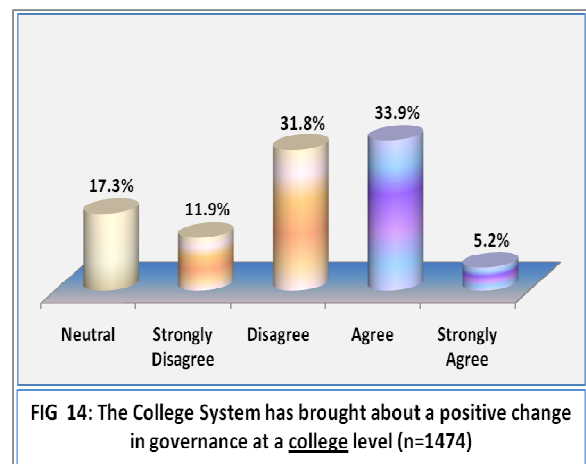
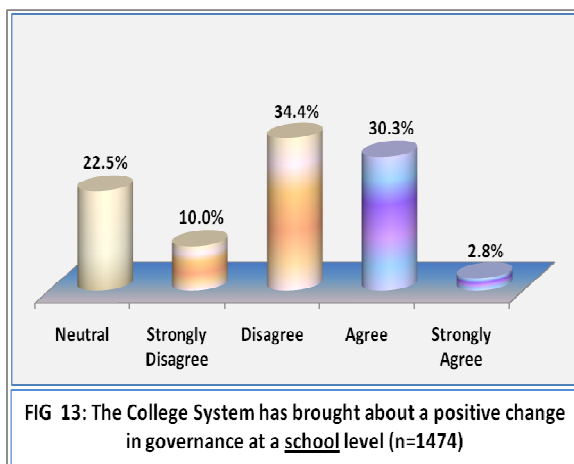
While 67.1 per cent of respondents are in agreement that colleges should have greater autonomy (Fig 7), 48.8 per cent feel that College System is instrumental in the implementation of the decentralisation policy and practices (Fig 8). Of the 1474 respondents, 50.4 per cent do not feel that the College System has brought about greater autonomy at the classroom level (Fig 9) [with 26.4 per cent being noncommittal]; 40.4 per cent feel that schools now have greater autonomy (Fig 10) [with 23.1 per cent being noncommittal]. In all, 81.9 per cent of respondents feel that the College System has still not delivered in terms of devolution and flexibility on such central issues as syllabi and text books (Fig 11). With regard to bureaucracy, 68.7 per cent of respondents feel that this has increased because of the College System (Fig 12).





Governance

Asked to indicate the extent to which the College System has brought about a positive change in governance, 44.4 per cent, 43.7 per cent and 42.2 per cent feel that this is not the case at a school level (Fig 13) [with 22.5 per cent being noncommittal], at a college level (Fig 14), and at a directorate/national level (Fig 15) [with 30.1 per cent being noncommittal], respectively.



Logistic Collaboration and Cooperation

In all, 57 per cent and 45.8 per cent of respondents are in agreement that the College System has resulted in more logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of sharing of facilities (Fig 16) and of resources (Fig 17) within a college, respectively. With regard to logistic collaboration and cooperation across colleges, 52.9 per cent of respondents feel that this is not the case for the sharing of facilities (Fig 18) [with 25 per cent being noncommittal], and resources (Fig 19) [with 21.5 per cent being noncommittal]. Of the 1474 respondents, 41.3 per cent feel that the College System has brought about greater interaction and collaboration with the external community (Fig 20) [with 27.1 per cent being noncommittal].

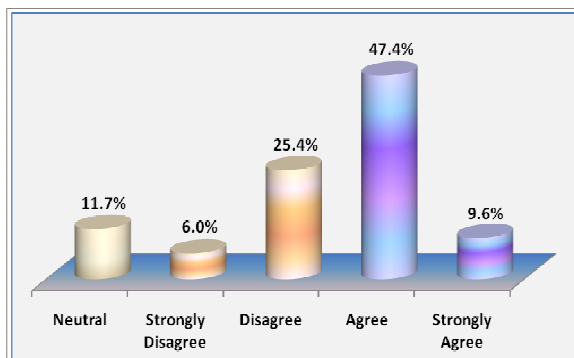


FIG 16: The College System has resulted in more logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of sharing of facilities among schools within a college (n=1474)

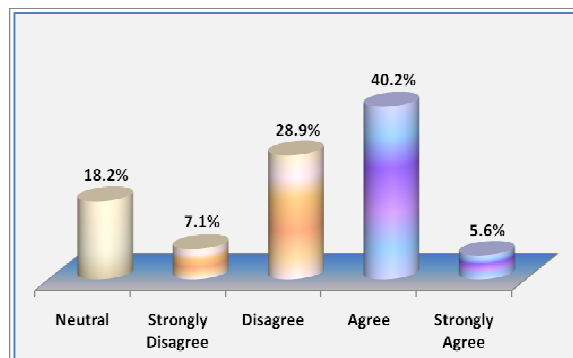


FIG 17: The College System has resulted in more logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of sharing of resources among schools within a college (n=1474)

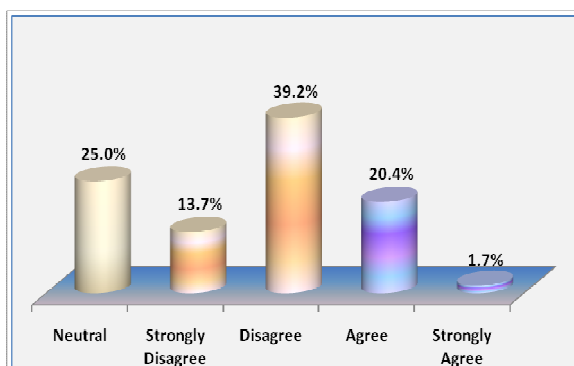


FIG 18: The College System has resulted in more logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of sharing of facilities among schools from different colleges (n=1474)

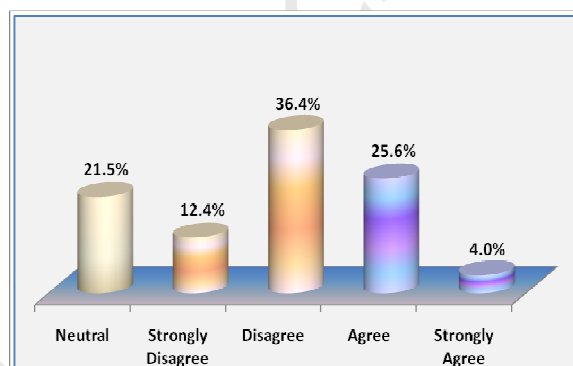


FIG 19: The College System has resulted in more logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of sharing of resources among schools from different colleges (n=1474)

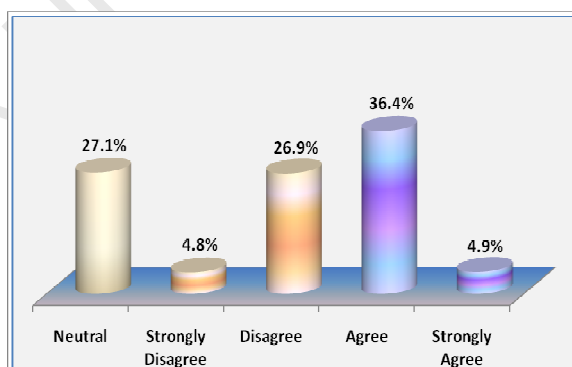
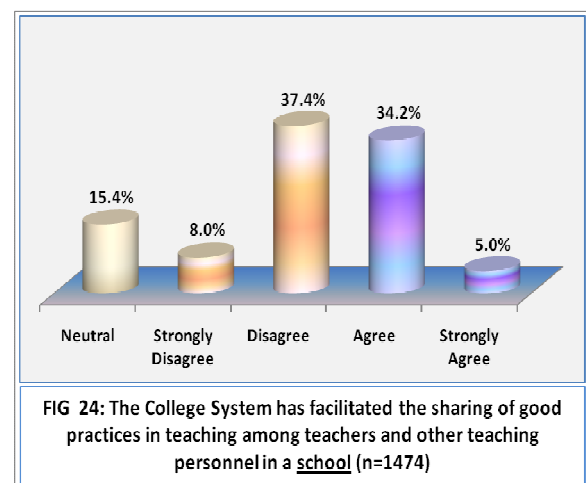
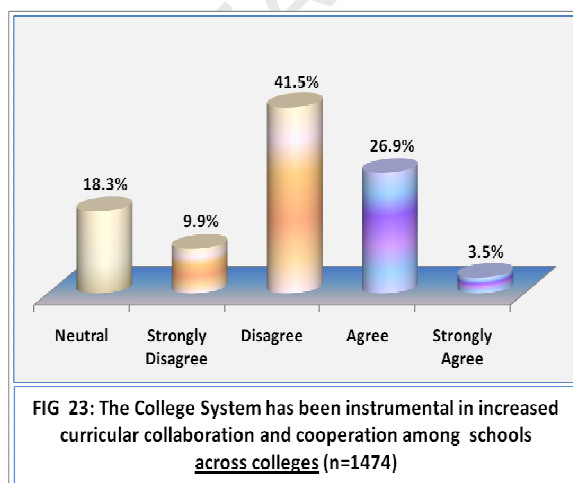
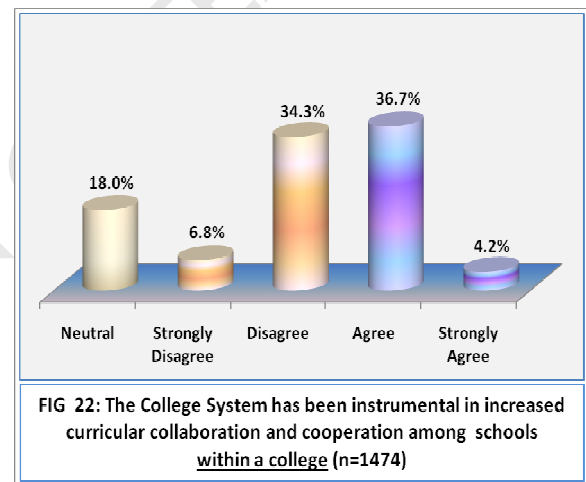
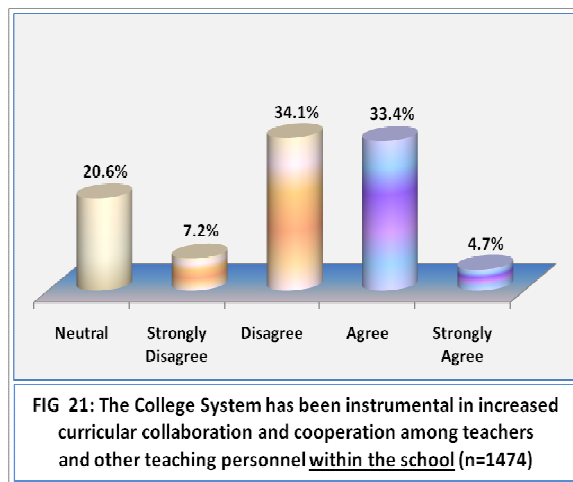
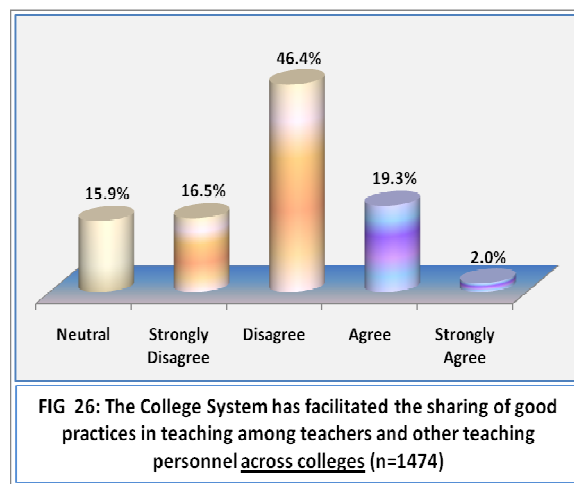
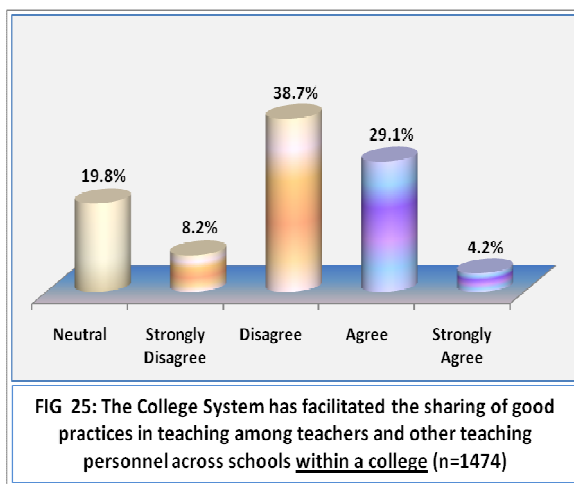


FIG 20: The College System has brought about greater interaction and collaboration with the external community (eg local councils, and NGOs)(n=1474)

Curricular Collaboration and Sharing of Good Practices

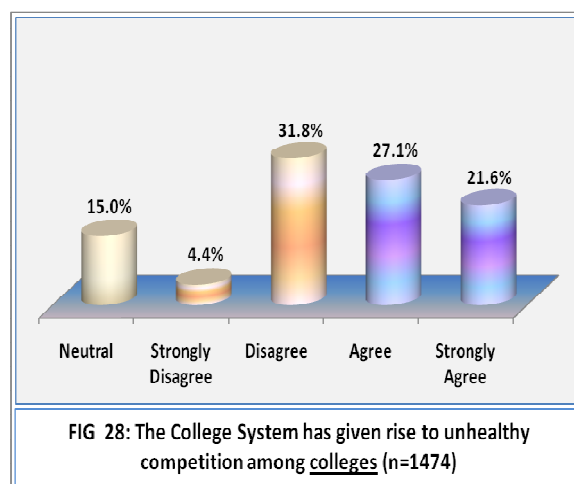
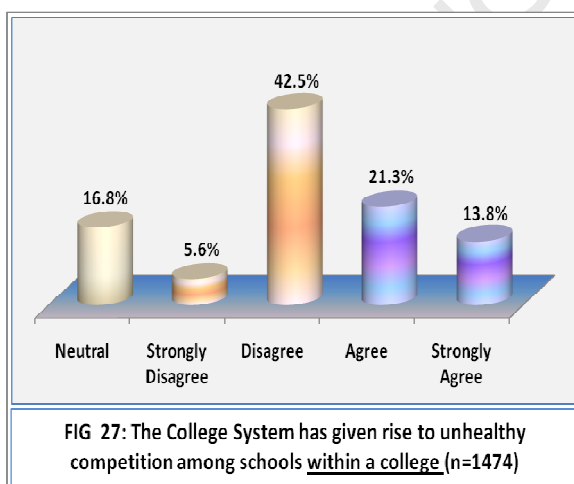
While about four in ten of the respondents (41.3 per cent) feel that the College System has not been instrumental in increased curricular collaboration at a school level (Fig 21) [with 20.6 per cent being noncommittal], 40.9 per cent feel that there was indeed increased curricular collaboration at a college level (Fig 22). More than half the respondents (51.4 per cent) feel that this has not been the case across colleges (Fig 23). With regard to facilitating the sharing of good practices in teaching, 45.2 per cent of respondents are in disagreement that this is the case at a school level (Fig 24), 46.9 per cent at a college level (Fig 25) [with 19.8 per cent being noncommittal], and 62.9 per cent across colleges (Fig 26).

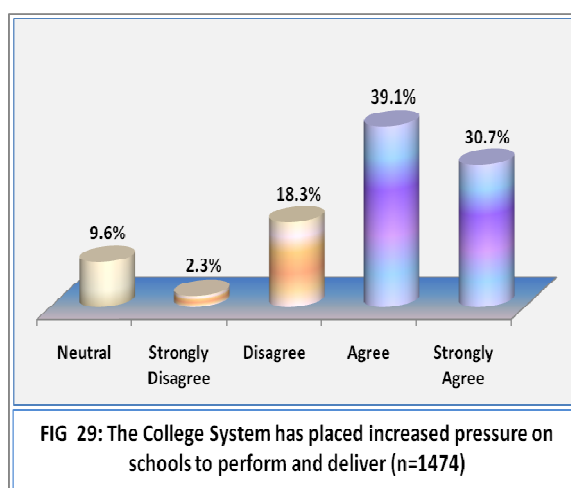




Competition

While 48.1 per cent of the respondents feel that the College System has not given rise to unhealthy competition among schools within a college (Fig 27), 48.7 per cent feel it has given rise to unhealthy competition among colleges (Fig 28). Fig 29 shows that 69.8 per cent of the 1474 respondents feel that the College System has placed increased pressure on the schools to perform and deliver.





Impact on Personnel and Operations

Requested to indicate the extent to which they feel that the College System has been instrumental in fostering a greater readiness among education personnel to generate, and to implement reforms, 44.7 per cent (Fig 30) [with 24.8 per cent being noncommittal], and 40.7 per cent of respondents (Fig 32) [with 19.9 per cent being noncommittal] are in agreement, respectively. With regard to a greater readiness to accept reforms 45.7 per cent (Fig 31) feel that this is not the case. Asked about the introduction of a number of roles, 66.1 per cent of respondents are in agreement that these resulted in increased support to schools and colleges (Fig 33). In all, 84.8 per cent of respondents are in agreement that the College System has brought about an increase in the volume of work both to personnel in the teaching grades as well as the school management teams (Fig 34). Moreover, 45.7 per cent feel that the College System has not brought about a quality leap in how schools are operating (Fig 35) [with 27 per cent being noncommittal]. Of the 1474 respondents, 71.3 per cent are in agreement that the College System has deprived schools of their identity (e.g. school uniform and school's name) (Fig 36). Asked to indicate the extent to which they feel that the catchment area of a college should be determined on the basis of a social dimension rather than geographical convenience, 50.8 per cent are in agreement (Fig 37). Moreover, 80.2 per cent of respondents feel that the setting up of very large schools as a result of the College System is rendering schools even more impersonal to students (Fig 38).

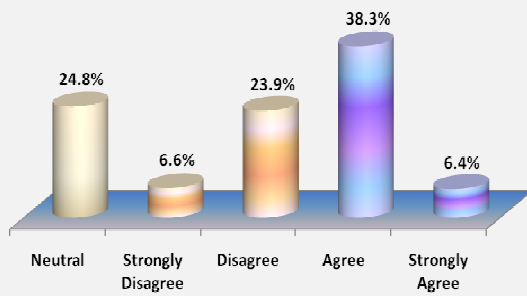


FIG 30: The College System has been instrumental in fostering a greater readiness among education personnel to generate reforms (n=1474)

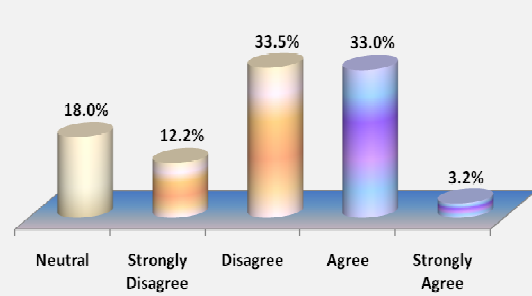


FIG 31: The College System has been instrumental in fostering a greater readiness among education personnel to accept reforms (n=1474)

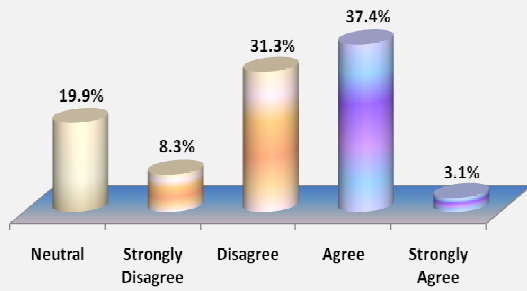


FIG 32: The College System has been instrumental in fostering a greater readiness among education personnel to implement reforms (n=1474)

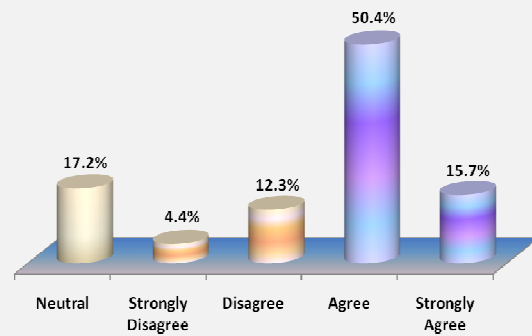


FIG 33: The College System has introduced a number of roles (including Precincts Officer, Prefect of Discipline, Career Advisor, Counsellors, Social Workers and Youth Workers) which brought increased support in colleges and respective schools (n=1474)

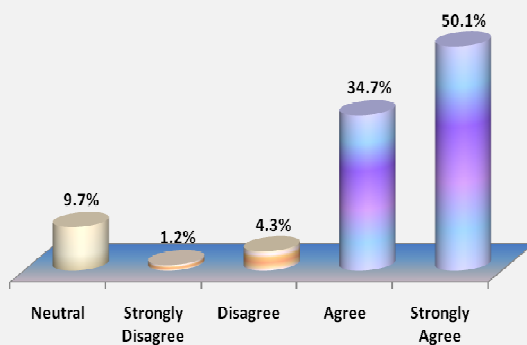


FIG 34: The College System has brought an increase in the volume of work both to personnel in the teaching grades as well as the School Management Team (n=1474)

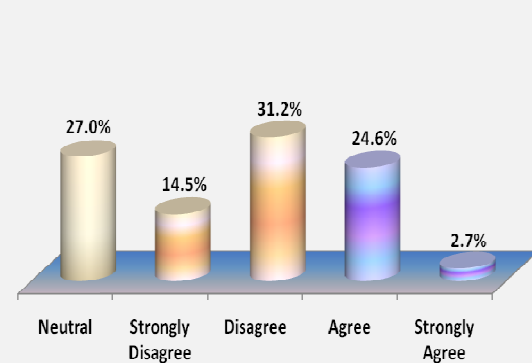
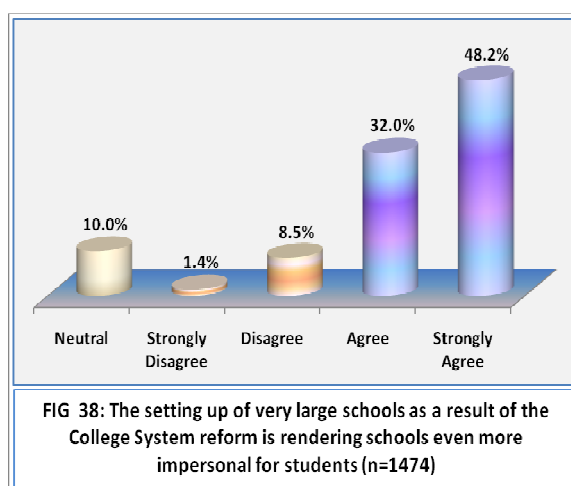
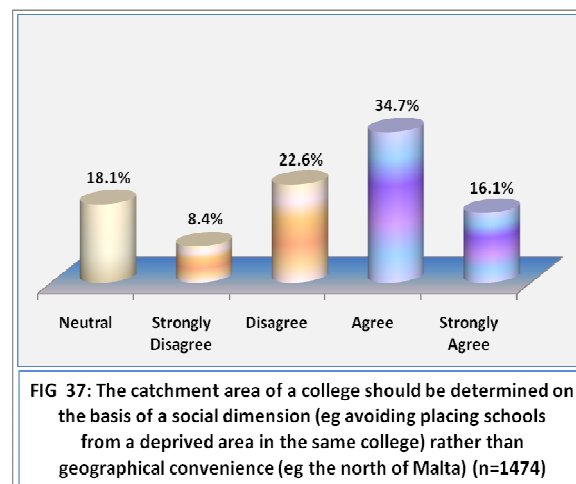
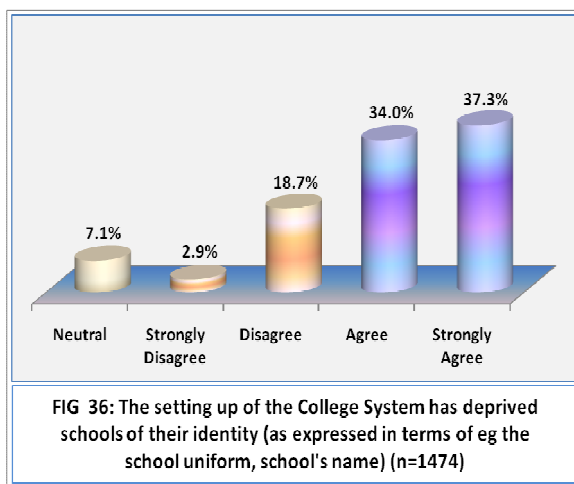
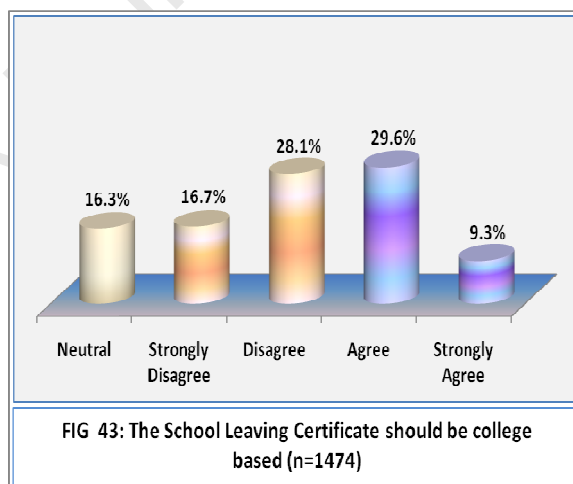
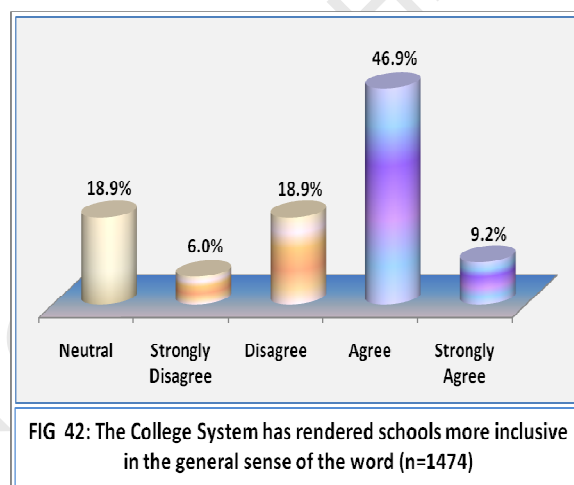
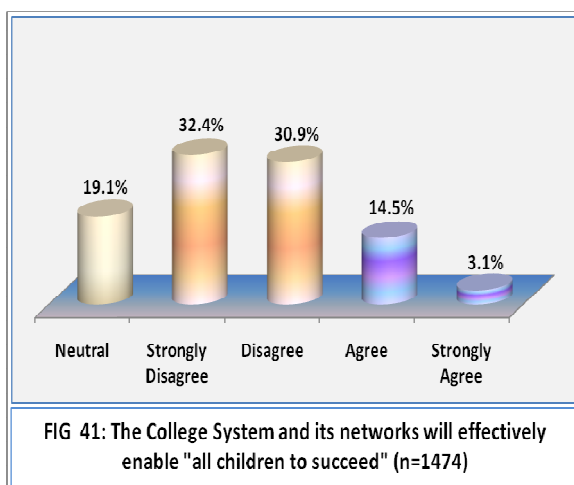
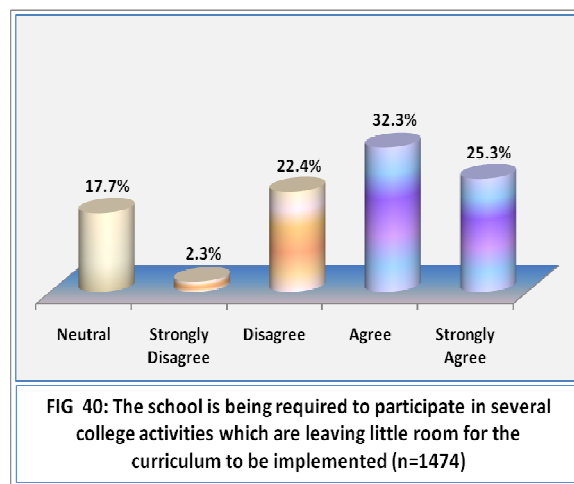
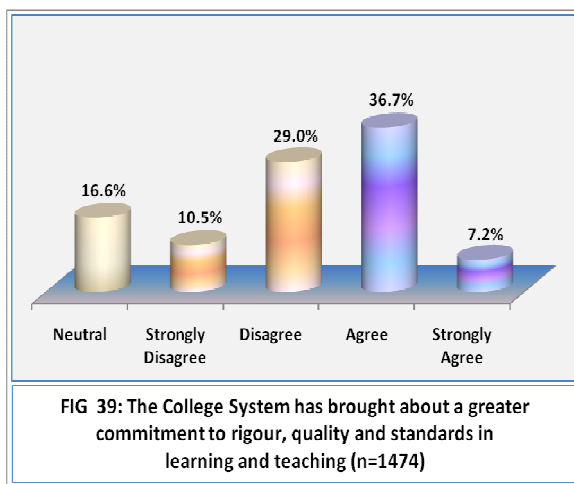


FIG 35: The College System has brought about a quality leap in how schools are operating (n=1474)



Impact on Student Entitlement

Asked to indicate the extent to which they feel that the College System has brought about a greater commitment to rigour, quality and standards in learning and teaching, 43.9 per cent of respondents are in agreement (Fig 39). Fig 40 shows that 57.6 per cent of respondents feel that participation in the various college activities is leaving little room for the implementation of the curriculum. Of the 1474 respondents, 63.1 per cent feel that the College System and its networks will not effectively enable “all children to succeed” (Fig 41). However, 56.1 per cent of respondents feel that the College System has rendered schools more inclusive in the general sense of the word (Fig 42). Moreover, 44.8 per cent are not in agreement that the School Leaving Certificate should be college based (Fig 43).



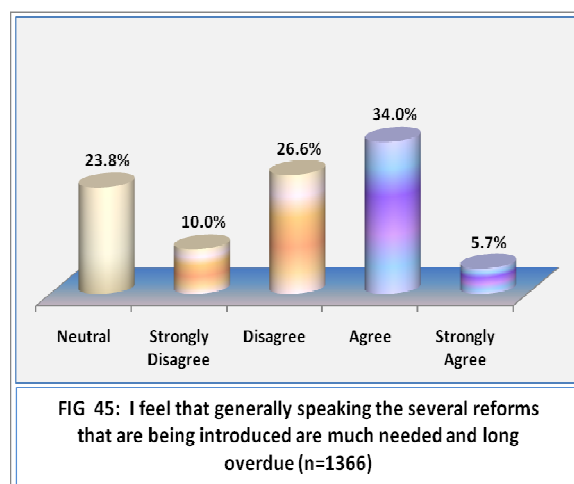
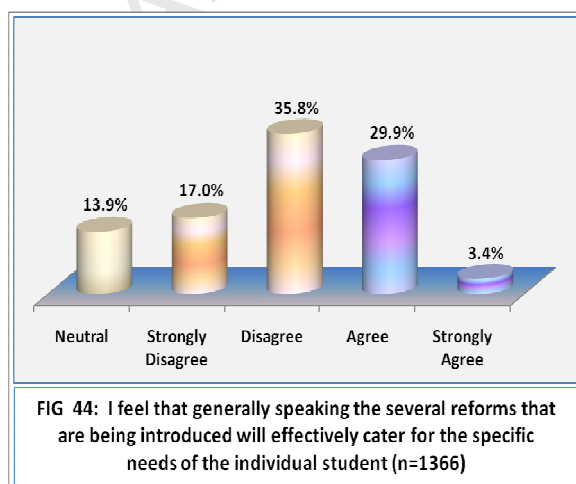
Section C: The Reforms

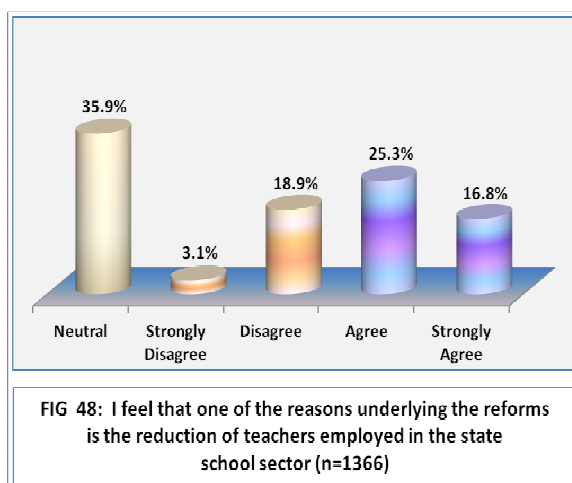
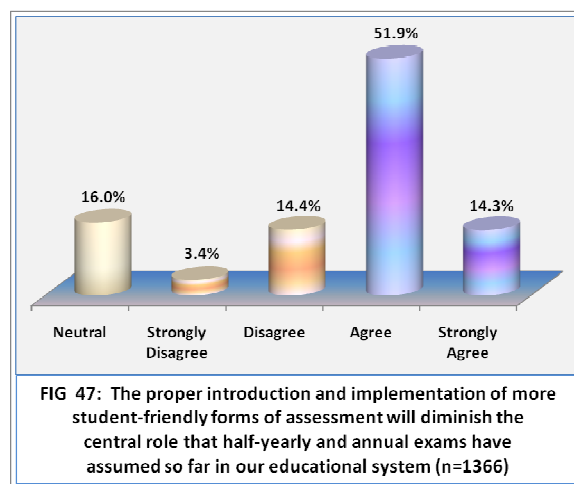
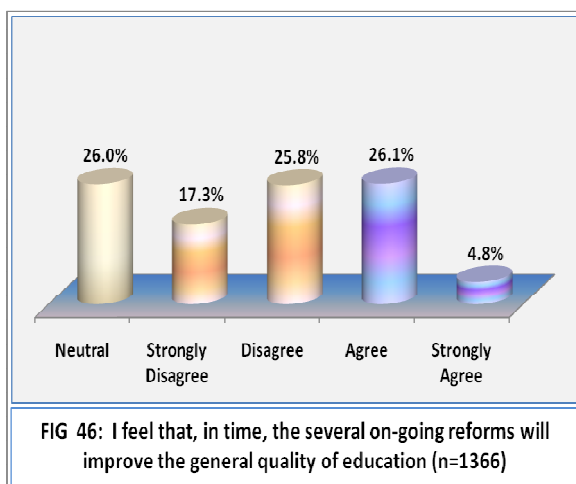
A total of 1366 respondents completed all the questions in this section. Results are organised in six themes as follows:

- The Need for the Reforms
- Preparation and Support
- Owning the Reforms
- The Rate and Pace of Implementation
- Impact on Students, Teachers and Parents
- Specific Reforms

The Need for the Reforms

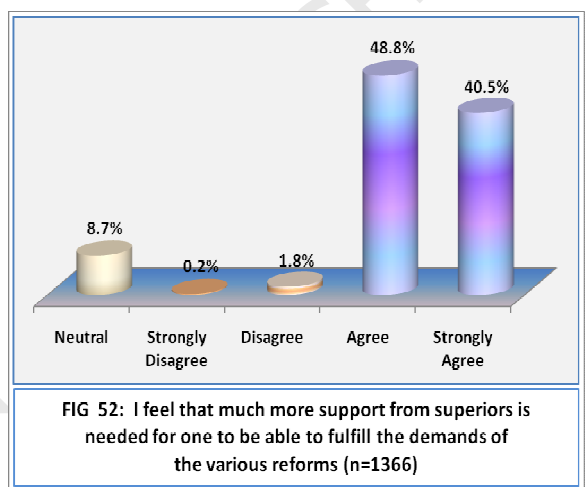
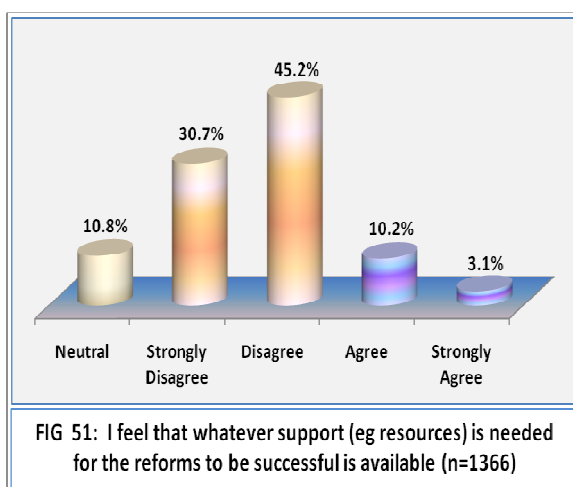
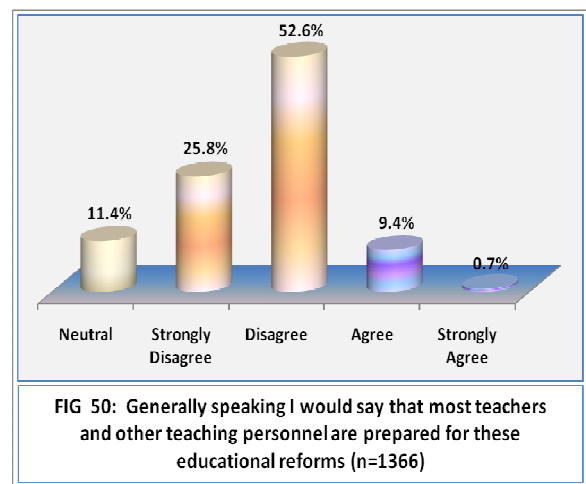
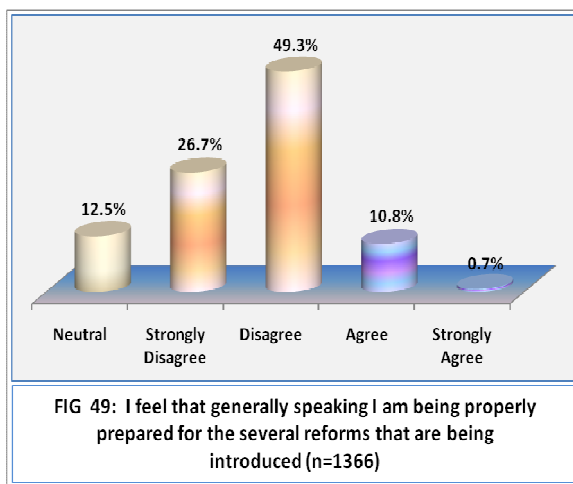
While 52.8 per cent of the 1366 respondents feel that the several reforms will not effectively cater for the specific needs of the individual students (Fig 44), 39.7 per cent feel that the reforms are much needed and long overdue (Fig 45) [with 23.8 per cent being noncommittal]. In addition, 43.1 per cent do not agree that the reforms will in time improve the general quality of education (Fig 46) [with 26 per cent being noncommittal]. Of the respondents, 66.2 per cent feel that the proper implementation of more student-friendly forms of assessment will reduce the central role that half-yearly and annual exams have assumed in our educational system (Fig 47). Asked whether they feel that one of the reasons underlying the reforms was the reduction of teachers employed in the state school sector, 42.1 per cent were in agreement (Fig 48) [with 35.9 per cent being noncommittal].





Preparation and Support

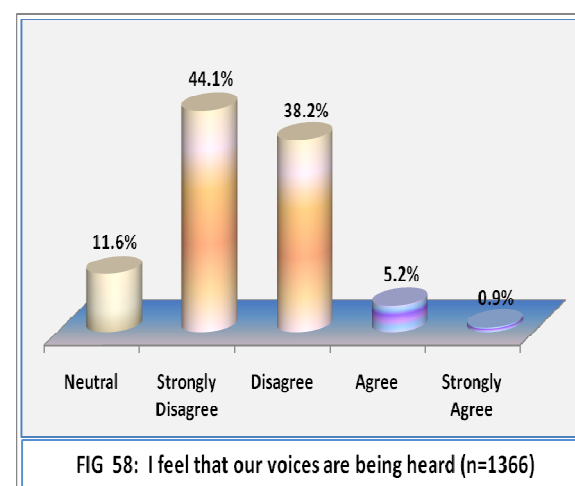
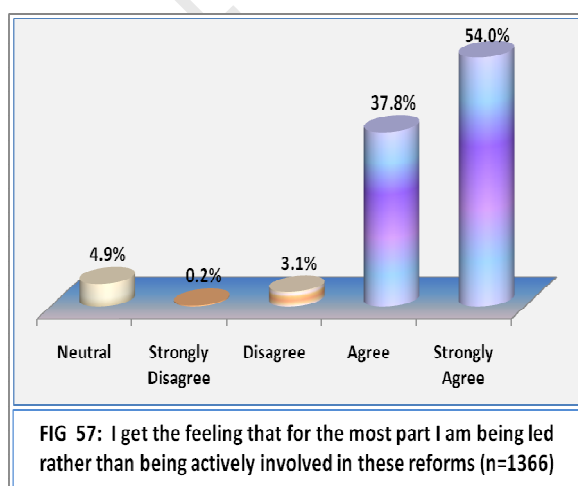
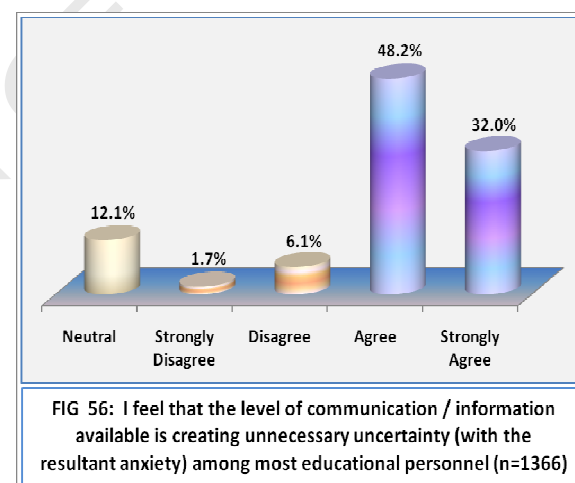
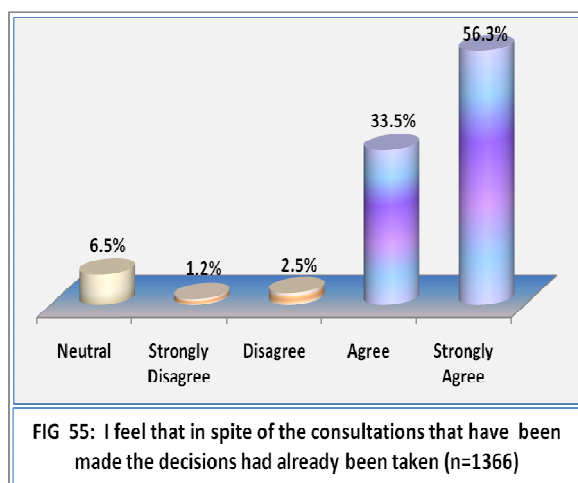
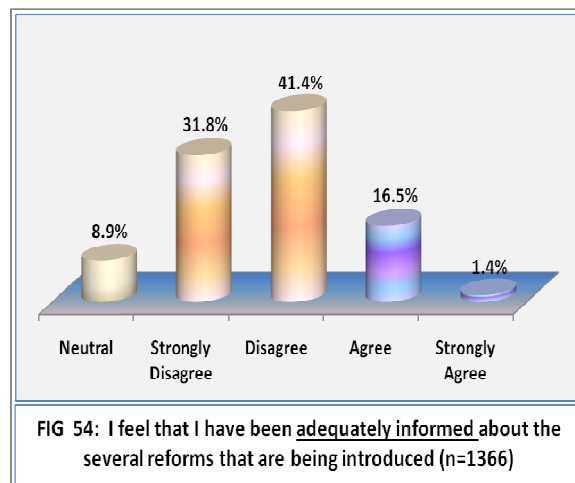
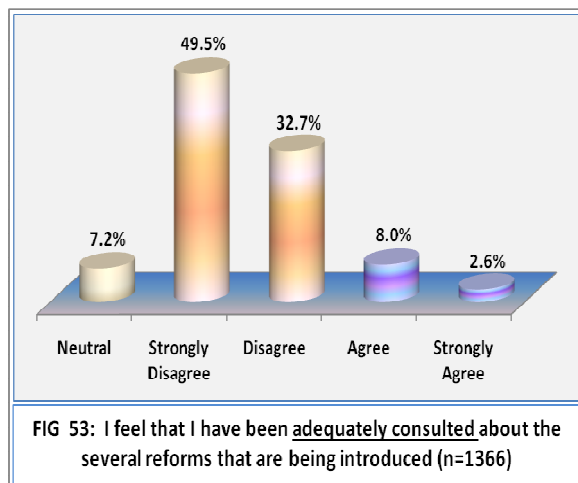
Fig 49 shows that 76 per cent do not feel that they are being properly prepared for the several reforms that are being introduced (Fig 49). Similarly, Fig 50 indicates that 78.4 per cent of the 1366 respondents feel that most teachers and other teaching personnel are not prepared for the reforms. Moreover, 75.9 per cent do not agree that the needed support (e.g. resources) for the reforms to be successful is available (Fig 51). On the other hand, 89.3 per cent are in agreement that much more support from superiors is needed if the demands of the various reforms are to be addressed (Fig 52).

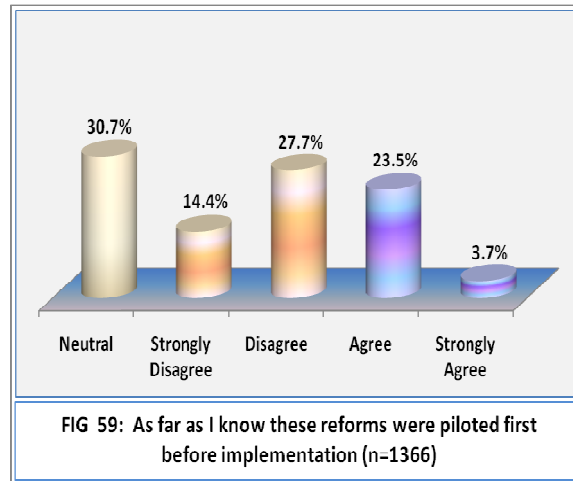


Owning the Reforms

Fig 53 shows that 82.2 per cent feel that they have not been adequately consulted about the several reforms; 73.2 per cent even feel that they were not adequately informed about the reforms (Fig 54). Of the 1366 respondents, 89.8 per cent feel that decisions had already been taken in spite of the consultations that were taking place (Fig 55). Asked whether they feel that the level of communication / information available is creating unnecessary uncertainty among most educational personnel, 80.2 per cent are in agreement (Fig 56). In all, 91.8 per cent of the respondents feel that for the most part they are being led rather than being actively involved in the reforms (Fig 57); 82.3 per cent do not feel that their voices are being heard (Fig 58).

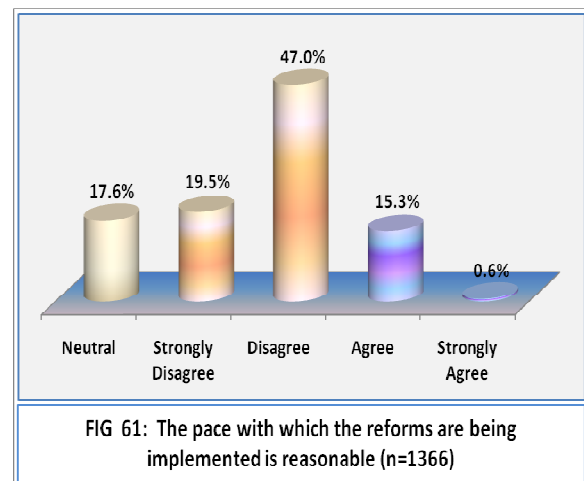
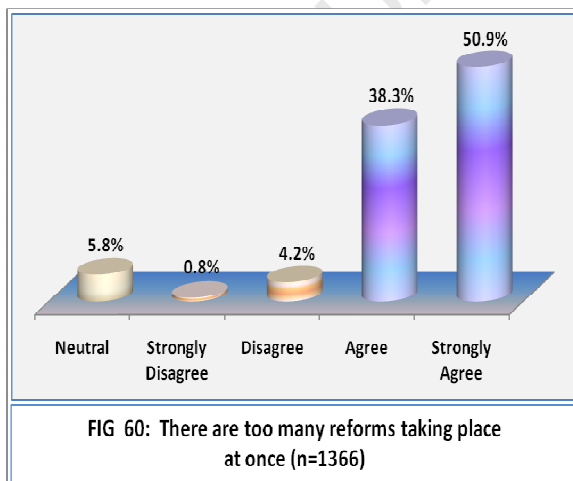
Moreover, 42.1 per cent felt that as far as they knew the reforms were not piloted first before implementation (Fig 59) [with 30.75 per cent being noncommittal].

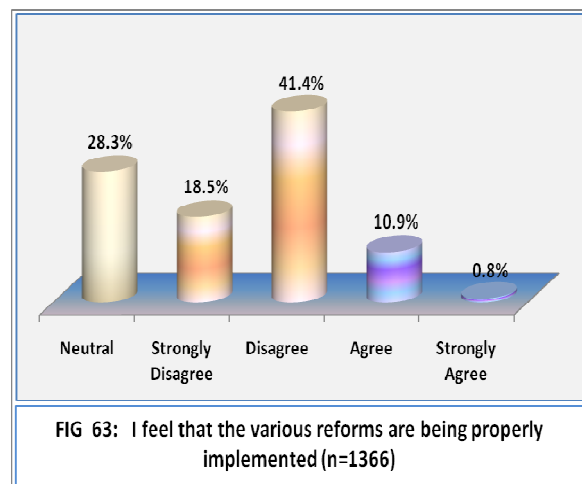
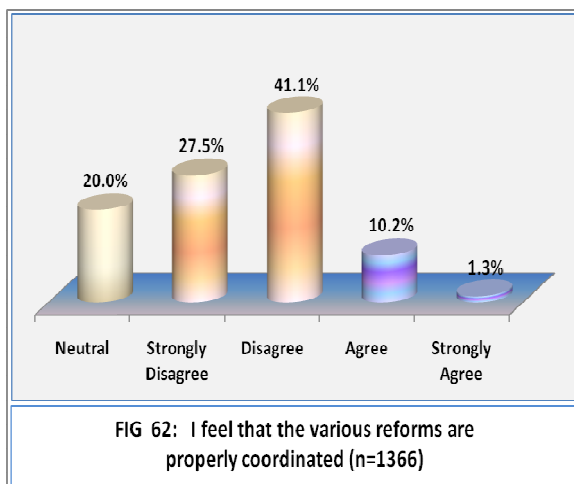




The Rate and Pace of Implementation

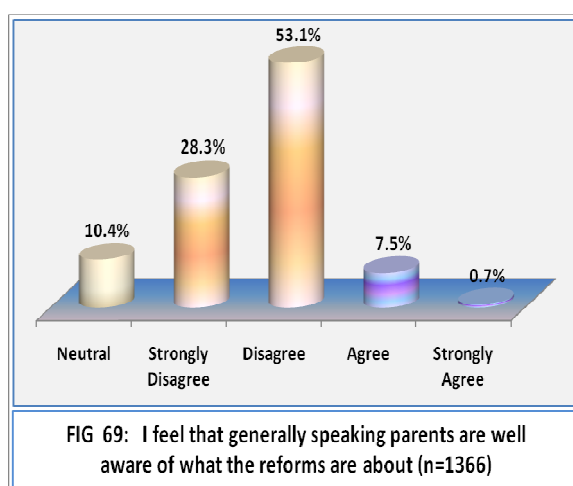
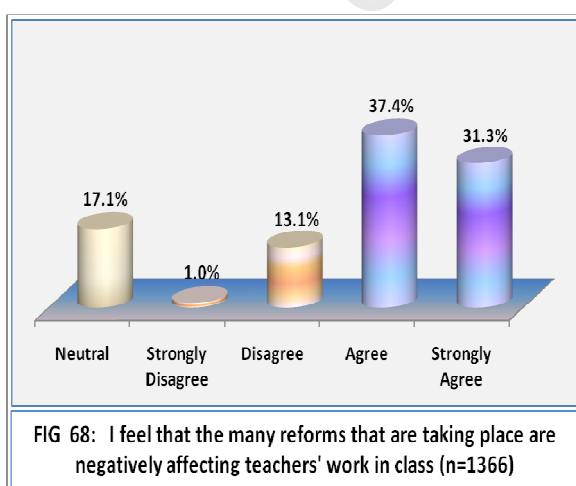
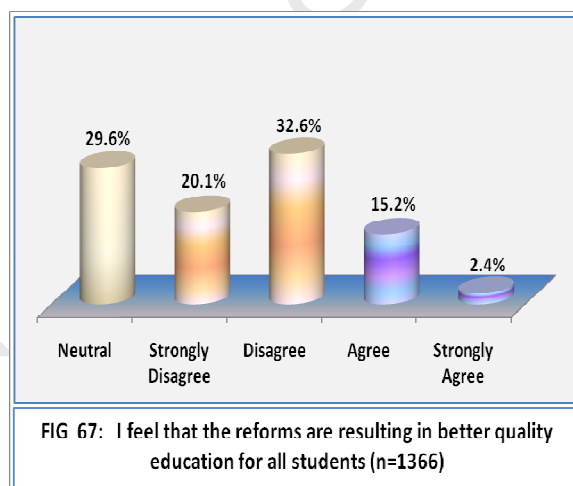
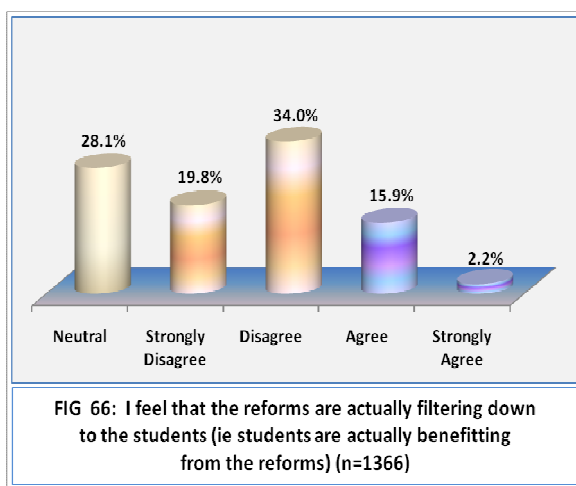
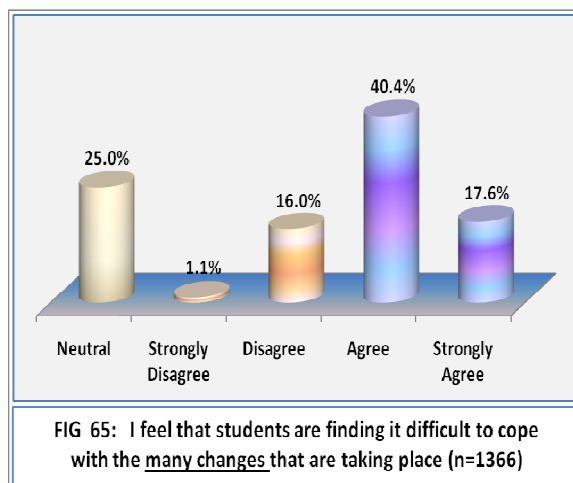
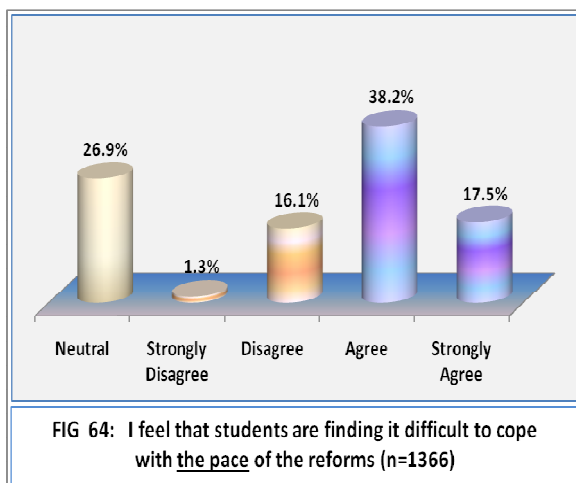
Fig 60 shows that 89.2 per cent of the 1366 respondents are in agreement that there are too many reforms taking place at same time. Moreover, 66.5 per cent do not agree that the pace with which the reforms are being implemented is reasonable (Fig 61). Of the respondents, 68.6 per cent and 59.9 per cent do not agree that the reforms are properly coordinated (Fig 62) [with 20 per cent being noncommittal] and properly implemented (Fig 63) [with 28.3 per cent being noncommittal], respectively.

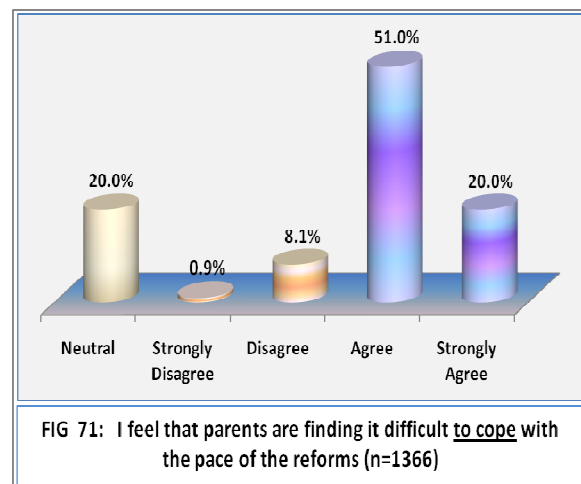
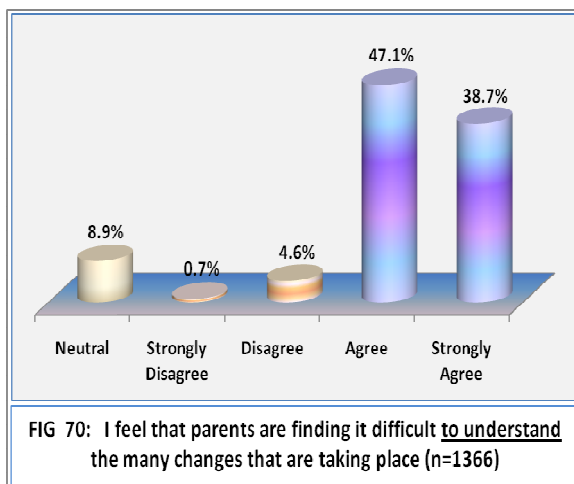




Impact on Students, Teachers and Parents

Of the 1366 respondents 55.7 per cent are in agreement that students are finding it difficult to cope with the pace of the reforms (Fig 64) [with 26.9 per cent being noncommittal]. Similarly, 58 per cent feel that students are finding it difficult to cope with the many changes that are taking place (Fig 65) [with 25 per cent being noncommittal]. Asked whether they feel that the reforms are actually filtering down to the students, 53.8 per cent do not think this is the case (Fig 66) [with 28.1 per cent being noncommittal]; nor do 52.7 per cent feel that the reforms are resulting in better quality education for all students (Fig 67) [with 29.6 per cent being noncommittal]. Moreover, 68.7 per cent feel that the many reforms that are taking place are negatively affecting teachers' work in class (Fig 68). Asked whether they feel that parents are generally well aware of what the reforms are about, 81.4 per cent are of the opinion that parents are not (Fig 69). In all, 85.8 per cent feel that parents are finding it difficult to understand the many changes that are taking place (Fig 70). Fig 71 shows that 71 per cent of respondents feel that parents are finding it difficult to cope with the pace of the reforms [with 20 per cent being noncommittal].

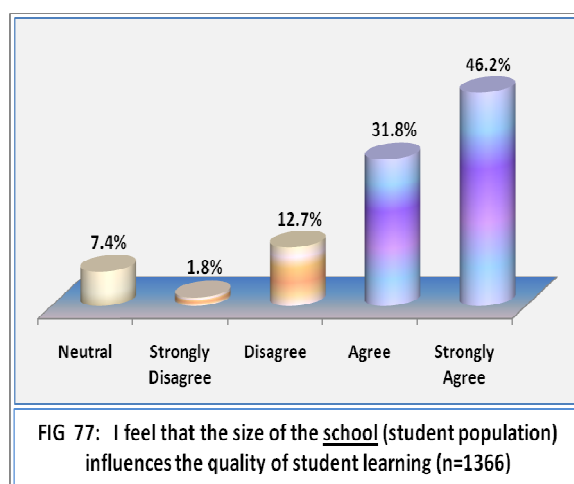
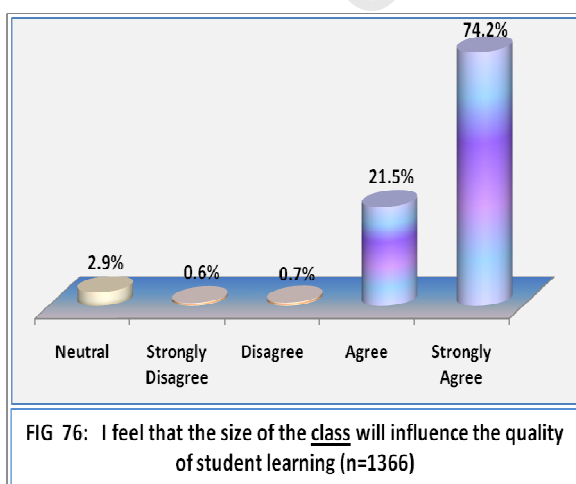
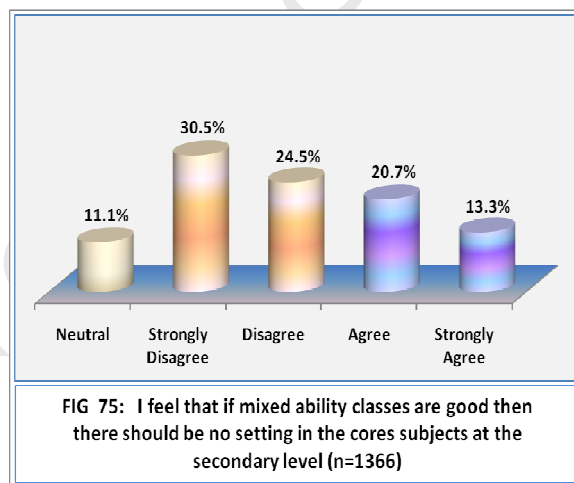
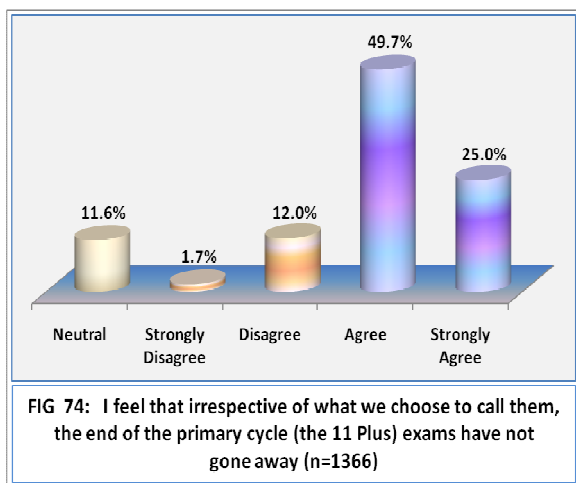
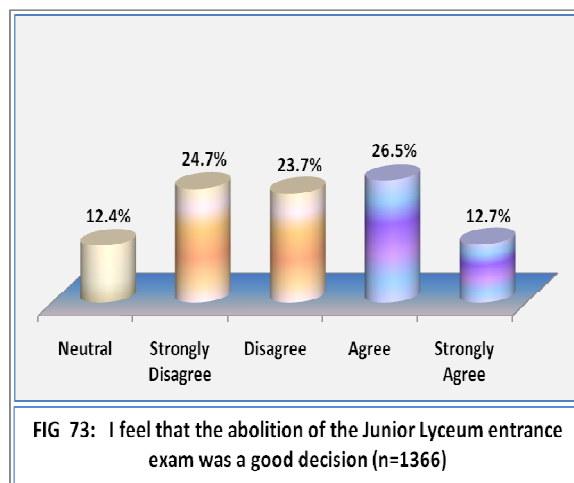
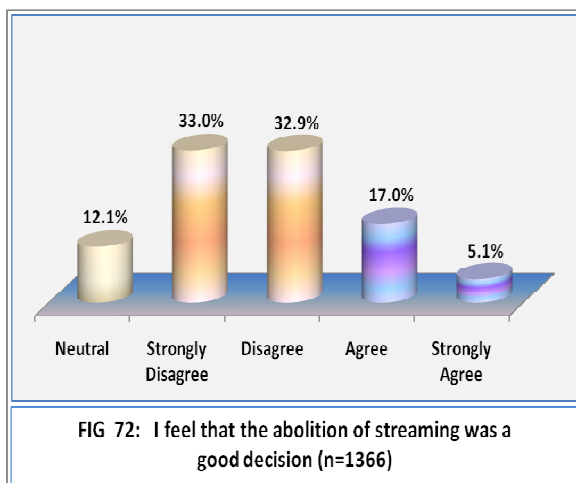


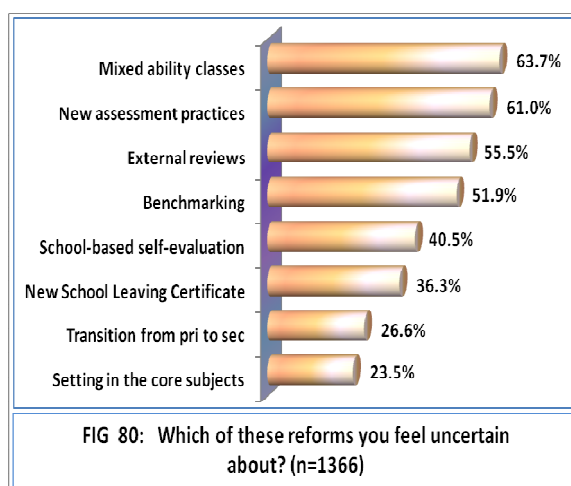
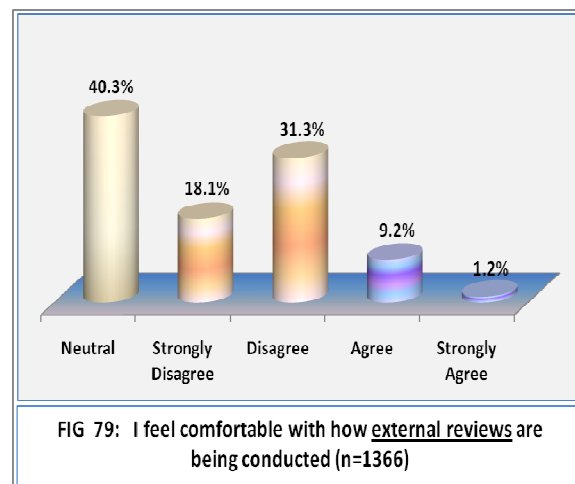
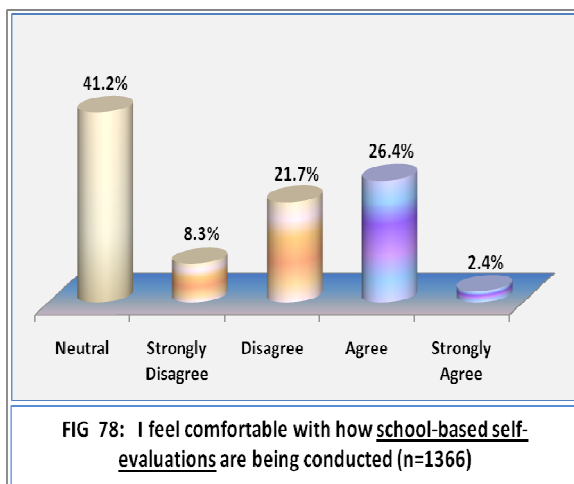


Specific Reforms

Of the 1366 respondents, 65.9 per cent and 48.4 per cent respectively do not agree that the abolition of streaming (Fig 72) and of the Junior Lyceum entrance exam (Fig 73) was a good decision. Moreover, 74.7 per cent feel that irrespective of what we choose to call them, the end of the primary cycle (11 Plus) exams have not gone away (Fig 74). Fig 75 shows that 55 per cent of respondents do not agree that there should be no setting in the core subjects at the secondary level. In addition, 95.7 per cent feel that the size of the class will influence the quality of student learning (Fig 76); 78 per cent feel the same about the size of the school (i.e. student population) (Fig 77). Fig 78 shows that 30 per cent of respondents do not feel comfortable with how school-based self-evaluation are being conducted [with 41.2 per cent being noncommittal]; nor are 49.4 per cent comfortable with how external reviews are being conducted (Fig 79) [with 40.3 per cent being noncommittal]. The last question in this section requested participants to indicate which of eight listed reforms they feel most uncertain about. The results illustrated in Fig 80 show that mixed ability teaching (63.7 per cent) and new assessment practices (61 per cent) top the list, followed by external reviews (55.5 per cent) and benchmarking (51.9 per cent). The least uncertainty is expressed in regard to the transition from primary to secondary (26.6 per cent) and setting in the core subjects (23.5 per cent).¹⁵

¹⁵ FIG 81 is omitted as Question 81 is open-ended.





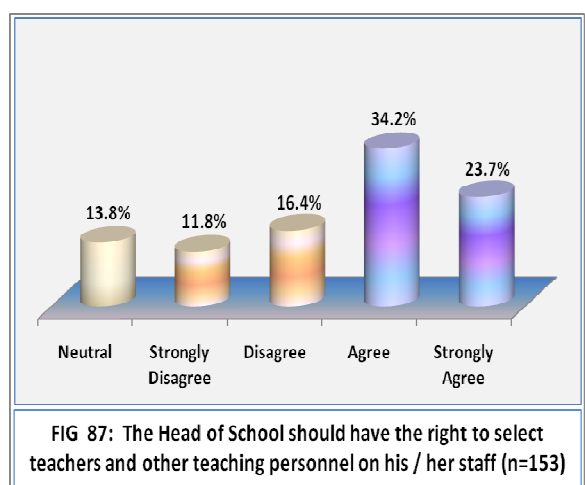
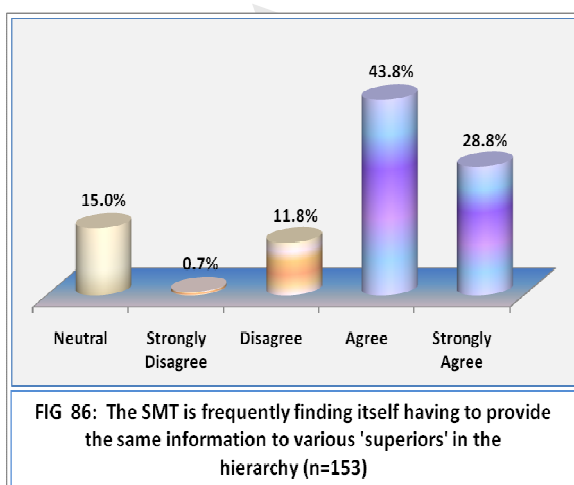
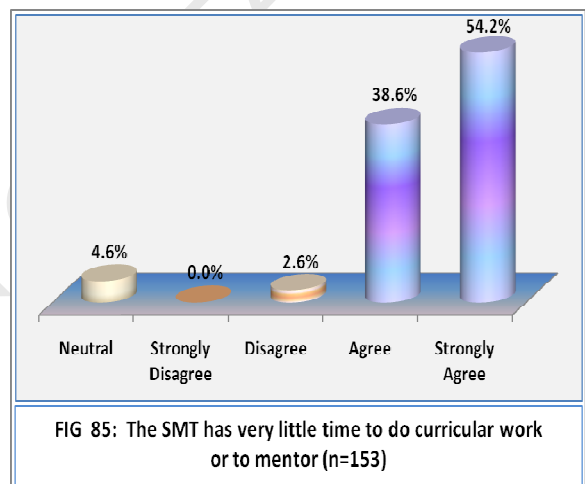
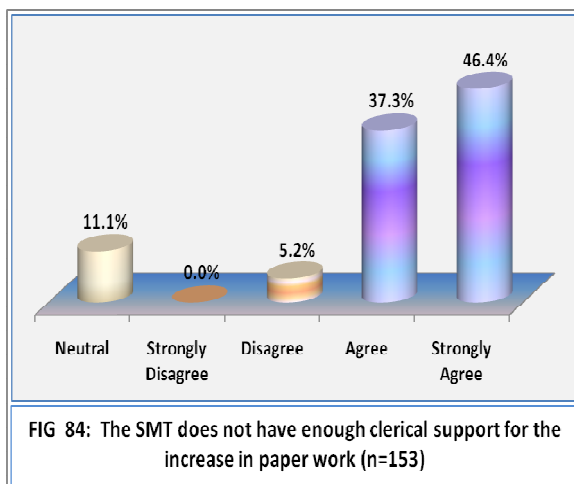
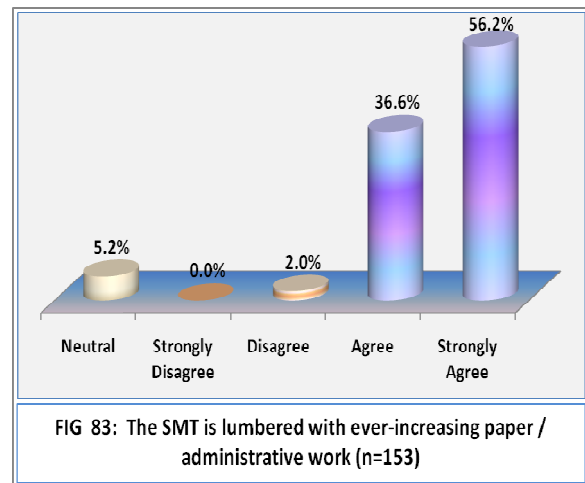
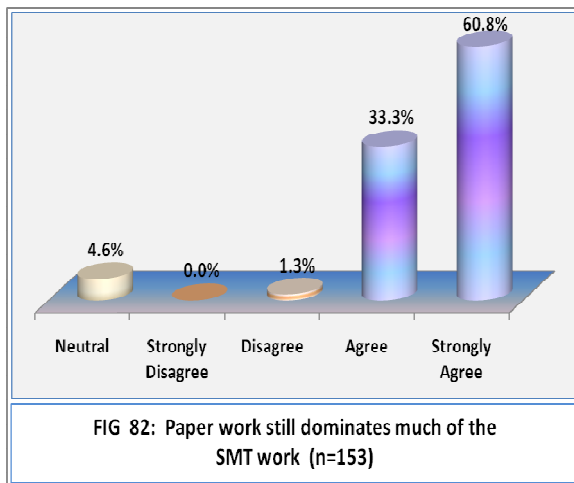
Section D: School Senior Management Team

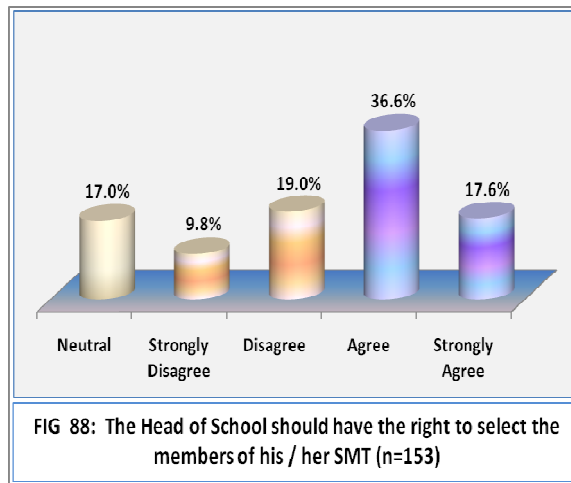
This section was completed by 153 members of the School Senior Management Team which included Heads of School, Assistant Heads, INCOs, and (at secondary level) Heads of Department. Results are organised in four themes as follows:

- The Role of the SMT
- Collegiality and Support
- The College Principal
- The Directorates

The Role of the SMT

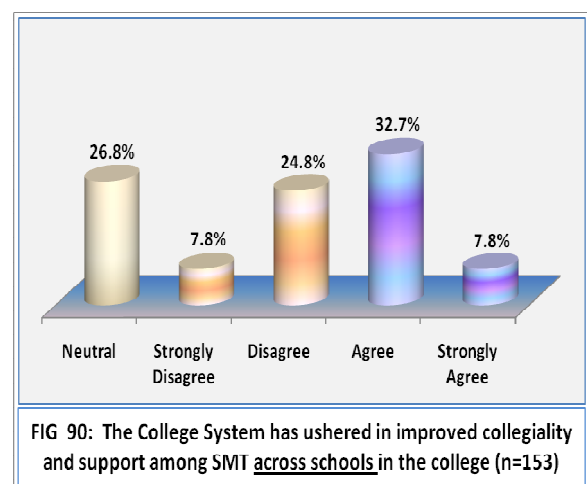
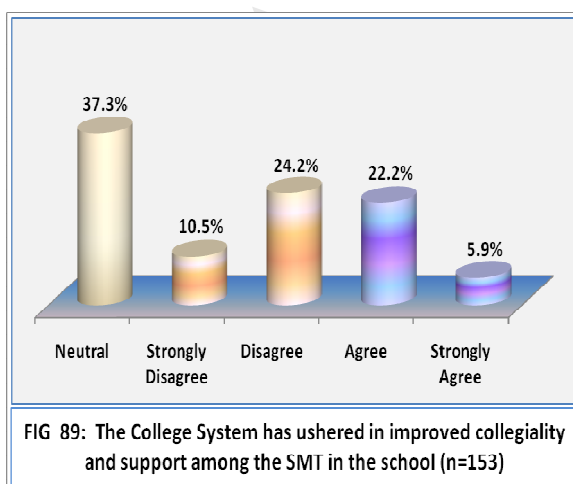
Of the 153 SMT respondents 94.1 per cent are in agreement that paper work still dominates much of their work (Fig 82). Similarly, 92.8 per cent feel that they are lumbered with ever-increasing paper/administrative work (Fig 83). In addition, 83.7 per cent are in agreement that they do not have enough clerical support for the increase in paper work (Fig 84). The result of all this, as 92.8 per cent of respondents indicate, is that they have very little time to do curricular work or to mentor (Fig 85). Moreover, 72.6 per cent are in agreement that the SMT is frequently finding itself having to provide the same information to various 'superiors' in the hierarchy (Fig 86). In all, 57.9 per cent of respondents are in agreement that the Head of School should have the right to select teachers and other teaching personnel on his/her staff (Fig 87); 54.2 per cent agree that the Head should also have the right to select members of his/her SMT (Fig 88).

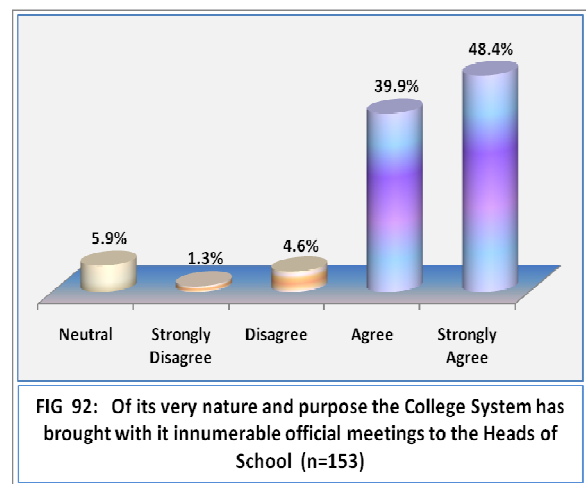
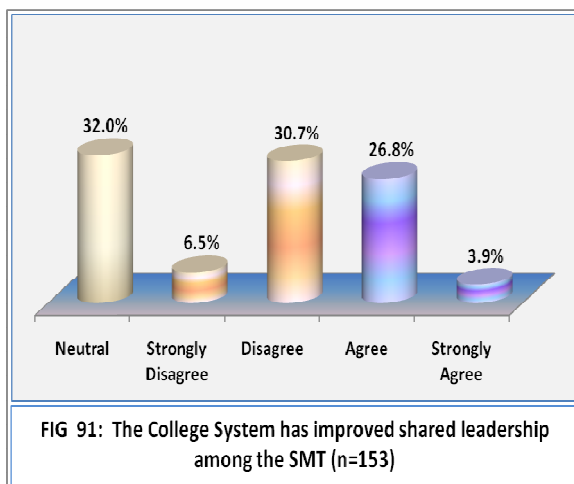




Collegiality and Support

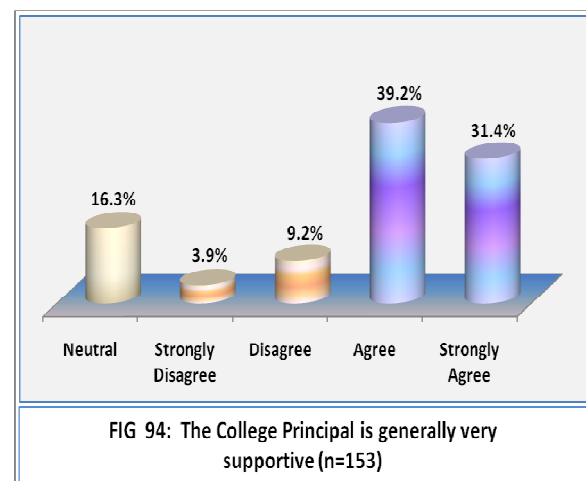
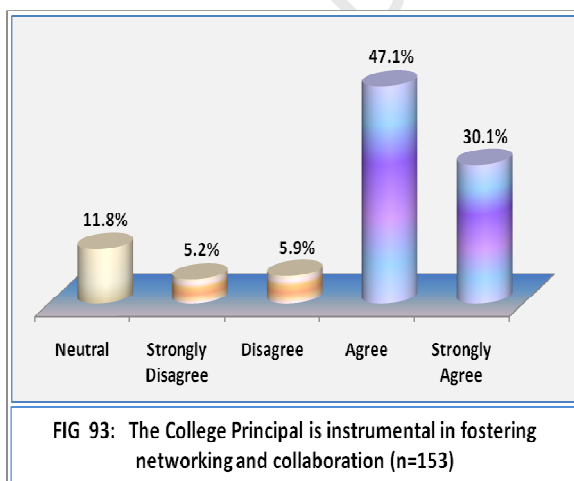
Asked whether the College System has ushered in improved collegiality and support among SMT, 34.7 per cent do not feel that this is the case at a school level (Fig 89) [with 37.3 per cent being noncommittal]; however, 40.5 per cent feel that this is the case across schools in the college (Fig 90) [with 26.8 per cent being noncommittal]. Of the 153 respondents, 37.2 per cent disagree that the College System has improved shared leadership among the SMT (Fig 91) [with 36 per cent being noncommittal]; 88.3 per cent are in agreement that the College System has brought about with it innumerable official meetings to the Heads of School (Fig 92).

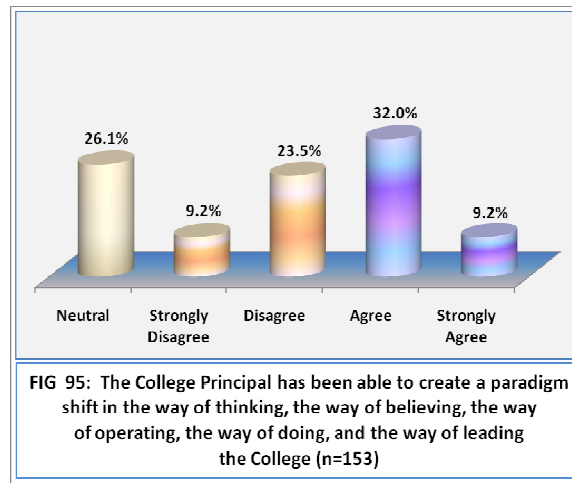




The College Principal

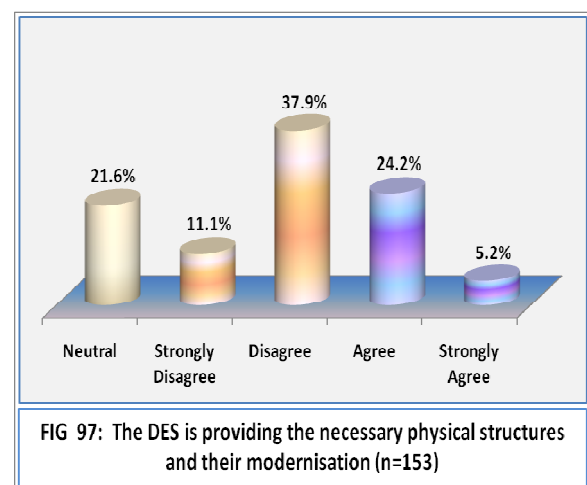
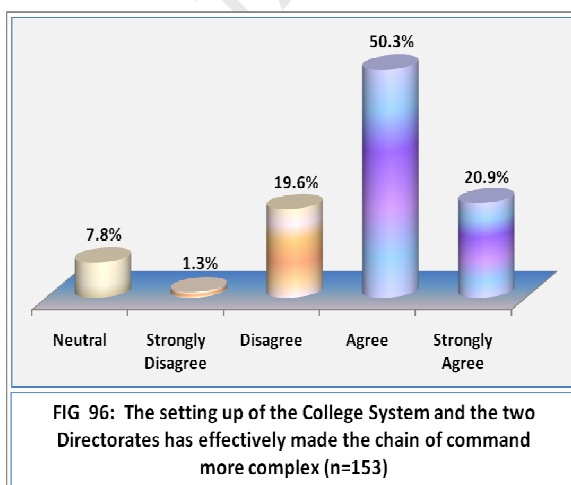
Fig 93 shows that 77.2 per cent of SMT respondents are in agreement that the College Principal is instrumental in fostering networking and collaboration. In all, 70.6 per cent feel that their College Principal is generally very supportive (Fig 94). Asked whether the College Principal has been able to create a paradigm shift in the way of thinking, the way of believing, the way of operating, the way of doing, and the way of thinking in the College, 41.2 per cent are in agreement (Fig 95) [with 26.1 per cent being noncommittal].

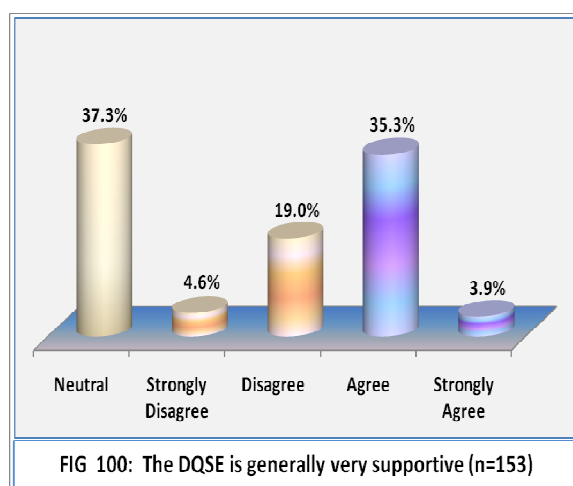
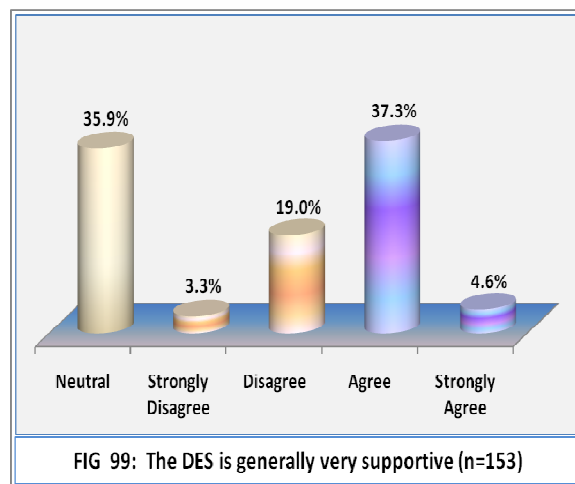
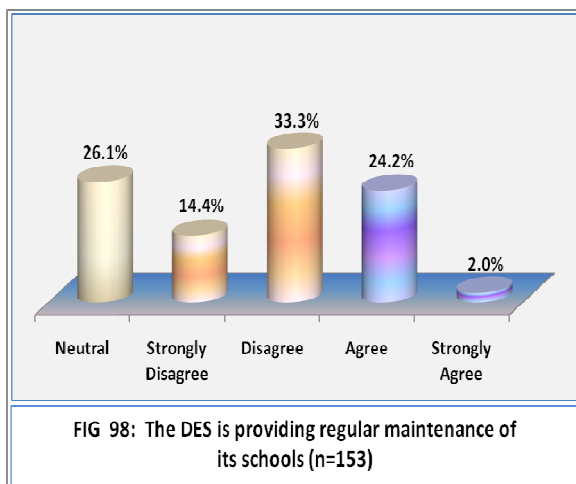




The Directorates

Asked to indicate whether the setting up of the College System and the two Directorates has effectively made the chain of command more complex, 71.2 per cent felt that this is the case (Fig 96). Moreover, 49 per cent of the 153 SMT respondents do not agree that the DES is providing the necessary physical structures and their modernization (Fig 97) [with 21.6 per cent being noncommittal]; nor do 47.7 per cent agree that the DES is providing regular maintenance of its schools (Fig 98) [with 26.1 per cent being noncommittal]. Moreover, 41.9 per cent are in agreement that the DES is generally very supportive (Fig 99) [with 35.9 per cent being noncommittal] and 39.2 per cent feel the same about support from the DQSE (Fig 100) [with 37.3 per cent being noncommittal].





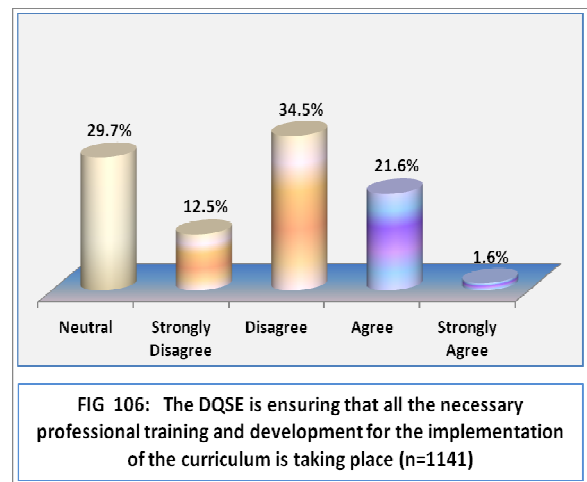
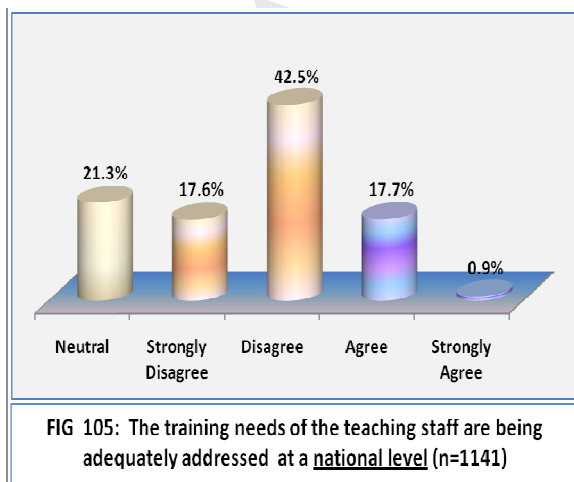
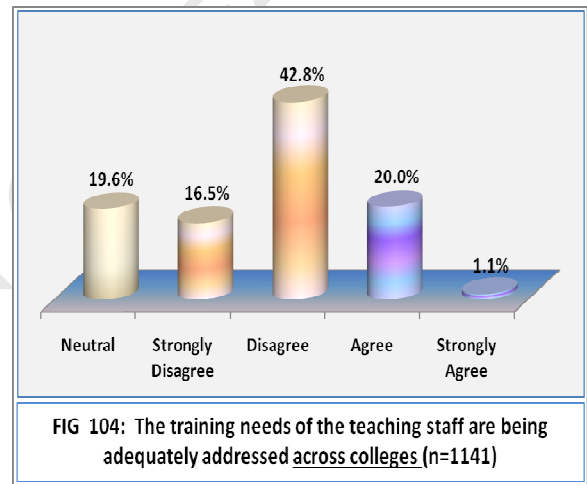
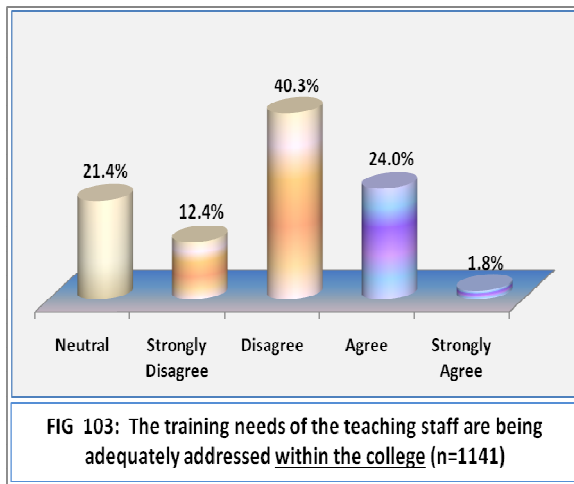
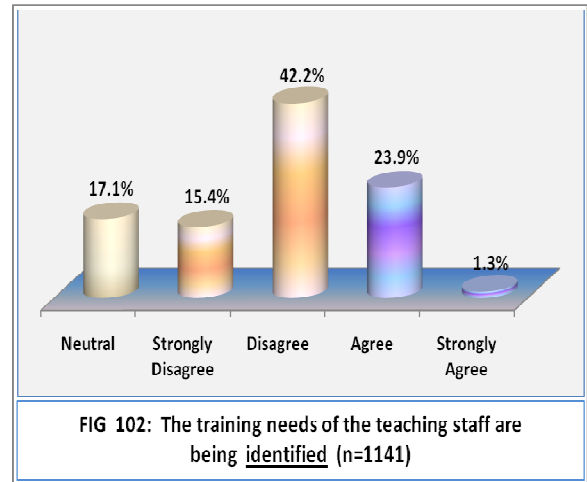
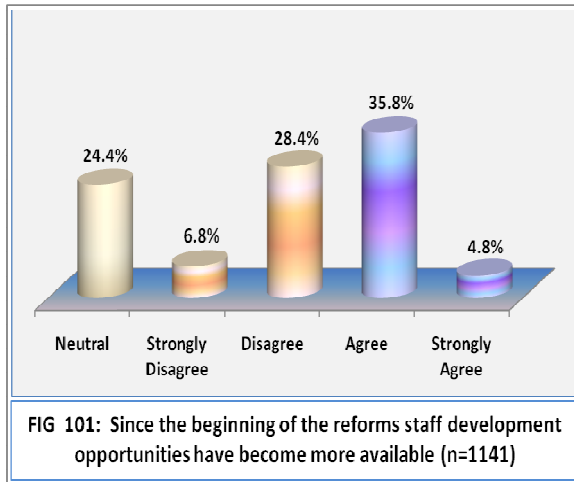
Section E: Teachers, Instructors, KAs and LSAs

This section was completed by 1141 participants from the various teaching grades. A set of five questions directed solely at teachers and Instructors was answered by a total of 902 respondents. Results are organised in seven themes as follows:

- Professional Training and Development
- Curricular Collaboration and Cooperation
- The SMT
- The Directorates
- Impact of Specific Reforms
- Specific Preparation (Teachers and Instructors only)
- The Student Load in a Mixed Ability Class (Teachers and Instructors only)

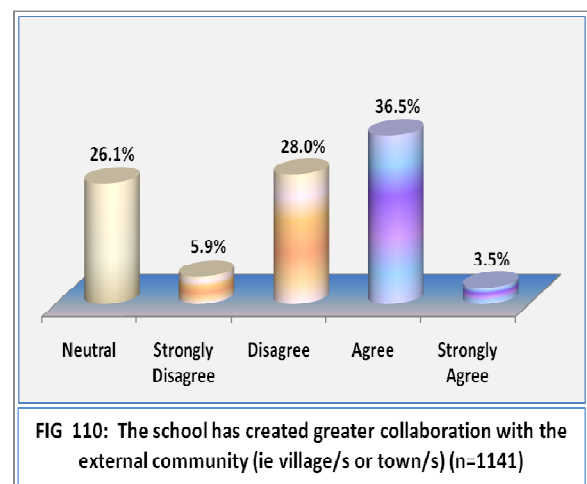
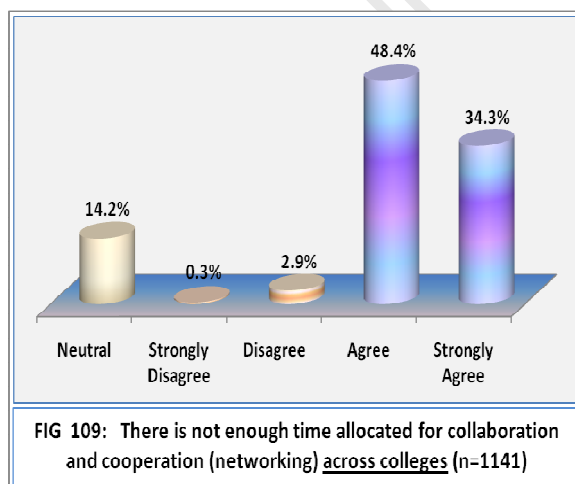
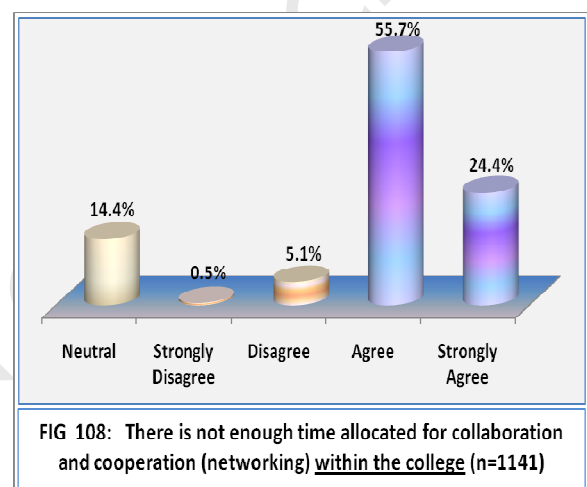
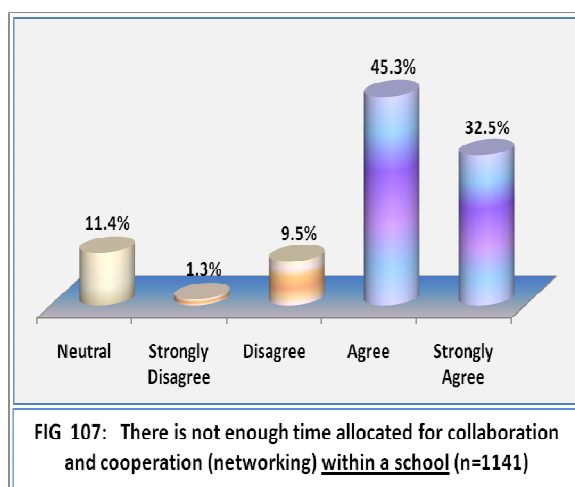
Professional Training and Development

Of the 1141 respondents, 40.6 per cent are in agreement that since the beginning of the reforms staff development opportunities have become more available (Fig 101) [with 24.4 per cent being noncommittal]. However, 57.6 per cent do not agree that the training needs of teaching staff are being identified (Fig 102). Asked to indicate whether they feel that the training needs of staff are being adequately addressed, 52.7 per cent of respondents feel that this is not the case within their college (Fig 103) [with 21.4 per cent being noncommittal], 59.3 per cent feel that this is not the case across colleges (Fig 104) [with 19.6 per cent being noncommittal], and 60.1 per cent feel that this is not the case at a national level (Fig 105) [with 21.3 per cent being noncommittal]. Fig 106 shows that 47 per cent of respondents do not agree that the DQSE is ensuring that all the necessary professional training and development for the implementation of the curriculum is taking place [with 29.7 per cent being noncommittal].



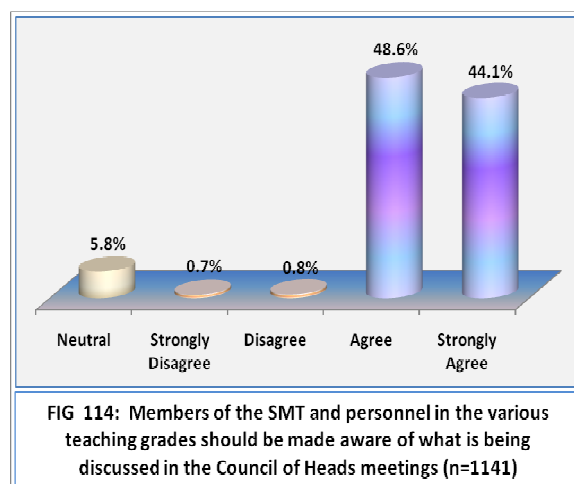
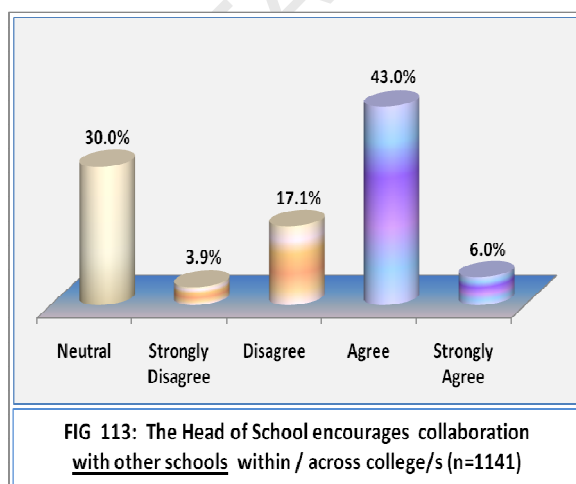
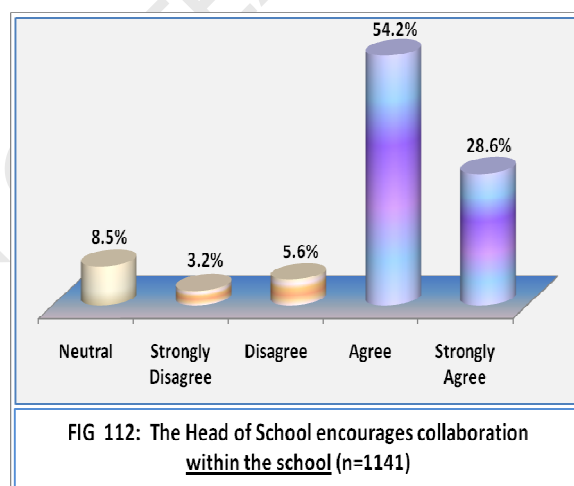
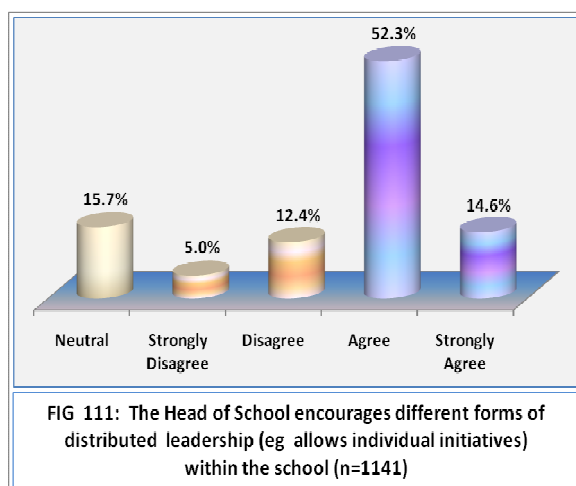
Curricular Collaboration and Cooperation

Of the 1141 teaching grade respondents, 77.8 per cent are in agreement that there is not enough time allocated for collaboration and cooperation within their school (Fig 107); 80.1 per cent feel that this is also the case within the college (Fig 108), as do 82.7 per cent across colleges (Fig 109). Fig 110 shows that 40 per cent of respondents are in agreement that their school has created greater collaboration with the external community [with 26.1 per cent being noncommittal].



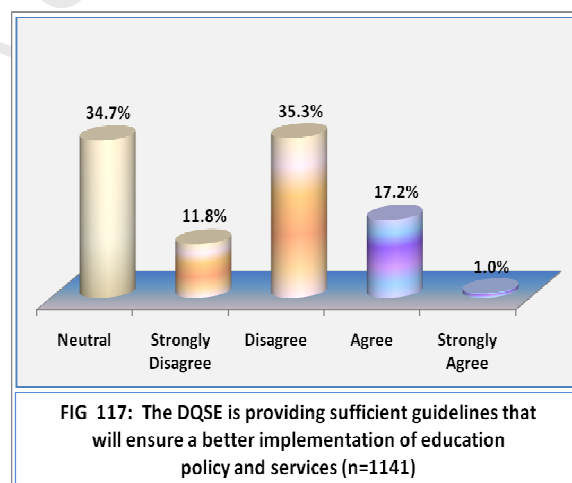
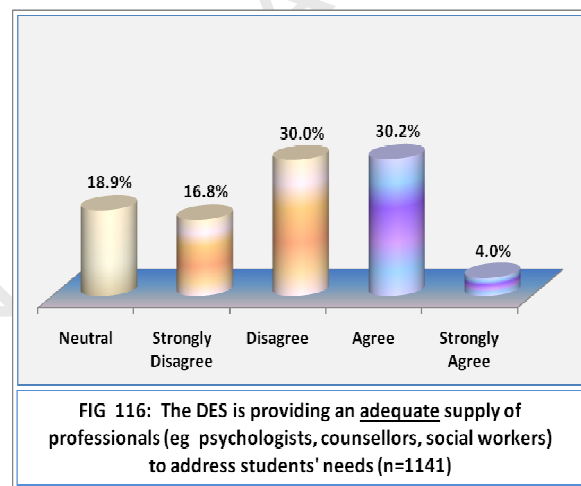
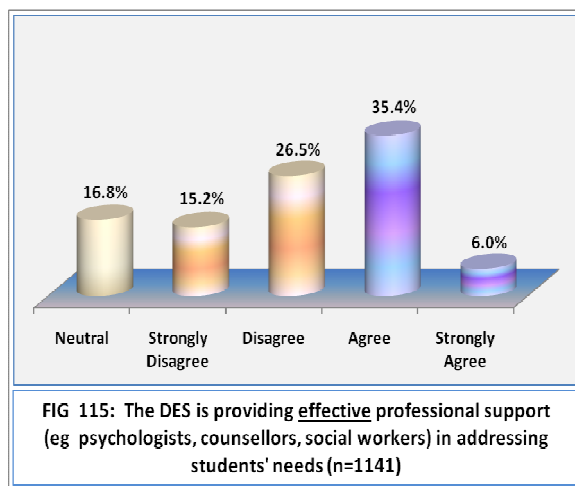
The SMT

Of the 1141 respondents in the various teaching grades, 66.9 per cent are in agreement that their Head of School encourages different forms of distributed leadership (Fig 111). Moreover, 82.8 per cent feel that their Head is encouraging collaboration within the school (Fig 112), as do 49 per cent with regard to collaboration with other schools within/across college/s (Fig 113). Moreover, 92.7 per cent are of the opinion that Members of the SMT and personnel in the various teaching grades should be made aware of what is being discussed in the Council of Heads meetings (Fig 114).



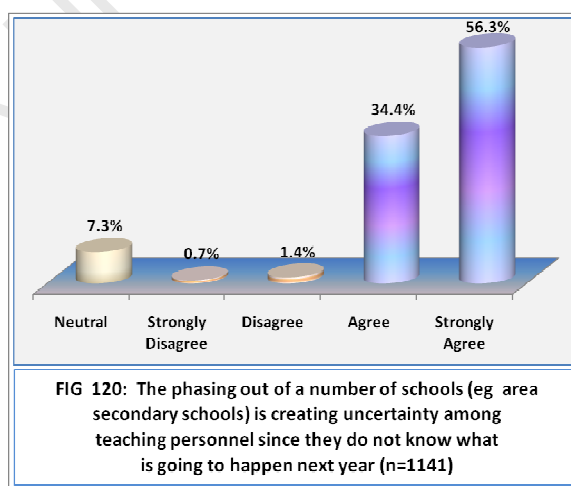
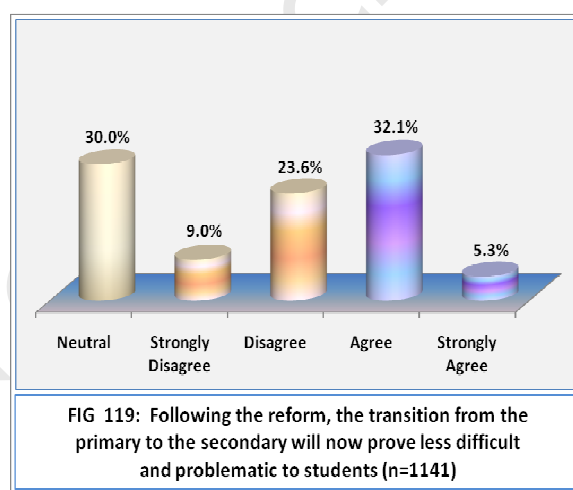
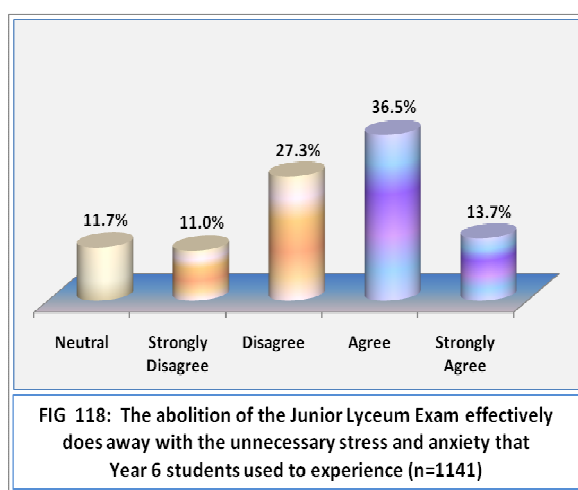
The Directorates

Fig 115 shows that practically an equal percentage of the respondents are in agreement and disagreement as to whether the DES is providing effective professional support in addressing students' (41.4 per cent and 41.7 per cent respectively). With regard to whether the DES is providing an adequate supply of professionals to address students' needs, 46.8 per cent feel that this is not the case (Fig 116). Asked whether the DQSE is providing sufficient guidelines that will ensure better implementation of education policy and services, 47.1 per cent feel that this is not the case (Fig 117) [with 34.7 per cent being noncommittal].



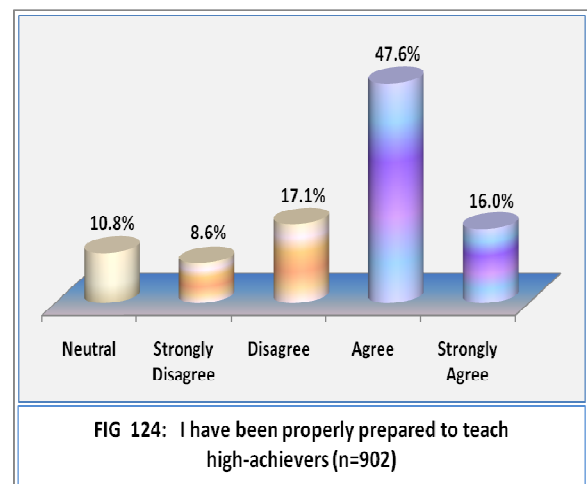
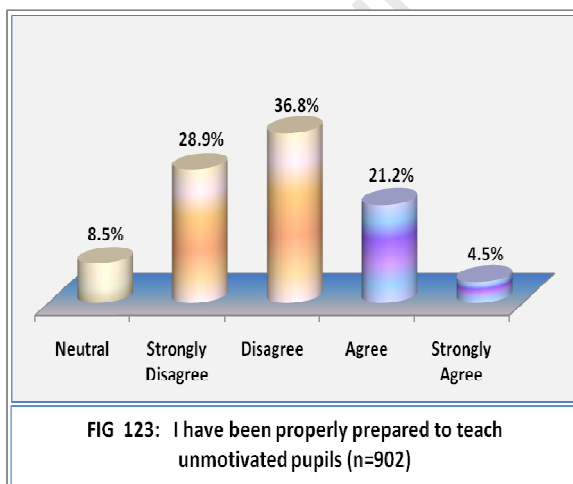
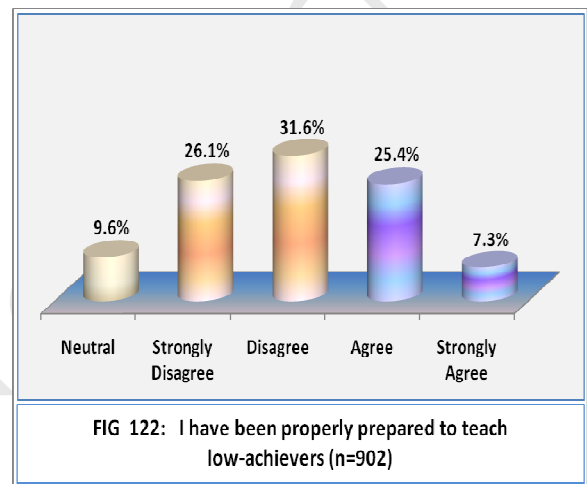
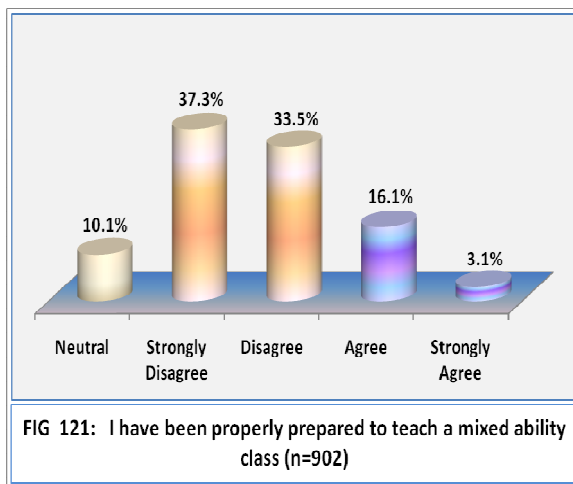
Impact of Specific Reforms

Of the 1141 respondents in the various teaching grades 50.2 per cent feel that the abolition of the Junior Lyceum Exam effectively did away with the unnecessary stress and anxiety that Year 6 students used to experience (Fig 118). Similarly, 37.4 per cent are in agreement that the transition from primary to secondary will now prove less difficult and problematic to students (Fig 119). Moreover, 90.7 per cent of respondents feel that the phasing out of a number of schools is creating uncertainty among teaching personnel since they do not know what is going to happen (Fig 120).



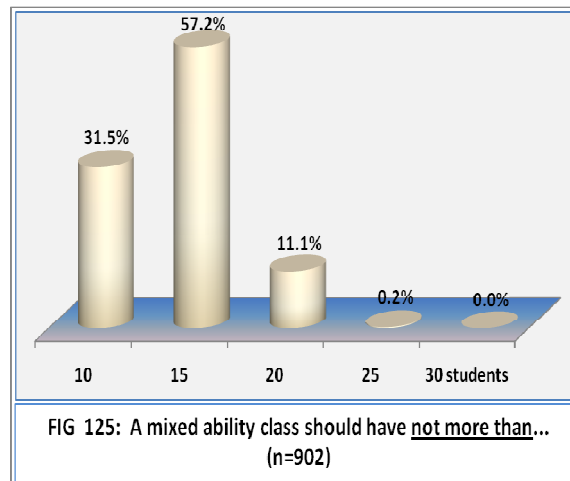
Specific Preparation

Of the 902 teachers/instructors who completed this set of questions, 70.8 per cent feel that they have not been properly prepared to teach a mixed ability class (Fig 121). Fig 122 shows that 57.7 per cent of these respondents do not feel that they have been properly prepared to teach low-achievers (Fig 122). Moreover, 65.7 per cent do not agree that they have been properly prepared to teach unmotivated pupils (Fig 123). On the other hand, 63.6 per cent of teachers/instructors feel that they have been properly prepared to teach high-achievers (Fig 124).



The Student Load in a Mixed Ability Class

The last question in this section requested the 902 teachers/instructors what the student load of a mixed ability class should be. The results illustrated in Fig 125 show that 88.7 per cent are of the opinion that this should be 15 or less while 31.5 per cent feel that this should not be more than 10 students.



Section F: Concluding Questions

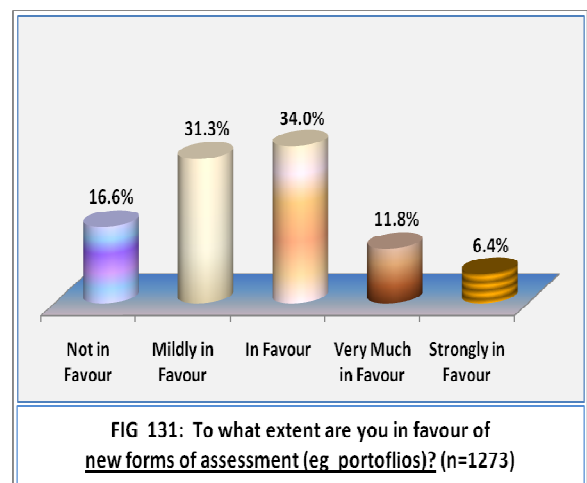
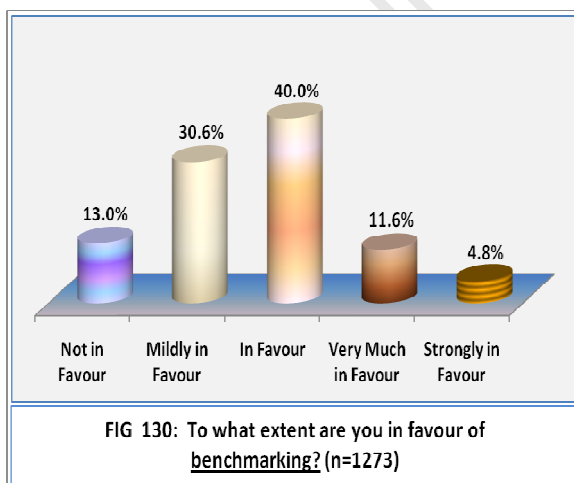
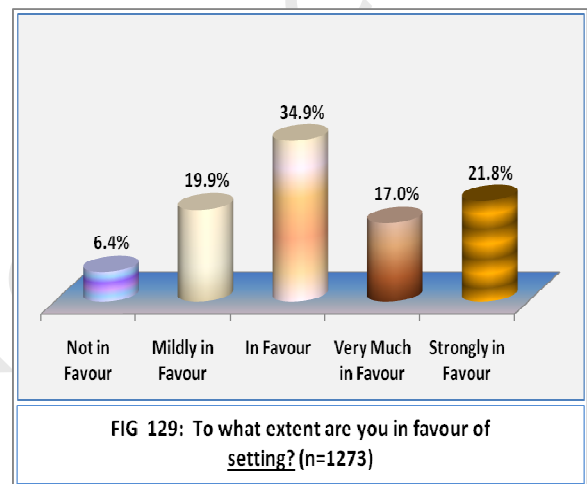
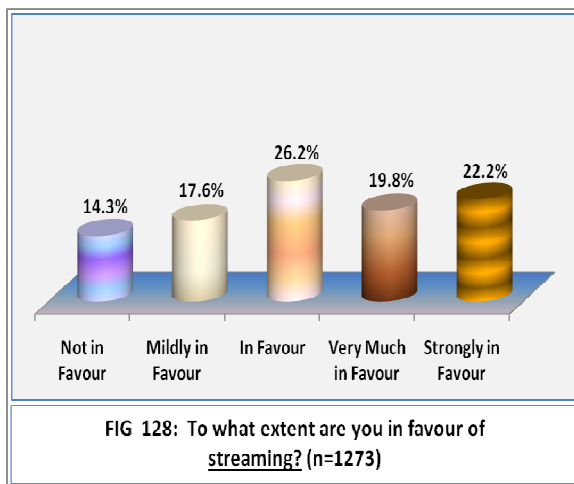
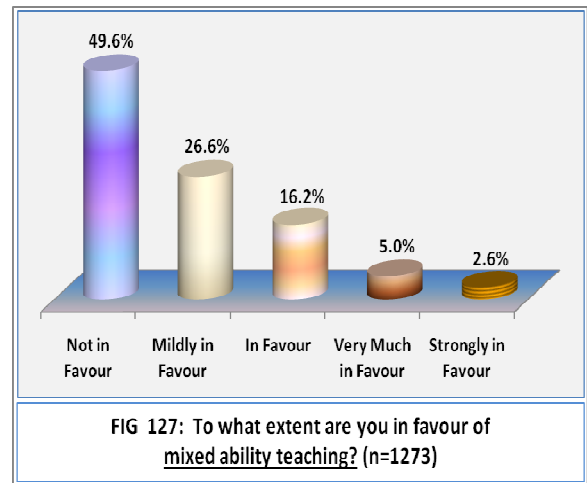
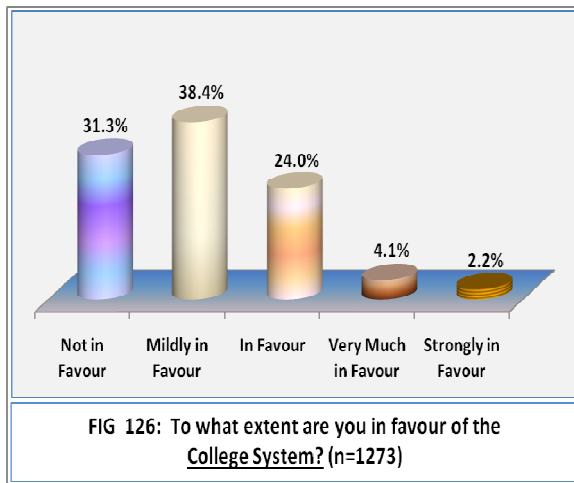
This section is organised in three themes as follows:

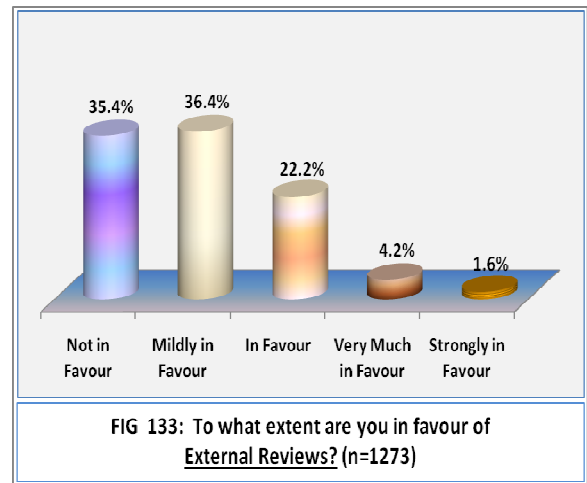
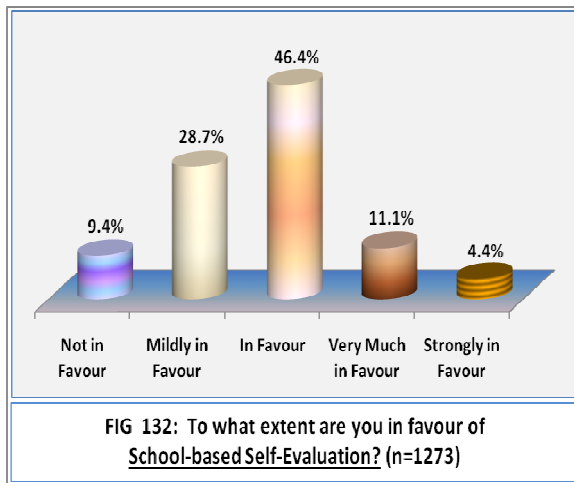
- Specific Reforms
- Then and Now
- Positive and Negative Aspects.

The first theme was completed by 1273 respondents, including members of the SMT and personnel in the various teaching grades. The second theme, made up of questions comparing the present personal state of the respondent with that of five years ago, was completed by 1043 respondents with five years experience in education or more. The last two questions were completed by 1264 respondents.

Specific Reforms

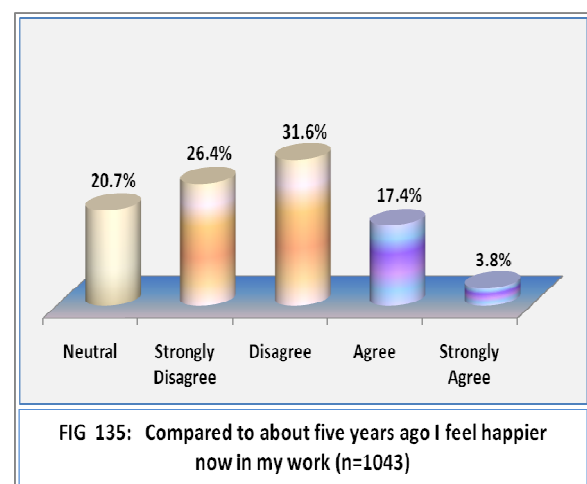
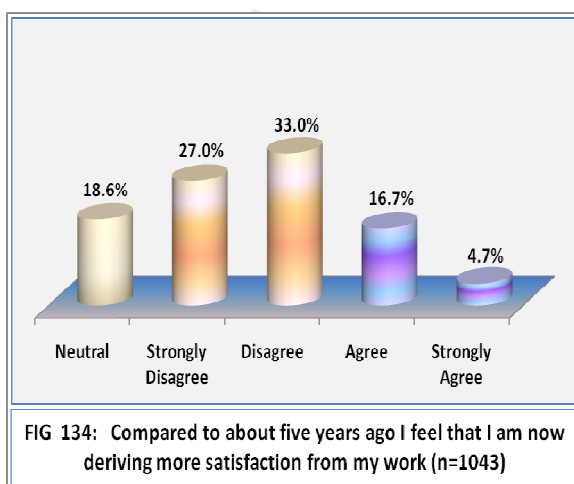
Of the 1273 respondents, 68.7 per cent are, to one extent or another, in favour of the College System (Fig 126). The sample is almost equally divided on mixed ability teaching with 50.4 per cent indicating that they are not in favour to one extent or another (Fig 127). With regard to streaming and setting, 85.7 per cent (Fig 128) and 93.6 per cent (Fig 129) respectively are in favour to some degree or other. In all, 87 per cent of respondents are in favour of benchmarking (Fig 130), as are 83.4 per cent of new forms of assessment (Fig 131). While 90.6 per cent are in favour to some degree of school-based self-evaluation (Fig 132), 64.6 per cent are in favour of external reviews (Fig 133).

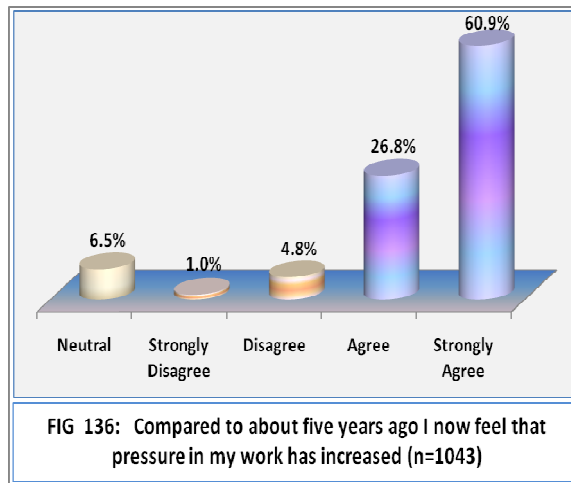




Then and Now

Those respondents with at least five years experience in education completed three questions about their perceived personal state. Of the 1043 respondents 60 per cent do not agree that compared to about five years ago they are now deriving more satisfaction from their work (Fig 134). Moreover, 58 per cent do not agree that they feel happier now in their work (Fig 135) [with 20.7 per cent being noncommittal]. Moreover, 87.7 per cent of respondents are in agreement that compared to about five years ago they now feel that the pressure in their work has increased (Fig 136).





Positive and Negative Aspects

Asked to indicate one of seven positive statements that would best encapsulate how they feel and/or perceive the College System and its accompanying reforms, 22 per cent singled out '*A means by which ingrained and outdated notions of education are replaced by more contemporary ones*' and 19.1 per cent chose '*A way of bringing education in this country in line with that of other EU member countries*' (Fig 137). This figure also shows that the least popular statement is '*It represents all that I would have liked to see realized in education in our country*' (1.9 per cent). The statement '*There is nothing positive*' was indicated by 14.6 per cent of the respondents.

Similarly, participants were also requested to indicate one of seven negative statements. The top statement was '*Rather than simplifying things it has confounded them*' with 26.4 percent of respondents subscribing to it (Fig 138). '*It is an ego-massaging exercise*' is the least popular statement. Of the respondents, 5.3 per cent subscribe to the statement '*There is nothing negative*'.

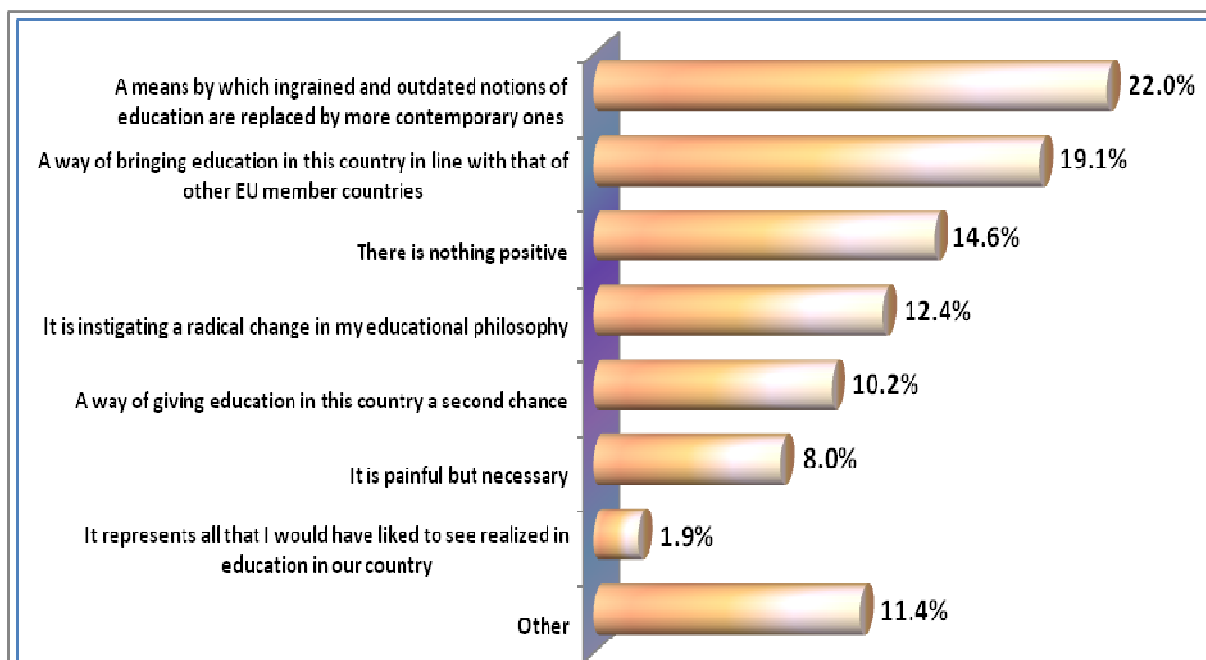


FIG 137: Which ONE of these positive statements would best encapsulate how you might feel and / or perceive the College System and its accompanying reforms? (n=1271)

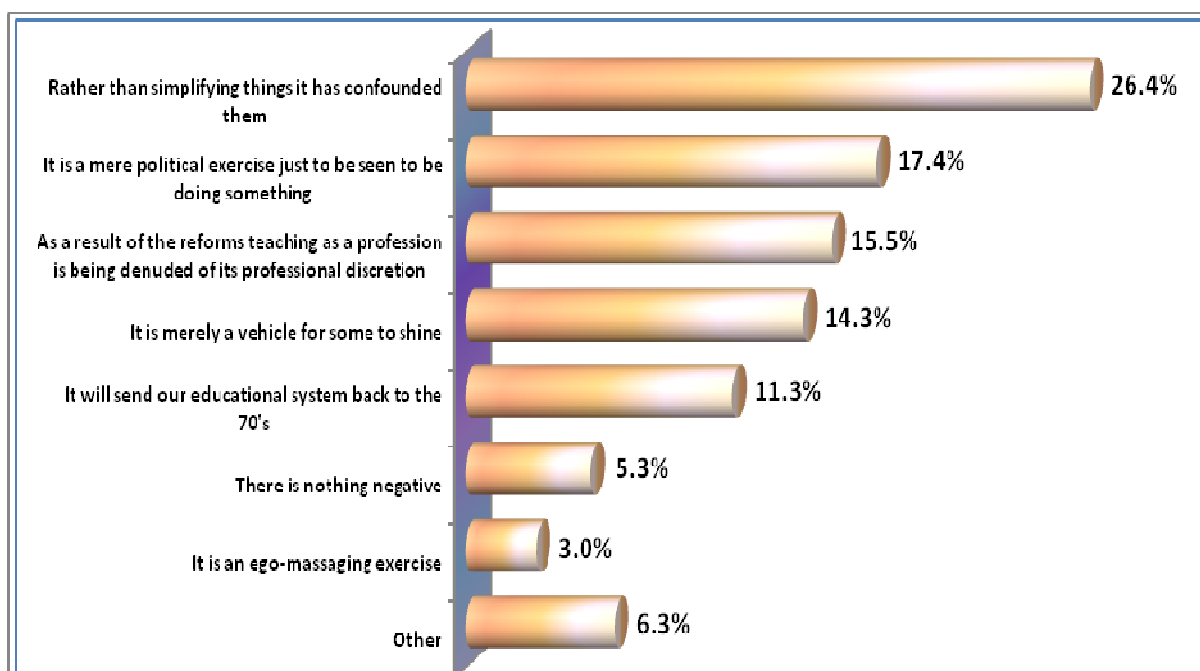


FIG 138: Which ONE of these negative statements would best encapsulate how you might feel and / or perceive the College System and its accompanying reforms? (n=1264)

DISCUSSION

This summary and discussion of the questionnaire findings is organized around the two main foci of the present study: the College System and the accompanying reforms. Each of the two sections is in turn organized in terms of a number of themes as identified above. Apart from highlighting the major findings reported in the previous section these will be consolidated by a selection of comments made by respondents in the open ended questions of the electronic questionnaire.

The College System

Not unlike any other reform which brings fundamental changes in the lives of people, the College System has its supporters and detractors from among the teaching profession. The following comments illustrate this:

"In my opinion this reform (the College System) is a good step (forward). If managed well by all stakeholders who own it, it will be a success."

"I am very much in favour of the College System."

"I am NOT in favour of the College System since it DOES NOT aid everybody and it is all an artificial means of showing that things are improving when, in real facts, they will be deteriorating eventually."

Decentralisation

The College Reform was meant to provide a structure for the decentralisation of state schools; it was meant to give schools increasing autonomy. This is something that most respondents in the present study endorsed. In fact, just over two in three of the 1474 respondents expressed agreement that colleges should have greater autonomy (Fig 7). One important reason for this is:

"... that decentralisation increases accountability towards the DES/DQSE, students and parents."

However, although the College System was to serve as the vehicle for the policy of decentralisation and autonomy, only just about half the respondents (n=1474) felt that (at least up to this point in the implementation stage) the College System is being instrumental in the implementation of the decentralisation policy and practices (Fig 8). Indeed, some respondents expressed frustration and concern with developments (or lack of them) in this regard. As one respondent remarked:

"The supposed decentralisation reform is a farce. This is a make-believe situation and the Department (Directorate) has still strong control over schools."

Another respondent argued that:

"The culture (of) decentralisation has not been instilled in the minds (of school personnel) yet. The (College System) reform will suffer in this regard as (it is being perceived as something that is) being imposed rather than owned."

The same picture emerges in regard to a greater autonomy across the board where about half of the 1474 respondents felt that this is the case at the classroom level (Fig 9), while only four in ten felt that schools now have greater autonomy (Fig 10). A case in point is the issue of syllabi and text books. Results showed that the vast majority of respondents (more than eight in ten) felt that the College System has still not delivered in terms of devolution and flexibility (Fig 11). These findings are illustrated by the following comments:

"(We have) no direct say in the setting up of the curriculum and syllabi."

"Not enough decentralisation to colleges and schools has taken place and the centre (Directorate) still has too much control."

"I believe that most teachers are truly professional and willing to implement the changes proposed. However, despite all the reforms proposed, everything is still very much centralised where all the decisions are still being made by one governing body who is not in touch with the various academic and social realities of the various schools."

Increased decentralisation and autonomy should have brought with them less bureaucracy. However, more than two-thirds of respondents (n=1474) felt that not only has bureaucracy been curtailed but has apparently increased because of the College System (Fig 12). In the words of two respondents:

"It (the College Reform) has created more hierarchy, more bureaucracy and I doubt it has the individual student at the centre. Might have been better to seriously evaluate what was working and what not and to find different ways and means of improving on those."

"(There is) too much bureaucracy."

Governance

Together with autonomy, governance is one of the major targets underlying the College Reform. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt that the College System has brought about a positive change in governance. Just over four in ten of the 1474 respondents felt that this is not the case at a school level (Fig 13), at a college level (Fig 14), and at a directorate/national level (Fig 15). The following concern was expressed:

"Li jinkwetani biss hu li qed jintagħażlu mexxejja fl-SMT li mhum iex 'leaders'. Qed ikunu f'pożizzjoni għolja u ma jafux imexxu lanqas SDP. Ma jafux b'Assessment for Learning, Ma jafux x'hemm bżonn għall-iskejjel ta' għana, speċjalment issa li qed għdin f' riforma ġdida... Qed jintagħażlu nies li m'għadhomx biss fl-'Administration'. U jekk hekk se jkun il-kaz, ir-Riforma tant mixtieqa mhix se tirnexxi."

What really worries me is that school leaders are being selected to form part of the SMT who are not really 'leaders'. These are being placed in key positions when they do not even know how to run an SDP. They

have no idea of what Assessment for Learning is. They have no idea what our schools require especially now that we are in the midst of a reform... Persons are being selected whose main concern is 'Administration'. If this situation persists then the much longed-for Reform will not succeed.

Logistic Collaboration and Cooperation

One of the most desired positive outcomes of the College System is an increase in logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of sharing of facilities and resources across the board. Within the College, less than six in ten respondents (n=1474) agreed that this is indeed the case with regard to the sharing of facilities (Fig 16), while less than half of respondents indicated that this is the case in regard to the sharing of resources (Fig 17). When it comes to logistic collaboration and cooperation across colleges, about half of the respondents felt that this was not the case for the sharing of facilities (Fig 18), and resources (Fig 19). Slightly more than four in ten of the respondents felt that the College System has brought about greater interaction and collaboration with the external community (Fig 20).

Curricular Collaboration and Sharing of Good Practices

Another desired positive outcome of the College System is an expected increase in curricular collaboration and cooperation and in the sharing of good practices. Slightly more than four in ten of the 1474 respondents felt that the College System has not been instrumental in increased curricular collaboration at a school level (Fig 21); similarly, more than half the respondents felt that this was not the case across colleges (Fig 23). On the other hand, just over four in ten respondents felt that there was indeed an increased curricular collaboration at a college level (Fig 22). With regard to facilitating the sharing of good practices in teaching, the majority of respondents (slightly more than six in ten) were in disagreement that this has been the case across colleges (Fig 26); similarly, less than half of the respondents were in disagreement that this is the case at a school level (Fig 24), and at a college level (Fig 25). As one teacher put it:

"There is not enough time to consult (others) let alone exchange examples of good practice."

It may be the case that the desired level of curricular collaboration and cooperation has not been achieved so far because the College Reform is still in its first years. Some would argue that it cannot be achieved because there is simply not enough time to make this possible. Indeed, the vast majority of the 1141 respondents from the various teaching grades (about eight in ten) were in agreement that there is not enough time allocated for collaboration and cooperation either within their school (Fig 107), or within the college (Fig 108), or across colleges (Fig 109). As these two respondents put it:

"Definitely, there is not enough time for us teachers to communicate and interact with other school personals to share resources and do/prepare activities together."

"... time management is important in order to share ideas as the teachers in my school didn't have the opportunity to share teaching ideas as there wasn't any time management (including when working) with the peripatetic teachers."

In line with the above finding that the College System has been instrumental in bringing about greater interaction and collaboration, four in ten of respondents (n=1141) in the various teaching grades were in agreement that their school has created greater collaboration with the external community (Fig 110).

Competition

It would appear that the College System wittingly or otherwise has give rise to competition among the ten colleges. Quoting one respondent:

"It has rendered a sense of competition between one college and another."

The issue of course is not whether or not there should be this 'sense of competition' so much as whether this is healthy and productive or otherwise. Results showed that while slightly less than half the 1474 respondents were in disagreement that the College System has given rise to unhealthy competition among schools within the college (Fig 27), a similar proportion felt it has given rise to unhealthy competition among colleges (Fig 28). Indeed, the latter findings are crystallized by the following remark:

"It may contribute to unhealthy competition between colleges."

The competition that the College System has given rise to has brought with it increased pressure on the schools to perform and deliver, as indicated by about seven in ten respondents (Fig 29). The comments of three respondents highlight this:

"As a teacher, I feel that the heavy competition between colleges (is)... in fact killing the college spirit."

"Colleges are a way of competing with others and try to show the rest of the colleges that we are better (than the rest). For me, being part in this college has meant lots of work which is never enough."

"Colleges are being very much concerned in being the best when compared to others, thus imposing more work on teachers and school staff and making school life and work unpleasant and stressful."

Impact on Personnel and Operations

The document *For All Children to Succeed* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005) sets as one of its main challenges the building of:

"... new professional identities and new professional learning communities that are oriented towards adaptation and bring about radical innovation" (p xi).

Hence, the College System is meant to be instrumental in fostering a greater readiness among education professionals at all levels to generate, accept, and implement reforms by education personnel. Present findings show that less than half of the 1474 respondents were in agreement that the College System has indeed brought about a greater readiness among them to generate (Fig 30), and to implement (Fig 32) reforms. With regard to a greater readiness to accept reforms, a similar proportion of respondents felt that this was not the case. As a respondent put it:

"(The) College System is not necessary to implement reforms."

The College System has ushered in a number of roles (e.g. Precincts officer, Prefect of Discipline, Youth Workers) to improve support to colleges and schools. Two-thirds of the respondents (n=1474) in the present survey were in agreement that support has in fact increased (Fig 33). However, several respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the support that is being provided:

"... I would like to see more social workers and psychologists."

"Adequate and real provision of support services for ALL (e.g. social and psychological services) NOT merely apparent cosmetic provision of such services which are limited due to insufficient manpower. Reforms will fail if staff is driven to burn out. Support for staff, including psychological support, to deal with multiple complex issues arising from multi-faceted demands with which they have to deal and to feel included rather than rejected."

"(There is a) lack of support for children with learning difficulties from professionals like SPLD personnel."

One impact which can prove counter-productive is an increase in workload. Results showed that the vast majority of the 1474 respondents (more than eight in ten) indicated that the College System has brought about an increase in the volume of work both to personnel in the teaching grades as well as to the school Senior Management Teams (Fig 34). As two respondents point out:

"I feel that the College System has put a lot of unnecessary pressure on the teacher. This is added to our already existing work load."

"I feel this new system will be loading teachers with yet more work and pressure, depriving them of the joy of teaching. Teachers need more time and space to conduct and develop their work more creatively and seriously."

The College System, of its very nature, is intended to bring about a quality leap forward in how state school operate. The present findings show that less than half of the respondents (n=1474) felt that so far this is not the case (Fig 35).

One criticism aired by some is that the College System has deprived individual schools of their identity, now that each school in a college carries that college's name and uniform. In fact, more than seven in ten respondents were in agreement that this is very much the case (Fig 36). As two respondents remarked:

"(The) College System has put chains that limit the progression of individual schools. (It) has deprived schools of their pride and identity."

"Colleges have taken away the schools' identity."

The geographical basis on which the ten colleges were constituted has also given rise to criticism. As one respondent put it:

"Colleges... must be (constituted) in a more reasonable and serious way. Grouping students only according to where they live is having highly demotivating effects on teachers."

One alternative method could have been grouping schools on the basis of a diverse social dimension. Indeed, just over half of the 1474 respondents felt that the catchment area of a college should be determined on the basis of such a dimension rather than a geographical one (Fig 37). Respondents commented that having large schools from the same locality (hence with similar social challenges) perpetuates the very same problems. The way the colleges are organized reinforce particular social behaviours; children do not have the opportunity to mix with pupils from different parts of the island.

The last ten years or so have seen the construction of three very large secondary schools (accommodating a maximum of 1000 students). Hence, it is clear that there has been a systematic move towards having such large schools. Although large schools bring with them certain economic advantages (not least better use of human and material resources) they also bring a number of disadvantages of an educational nature (Tableman et al., 2004). One such negative impact is on the students themselves. In fact, the vast majority of the 1474 respondents (eight in ten) felt that the setting up of very large schools is rendering them even more impersonal to students (Fig 38). Large schools create difficulties:

"... in integrating students into a 'school community'."

"I do not agree with the idea of having large schools, as it will be more difficult to view and treat the students as individuals."

"I feel that in a society where a good number of students find no security at home, in ... a big school students will not find security (they so need). They will not be able to (connect with) a teacher as the personal aspect of teaching is deteriorating due to large numbers of students and teaching staff. Teachers teaching (the) same students will not meet as they are not in (the) same staffroom;s so if someone observes a students' change in behaviour he can't check with other teachers. Smaller schools are best."

"Bigger schools mean less individual attention. Students with behaviour problems cannot be monitored. Hardworking students will not get the

necessary attention. Most of the energy goes on those who do not want to learn."

"European countries are promoting smaller schools and we are proud of building such big schools with no identity at all."

"The whole of Europe is moving to smaller and smaller schools... and in Malta we are moving (towards) ever larger colleges with hundreds and hundreds (if not a thousand +) student population."

Impact on Student Entitlement

The College Reform was necessarily motivated by a desire to improve the quality of student entitlement in all its aspects, to provide a quality education for all. One way of achieving this is to foster a greater commitment to rigour, quality and standards in learning and teaching. Almost four in ten of the 1474 respondents were in agreement that this was indeed the case (Fig 39). Others do not agree. As one respondent pointed out:

"I feel the College System has not made a lot of difference in the way teachers teach. E.g. If a teacher used to teach in the old 'chalk and talk' method and they want to continue doing so the College System hasn't done anything to change this methodology."

The setting up of the colleges inevitably brought with it additional activities other than the ones schools were used to. Undoubtedly, college activities are meant to enrich the educational experience of school children. However, too much of a good thing can be counter-productive. Indeed, most teachers complained that the many college activities are detracting them from their classroom duties. Indeed, results show that less than six in ten (n=1474) indicated that participation in the various college activities is leaving little room for the implementation of the curriculum (Fig 40), illustrated by these comments:

"(The College System) ... has created a good number of chiefs, all of who want to shine, dishing out orders, but never coordinating between them, resulting in increase in stress, too (many) activities... and less classroom contact."

"(The College) organises too many activities thus leaving less quality time with the students in the classroom."

Two important slogans that typify the College Reform and the ensuing reforms are "a quality education for all" and "for all children to succeed". It is clear that the main

focus of these reforms is the child - *all* children, as indeed it should be. The majority of the 1474 respondents were not optimistic that these are realistic and attainable targets. Results showed that more than six in ten respondents felt that the College System with its networks will not effectively enable “all children to succeed” (Fig 41). This is illustrated by the following comments:

“I believe that with this system neither the high achievers nor the low achievers will benefit.”

“Bright students will not be catered for. Gifted students ... will they be properly taken care of? High achievers will get bored while low achievers might find it difficult as well.”

Most respondents agreed, however, that colleges have given a boost to inclusion in schools. Less than six in ten of the 1474 respondents indicated that the College System has rendered schools more inclusive in the general sense of the word (Fig 42). Moreover, less than half did not agree that the School Leaving Certificate should be college based (Fig 43). One respondent remarked that:

“A lot of attention is being given to the fact that all must get a 'good' school leaving certificate but this will just be granted, not earned!”

The Role of the SMT

The role of the school Senior Management Team led by the school’s Head is crucial in the running of a school. For many years, much of the SMT’s time was taken up by purely administrative and paper work with the result that that central part of their role as the school’s educational leaders was highly restricted, often limited to a token input. Much hope was raised that the College Reform would usher in important changes in this regard. However, present findings show that an overwhelming majority of the 153 members of the SMT (more than nine in ten) were in agreement that paper work still dominates much of their work (Fig 82), and that they are lumbered with ever-increasing paper/administrative work (Fig 83). This, together with the lack of sufficient clerical support to address the increase in paper work (Fig 84) (as indicated by more than eight in ten SMT members), has resulted in an overwhelming majority (more than nine in ten) indicating that they have very little

time to do curricular work or to mentor (Fig 85). The following remarks elaborate on these findings:

"I have always worked as a Head within the College System so I cannot compare with what was like before. I find a lot of support from the College Principal and I have a very good working relationship with him though I do not always agree, which is healthy. I find support and collaboration from other Heads within the college. On the other hand sometimes there are college based initiatives which continue to add a burden on an already overloaded job."

"(The) Head's role has been diminished due to an increase of bureaucracy."

"Heads should have more time to think (and) not go about managing more than one thing at a time. It has become a multitasking exercise to manage everything besides Teaching and Learning, which should always be top priorities."

The increased bureaucracy highlighted above once more raises its head on the occasion of information required by upper echelons of the education hierarchy. The questionnaire findings showed that more than seven in ten of the 153 SMT members were in agreement that the SMT is frequently finding itself having to provide the same information to various 'superiors' in the hierarchy (Fig 86). Moreover, less than six in ten were of the opinion that the Head of School should have the right to select teachers and other teaching personnel on his/her staff (Fig 87) as well as of his/her SMT (Fig 88). As one Head put it:

"School leaders need to be involved in the choice of their SMT members and teaching personnel."

Just about two in three of the 1141 respondents in the various teaching grades were in agreement that their Head of School encourages different forms of distributed leadership (Fig 111). This is a quality that is acknowledged as being important for the success of the College System. Indeed, as one respondent remarked:

"I think it all depends on the Head of the school i.e. how much she collaborates with the staff and how much she allows staff to take initiative."

Moreover, the vast majority (more than eight in ten of the 1141 respondents) felt that their Head is indeed encouraging collaboration with the school (Fig 112), as do about half of them with regard to collaboration with other schools within/across college/s (Fig 113). An overwhelming majority (more than nine in ten) were of the opinion that members of the SMT and personnel in the various teaching grades should be

made aware of what is being discussed in the Council of Heads meetings (Fig 114). One teacher observed:

"The Head of School should keep us informed of the new changes that are being held within the collage."

Collegiality and Support

The central role of networking in the College Reforms presumes collegiality and mutual support among schools and thereby among school personnel at all levels in a school as well as across schools and even colleges. The responses of the 153 members of the SMT showed that about one-third of them did not feel that the College System has ushered in improved collegiality and support amongst themselves (Fig 89); however, four in ten felt that this is the case across schools in the college (Fig 90). Indeed, this is not always perceived as such by other school personnel as illustrated by the following comment:

"There is a share of backstabbing taking place with (some) Heads trying to outshine others."

A slightly lesser proportion of the 153 SMT respondents were in disagreement that the College System has improved shared leadership among the SMT (Fig 91), while the vast majority (slightly less than nine in ten) were in agreement that the College System has brought about with it innumerable official meetings to the Heads of School (Fig 92).

The College Principal

Central to the College Principal's role is the encouragement and facilitation of networking. This is acknowledged by the majority of SMT members (less than eight in ten) who were in agreement that the College Principal is instrumental in fostering networking and collaboration. Clearly, however, this is not the case across the board.

As one Head remarked:

"I am now working with my second College Principal, since I was asked to move to a larger school two years ago. Thus I am in a position to compare College Principals. With the present one (college name supplied) the situation is perfect as he/she knows his/her place, gives you full autonomy to work, believes in your professionalism and does not breathe down your neck at all. With the

previous one the situation was terrible, the complete opposite of what I am experiencing at the moment."

And one respondent from the teaching grades observed that the:

"(The) Head of School's autonomy and leadership are being jeopardized due to (the) Principal breathing down his/her neck."

Slightly more than three in four (n=153) felt that their Principal is generally very supportive (Fig 94). Indeed, the perception of others is that the:

"School Administration (is) required to support the College Principal rather than the other way round."

The College Principal is also entrusted with creating a paradigm shift in the way of thinking, the way of believing, the way of operating, the way of doing things in the College (Fig 95). Only just over four in ten SMT respondents were in agreement that this is indeed the case, at least so far. The following comments by teaching grades personnel highlight how some Principals and their role are perceived.

"I think the success of colleges depends on how open to suggestions and friendly the College Principal is rather than ordering (about) Heads of schools and teachers to obey orders."

"College Principals (are) more (like) whips on schools, urging participation in projects and initiatives from Centre. Who's gonna shine now!"

"(The) Principal's aim seems to be mainly to impress, taking every opportunity for PR stunts."

"College Principals are arrogantly demanding teachers to be competitive between one school and another within the same college and between other colleges for the sake of outshining other principals for their personal gain."

The Directorates

The College Reform necessitated the creation of additional strata in the education hierarchy, namely the creation of two directorates (a servicing directorate and a regulatory directorate), and the College Principals. When members of the SMT were asked to indicate whether the setting up of the College System and the two Directorates has effectively made the chain of command more complex, the majority of them (slightly more than seven in ten of the 153 participants) responded that this

is the case (Fig 96). Moreover, almost half of this respondent group did not agree that the DES is providing the necessary physical structures and their modernization (Fig 97); nor do slightly less than half were in agreement that the DES is providing regular maintenance of its schools (Fig 98). As one respondent put it:

"... large schools seem to lack maintenance and technical support."

Of the 153 respondents, slightly more than four in ten were in agreement that the DES is generally very supportive (Fig 99) and slightly less felt the same about support from the DQSE (Fig 100).

Almost an equal number of the 1141 respondents from the various teaching grades were in agreement and disagreement as to whether the DES is providing effective professional support in addressing students' needs (Fig 115). With regard to whether the DES is providing an adequate supply of professionals to address students' needs, slightly less than half of them felt that so far this is not the case (Fig 116). In fact, it appears there is a general feeling of concern with regards to resources, material as well as human. Teaching grade personnel are concerned about the amount of resources available, and whether they will be able to implement the reforms without such support. This is reflected in the comments of the following two respondents:

"Why don't we have proper resources and rooms for Special Needs pupils who sometimes have the need to be out of the classroom? And what about high achievers? They are surely being forgotten."

"Resources and training of teaching staff to cater for students with special needs who have been included in the school. Support for those students who have fared badly due to learning difficulties in their primary years and still need specific learning programmes to cope in their secondary years. These students don't manage to cope in class."

A similar proportion of teaching personnel (i.e. less than half the 1141 respondents) were in disagreement that the DQSE is providing sufficient guidelines that will ensure better implementation of education policy and services (Fig 117). The Directorates are inevitably criticized for various reasons including:

"... I sometimes felt like a puppet on a string with (the) Directorates pulling strings and I dangling at the other end to their tune."

"The College System is not the real problem, it's more that the people who (are) ... spearheading the change at the (Directorates) do not seem so sure as to the process and there are too many conflicting ideas - not everyone is pulling the rope in the same direction."

It would have been unrealistic and unreasonable to expect that the College Reform would not experience some problems and difficulties. What is important is that those who are managing and driving the implementation of these reforms acknowledge these difficulties and problems and take appropriate action to address them. As one respondent put it:

"It (the College Reform) involves change so there are bound to be teething problems. These negative vibes are inevitable. It is imperative, however, that they are addressed."

Another respondent chastises those of his/her colleagues who are not inclined to favour the College System:

"The College System is being perceived as negative by a number of people because up till now, there has been no accountability whatsoever. Why are professionals scared of the reform? The question I put to them is: 'Would you be comfortable if your son/daughter were a student in your own school/class, given your current performance?' Accountability needs to be instilled in the profession if teaching is to be regarded as a profession."

What should also be an issue is whether or not those at the grassroots feel that they have been properly consulted about the reforms before they were expected to be at the vanguard of their implementation. This and other similar issues will be addressed in the next section.

The Reforms

The Need for the Reforms

There can be very little doubt that the majority of the stakeholders in the educational enterprise are in agreement that the state of the county's educational system demanded important changes if it is to be relevant to future generations of school children. One aspect of the proposed reforms is that it should provide a quality education that effectively caters for the specific needs of individual students. Asked whether they think that the several reforms will manage to achieve this objective,

just over half of the 1366 respondents felt that it will not (Fig 44). One possible reason for this may be the actual size of the class, as one teacher commented:

"(The educational) system is changing positively in many aspects...but one of the most important things that should have been change (i.e. the number of children in a class) is still (not addressed)... This makes it very difficult to cater for all the children's needs."

It is perhaps not surprising that not all the school professional personnel share the same urgency and need for the reforms. As it turned out only just about four in ten respondents (n=1366) felt that the reforms are much needed and long overdue (Fig 45). The following comments reflect this view, even if these respondents do not necessarily agree with how the reforms are being approached or its impact on school personnel.

"A change in the Maltese educational system was long overdue, but definitely not in this way."

"Although change is inevitable and necessary, it ... brings a lot of uncertainty."

"A reform in the education system is definitely required. As a teacher, I am not against reform but against the way things are being done."

Similarly, slightly more than four in ten did not agree that the reforms will in time improve the general quality of education (Fig 46). This is illustrated by this teacher's comment:

"I believe that although the reform has been introduced for school/children's performance to improve, unfortunately, most children have become more passive learners. Steaming was good because the teacher could address the children's needs more and the JL exams were good because the children had something to aim for and now that there is no real exam, most of the children do not care to study since they are still young to realise that studying per se is for their own benefit."

One of the reforms entails the introduction of new forms of assessment which should diminish the importance of formal exams. Results showed that most of the 1366 respondents (two in every three) were in agreement that the proper implementation of more student-friendly forms of assessment will reduce the central role that half-yearly and annual exams have assumed in our educational system (Fig 47).

However, several respondents expressed reservations and concerns about some of these new forms of assessment. For instance, with regard to portfolios:

"... It makes no sense and if only teachers had a say in how to set it up, it would have made much more sense. The portfolio is very elitist and as form teachers, filling it in, changed us into glorified clerks...we want to do our jobs, not fill out forms."

"Everything seems to be a half-baked desperate attempt to make a change, just for the sake of it, such as: the way class/form teachers were informed about the students' portfolios. In (college named) it was just one 40-minute one-way speech by an official (during lessons!) for all Forms 1, 2 and 3 Form Teachers of both boys and girls schools at the same time..."

Quite a substantial proportion of the 1366 respondents attribute motives other than educational ones to the proposed reforms. For instance, slightly more than four in ten felt that one of the reasons underlying the reforms was the reduction of teachers employed in the state school sector (Fig 48). As two teachers put it:

"I feel that the priority of the directorate is to employ the minimum number of teachers possible and to save the most money possible."

"I think that the College Reform ... was just a way for the government to employ (fewer) teachers."

Another respondent hinted at cost-cutting as a possible motivator:

"Although I understand the need of certain aspects of the reform, my biggest worry about the whole reform is that it is being done by the powers that be primarily as a management and cost cutting exercise for logistical purposes, rather than having the sole and primary aim of achieving a better standard of education. While cost cutting is always desirable in all government sectors, it must never be achieved at the expense of quality, especially in such a sensitive and important sector as education."

Preparation and Support

The success of reforms in education normally hinges on a number of crucial factors. One such factor is the importance of ensuring that those at the vanguard of the reforms and their implementation (in this case mainly SMTs and personnel in the various teaching grades) are professionally prepared and properly supported. With regard to professional preparation, results showed that more than three in four of the 1366 respondents felt that they are not being properly prepared for the

challenges that the several reforms that are being introduced present (Fig 49). If that were not enough, almost eight in ten also felt that most teachers and other teaching personnel are not prepared for the reforms (Fig 50). With regard to support, the picture is less bleak with only slightly more than three in four respondents disagreeing that the needed support (e.g. resources) for the reforms to be successful is available (Fig 51).

Generally speaking, most respondents are not against the reforms *per se*. What they mainly complain about is the lack of necessary preparation and support. The following comments encapsulate this widespread feeling among respondents:

"There has been much talk but no proper preparation."

"I feel that the reform has its good points but its implementation is lacking in competent leadership; lack of adequate preparation and it is not taking into consideration the considerable pressure it is putting on teachers. We are not being adequately prepared and we are not supported."

"Appropriate leadership and appropriate support should bring about the much desired success we all yearn for our students."

In fact, the vast majority of the 1366 respondents (almost nine in ten) were in agreement that much more support from superiors is needed if the demands of the various reforms are to be addressed (Fig 52). As two respondents pointed out:

"We need more support to make what looks good on paper a success."

"I am in favour of change but not in this way. We need more support and time to adhere to such a change."

One of the most controversial and hotly debated reforms is undoubtedly the introduction of mixed ability teaching across the board. The implementation of this reform constitutes a major change for a considerable number of teachers. One very sour point of contention is that generally teachers feel that, after spending years upon years teaching streamed classes of sorts, they are simply not prepared for the challenges of mixed ability teaching. Understandably, one cannot expect these teachers to switch their pedagogy overnight, and without training and preparation. Nevertheless, of the 902 teachers/instructors who participated in the survey, seven

in ten felt that they have not been properly prepared to teach a mixed ability class (Fig 121). Teachers are well aware that mixed ability teaching is 'no walk in the park' and that making the required switch from teaching and managing streamed classes requires more commitment on their part as well as from the education authorities to do what needs to be done so that they are properly equipped in the first place and adequately supported at a second stage. As one teacher put it:

"Mixed ability teaching can only work if teachers have the required training and support and smaller classes. Mixed ability teaching requires group work. Try doing that with the behavioural issues we have to deal with."

As pointed out above, most teachers feel the need for most of the reforms that are taking place but are concerned that there is a danger that changes will merely be cosmetic ones unless teachers and other personnel are properly trained. This is reflected in the following comment:

"As a young teacher I'm strongly in favour of the principles of these reforms, such as inclusion, the removal of streaming and Junior Lyceums, but I feel that the changes are being done only cosmetically, without really training the teachers, without resources which would help in teaching a mixed ability class and without (reducing) the number of students in classes."

One teacher blames some of his/her colleagues for not being equipped to teach mixed ability classes.

"The reforms are causing some teachers who are against the system and not able to teach mixed ability classes to complain and not give it their all, disseminating a bad vibe rather than a harmonious positive one, blaming unruly kids instead of addressing their lack of skills to keep all students interested and willing to learn."

It is perhaps not surprising that results showed that just over half the 902 teacher/instructor respondents felt that they have been properly prepared to teach low-achievers (Fig 122), and that two in three felt that they have been properly prepared to teach high-achievers (Fig 124). The problem is with teaching mixed ability classes and the unmotivated. Once again, with regard to the latter, almost two in three (n=902) did not agree that they have been properly prepared to teach pupils who are not motivated (Fig 123).

Professional Training and Development

One way of how education professionals can be properly prepared for the reforms is by providing them with opportunities for professional training and development. Present findings showed that of the 1141 respondents in the various teaching grades, slightly more than four in ten were in agreement that since the beginning of the reforms staff development opportunities have become more available (Fig 101). However, slightly less than six in ten did not agree that the training needs of teaching staff are being identified (Fig 102). Asked to indicate whether they felt that the training needs of staff are being adequately addressed, just over half of these respondents (n=1141) felt that this is not the case within their college (Fig 103), just under six in ten felt that this is not the case across colleges (Fig 104), and just over six in ten felt that this is not the case at a national level (Fig 105). These two remarks highlight how respondents feel about training:

"(There is a) lack of adequate training of teachers to deal with the reforms."

"(Teachers) are not being given the necessary training to put into practice what is being asked from them."

With regard to the implementation of the curriculum most of the respondents tend to point the finger for inadequate professional training and development opportunities at the DQSE. Results showed that just less than half the 1141 respondents did not agree that the DQSE is ensuring that all the necessary professional training and development is available so that they can be in a better position to implement the curriculum (Fig 106).

Owning the Reforms

It is widely acknowledged that educational reforms are destined to falter if they are not owned by the various teaching corps and education leaders. Several respondents acknowledged the importance of owning the reforms if these are to achieve the desired success and impact. One teacher remarked that:

"Teachers need to be encouraged to be promoters of the reform and not just inspected to see how they are coping with the reform."

Another qualified this and argued that:

"... investment in the right people who own the reform is crucial..."

Of course, reforms can only be owned if those concerned are properly and adequately consulted and informed at all stages of the decision and implementation processes. One simply cannot shove reforms down education leaders' and teaching personnel's throats. The present findings are explicit and unequivocal: the vast majority of the 1366 respondents (more than eight in ten) felt that they have not been adequately consulted about the several reforms (Fig 53). In addition, almost three in four felt that they were not even adequately informed about the reforms (Fig 54). Then again, being informed is one thing, being consulted is another. The frustration, and indeed anger, expressed by some of the respondents is perhaps understandable. The following comments exemplified this so eloquently:

"Even though I have been teaching for more than a decade in state schools, the authorities did not feel that I have anything to offer as I was always INFORMED with the decisions, but never truly CONSULTED! A shame!"

"Teachers have not been consulted. Many teachers' questions go unanswered because there is the notion of 'issues will be settled when the time arrives!'"

"For the guarantee of a quality education for all - time and energy should have been invested in consulting, empowering and involving teachers directly in this reform. I feel that the most important professional asset in this reform has been the least consulted and disrespectfully involved. This will lead the way for difficulties in the implementation of a quality education for all. DGs should at least have dedicated their time to visit all schools, meet-up with teachers and tackle queries..."

Worst still, the vast majority of the 1366 respondents (nine in ten) felt that decisions had already been taken in spite of the consultations that were taking place (Fig 55). The resultant indignation for being treated (or perceived to have been treated) in this way is illustrated by the following two comments:

"More consultation should take place - not face teachers with the decisions already taken - THAT IS NOT CONSULTATION."

"Before taking any decisions the (Directorates) should consult(ed) the people who are truly in touch with the students and with what is happening. We are just pawns on a chessboard! We are rarely consulted but have to (accept and implement) other people's decisions whether we like it or not!"

Indeed, one cannot blame respondents for feeling that the consultation process that was carried out was inadequate and incomplete. The following comment says it all:

"I feel that as a professional I am not being treated professionally at all and that all the decisions about this reform had already been taken when we were 'consulted'. We were given a talk by people sent from the (Directorates) to talk about how we can deal with the change but weren't allowed to voice our concerns about the reform. I feel that these courses and consultations are only being carried out for the sake of having been done."

Not being properly consulted irks school personnel; lack of information creates unnecessary uncertainties. In fact, the vast majority of the 1366 respondents (just over eight in ten) felt that the level of communication/information available is creating unnecessary uncertainty among most educational personnel (Fig 56). The following comments illustrate why respondents felt the way they did.

"The uncertainty arises mainly as a result of lack of information about the reform."

"(I feel) ... that in general there are still a lot of mixed feelings about the College System and the accompanying reforms. This is mostly due to the fact that, in my opinion, more time should have been allocated in (the) dissemination of information (e.g. seminars), a proper pilot study and evaluation of this system (by) education personnel in other countries that are experiencing or have experienced a similar system. Also, most decisions are taken by superiors without consulting us."

"Not sufficient information is being delivered. Printed texts are not enough. They do not constitute dialogue."

"Professionals and parents alike have been kept obscured from pertinent information concerning the establishment of new comprehensive schools."

"We must be more aware of what is happening around us. We should be more informed of new changes within the college."

It is very worrying, and it does not augur well for the much anticipated success of the reforms, that an overwhelming majority (more than nine in ten of the 1366 respondents) felt that for the most part they were being led rather than being actively involved in the reforms (Fig 57). As one respondent put it:

"Teachers have not been actively involved in the reforms."

Results also showed that more than eight in ten felt that their voices were not being heard (Fig 58). This is a very disconcerting finding. Indeed some observed that:

"No one really heard our voices."

"I do not agree with this reform and how it is being introduced without listening to the teacher's voices."

It is common practice in most countries that important changes in the educational system are first piloted to evaluate their effectiveness and impact. It is equally important that the findings of these pilot studies are disseminated not least to help convince stakeholders of the importance of the reforms and the positive impact that these might have on the system. A considerable proportion of the 1366 respondents (more than four in ten) indicated that as far as they knew the reforms were not piloted first before implementation (Fig 59). As one respondent remarked:

"We should have (had) a pilot scheme on one college and then decide whether to adopt the College System or not or to adopt it in better way."

In actual fact, the College System and some aspects of the reforms were indeed piloted. It follows therefore that the results of the pilot studies were either kept under tabs or not properly disseminated. It appears that not even school personnel who were involved in these pilot studies were made aware of the outcomes. Indeed, teachers whose school or college was part of the pilot studies commented as follows:

"Our college, which should have been the pilot project, has not been tested after a couple of years. The system is not a success, as portrayed in media. On the contrary, students' achievement has decreased, and we as teachers have no opportunity whatsoever to make our voice heard. When we do, we face consequences (and I obviously cannot make myself clearer)."

"In the college where I teach, a pilot study report was supposed to have been compiled some five years ago. To date, this has never materialised."

"Our college was the first one that started functioning... we were told that it was a pilot project yet nobody ever came to seek our opinions or feedback."

"I am very disappointed that as a teacher in the first college in Malta as a pilot project, I was never consulted or asked my opinion about college based education."

"For the past four years I've been teaching in ... (college name supplied). I am very well used to the College System because this school was the very first to adopt it (pilot project). Yet NOBODY consulted us teachers and LSAs. We were never asked how we feel in this system..."

The Rate and Pace of Implementation

It is generally acknowledged that the rate and pace of any reforms can be crucial for their success or failure. This is especially the case with educational reforms. Results show that almost nine in ten of the 1366 respondents were in agreement that there are too many reforms taking place at the same time (Fig 60). As one Head of School euphemistically remarked:

"It has been a bit overwhelming at times with too many reforms being carried out sometimes without consulting the grassroots who will operate system for their reactions."

Moreover, two teachers admitted:

"I feel that too many changes are taking place putting too much pressure on the teaching profession."

"I feel that most teachers are uncertain about everything because the reforms are being introduced in a rush. (There are) too many changes at once."

Moreover, two in three respondents (n=1366) did not agree that the pace with which the reforms are being implemented is reasonable (Fig 61). The fact that the reforms are necessary does not mean that the pace of implementation should be hastened. As two teachers remarked:

"(The reforms are) ... necessary but too fast."

"I agree with some of the reforms but feel that they are being implemented too quickly."

Results also showed that over six in ten of the 1366 respondents were in disagreement that the reforms are properly coordinated (Fig 62) and properly implemented (Fig 63). This is reflected in the following comment.

"Despite making sense in theory, the way (these reforms are) being implemented does not take into consideration the various variables which affect the day-to-day life in the school, which ultimately affect the teaching and learning process. There is no flexibility in the implementation to cater for the specific needs of the individual schools."

Impact on Students, Teachers and Parents

Reforms are meant to impact on the major stakeholders. Indeed, if they do not impact at all then what is the point of implementing them? The real issue, of course,

is whether they and their implementations impact positively or otherwise. Two of the respondents observed that:

"The reforms are intended to reduce stress from students. Hardly. Reforms are bringing more pressure on students, parents, teachers and SMTs in various ways."

"SMTs, teachers, parents and to a lesser extent pupils feel caught up in a hurricane not knowing where we will all actually end up."

Of the major stakeholders, students are undoubtedly the most vulnerable and are certainly the ones who would bear the largest brunt if reforms falter or not deliver what they promised. It is disconcerting that most of the 1366 respondents felt that students are finding it difficult to cope with the pace of the reforms (more than half the respondents) (Fig 64), and to cope with the many changes that are taking place (six in ten) (Fig 65).

It is not unreasonable to argue that reforms in education mean very little unless they filter down to the classroom level, to the students, and results in a positive impact such as a better quality education. The results of the survey are not very encouraging in this regard with slightly more than half the respondents (n=1366) indicating that, so far, the reforms are not actually filtering down to the students (Fig 66), and that the reforms are resulting in better quality education for all students (Fig 67). The following comments illustrate these findings:

"I believe that (the reforms are) working quite well with basic skills and low-achieving students. On the other hand, promising students have no room to excel as they are being greatly influenced by the lack of enthusiasm and laziness of certain students within their same school. In bare terms... the unmotivated is negatively influencing the motivated and not the opposite, as it was envisaged 5 years ago when the first pilot project was born."

"I believe that with this system neither the high achievers nor the low achievers will benefit."

"I feel that (as a result of) the reforms only the minority of students are benefitting to a certain extent. For this to occur, the system is sacrificing the majority of the students who would have benefitted much more from the previous educational system."

"... children are gaining nothing out of these reforms".

Turning to class and subject teachers, over two-thirds of the 1366 respondents felt that the many reforms that are taking place are negatively affecting teachers' work in class (Fig 68).

"The extra work and stresses that the new reforms are bringing along are NOT allowing the teacher to focus enough on the children's needs because there is far too much to do."

I think that the new reforms are putting lots of pressure on the teacher. As a teacher today I feel as if I'm always under surveillance and that takes away part of the fun in teaching!

An overwhelming majority of more than eight in ten respondents felt that parents are not generally well aware of what the reforms are about (Fig 69).

"Parents and students are not aware enough of the changes that are going to take place and their consequences so things are being seen negatively."

A slightly larger proportion of respondents (n=1366) still felt that parents are finding it difficult to understand the many changes that are taking place (Fig 70). Moreover, just over seven in ten respondents felt that parents are finding it difficult to cope with the pace of the reforms (Fig 71). The overall picture that respondents present here is that, generally speaking, they feel that parents are not properly informed about the reforms, are finding it difficult to understand them, and to cope with the pace of their implementation.

One of the reforms that was widely anticipated is the abolition of the Junior Lyceum Entrance Exam, to which was attributed many of the ailments of the country's state educational system ranging from the unnecessary stress and anxiety that this used to instill in students and parents, to the negative backwash effect of teaching (or rather instructing) at the exam. Yet, only just over half the 1141 respondents in the various teaching grades felt that the abolition of the Junior Lyceum Exam would effectively do away with the unnecessary stress and anxiety that Year 6 students used to experience (Fig 118).

Another major target listed in the document *For All Children to Succeed* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment , 2005) was:

"... to eliminate the rather staccato if not abrupt manner by which students move from primary to secondary schooling in the State system." (pp. 25-26)

Results showed that of the 1141 respondents, less than four in ten respondents were in agreement that the transition from primary to secondary will now prove less difficult and problematic to students (Fig 119).

The move towards larger secondary schools as part of the College Reform necessitated that a number of relatively small secondary schools would have to be closed down. Inevitably, the teaching personnel in these schools are experiencing uneasiness and uncertainty about where they are eventually going to be posted. Indeed, an overwhelming nine in ten of personnel in the various teaching grades (n=1141) felt that the phasing out of a number of schools is creating uncertainty among teaching personnel since they do not know what is going to happen (Fig 120).

As these two teachers put it:

"... as a teacher in a school which is being phased out, we have only been given scant information by the Head of School. The Principal did not even come to talk to us."

"Closing several secondary schools has created profound uncertainty among the members of staff. This is a demoralising situation! I feel we were not consulted at all. All of us have our personal life and commitments. We have to juggle our life between our family and work. Teachers are all concerned of what is going to happen, in which school will be teaching in next year or perhaps the year after and what will happen in the near future."

Specific Reforms

Of the 1366 respondents, almost two-thirds did not agree that the abolition of streaming was a good decision (Fig 72). As one respondent put it:

"I strongly disagree with the removal of streaming, both in the primary, as well as in the secondary sector. Whereas high flyers were given the possibility to progress at their fast pace with streaming, and low ability pupils were given the chance to learn at their own pace..."

Similarly, slightly less than half did not agree that the abolition of the Junior Lyceum entrance exam was a good decision (Fig 73). However, the majority of respondents felt that the introduction of benchmarking merely replaced one exam with another. Indeed, three in four respondents felt that irrespective of what we choose to call them, the end of the primary cycle (11 Plus) exams have not gone away (Fig 74). The following comments reflect how many of the respondents feel about this reform.

"Whether (it is called) the Junior Lyceum exam or final exams (benchmarking), children still sat for an exam!"

"I think that the benchmarking exams are another name for the Junior Lyceum exams."

"I feel that in Year 6 students and parents will still have the pressure of getting a good result in what is now being called 'benchmarking', rather than Junior Lyceum entrance."

Another important reform at the secondary level is the national introduction of setting in a number of core subjects. More than half the 1366 respondents did not agree with the statement that if mixed ability classes are good then there should be no setting in the core subjects at the secondary level. Indeed, there seemed to be widespread support to setting generally, as illustrated by the following comments:

"I believe in a ... setting system where students can move from one setting to another according to their abilities in each individual subject."

"Is-Sistema tal-Kulleġġi tgħinek taħdem aħjar għax permezz tas-Setting tkun taf eżattament x'tip ta' studenti għandek quddiemek. Izda bħal kull haġa oħra, hemm it-tajjeb u l-ħażin. Is-sistema għadha ġdida u r-riżultati għadhom iridu jibdeu jidhru!"

The College System helps the teacher to work better because with setting the teacher would know the ability level of students in a particular set. But, as in all things, there are positive aspects as well as negative ones. The College System is still in its early years and the outcomes have still to become clear.

Some respondents felt so strongly about setting that they advocated the implementation of setting not merely in the core subjects but across the curriculum. The following comments are typical.

"There should be setting in all subjects."

"I ... strongly agree with settings throughout all subjects not only in the core subjects! This, in my opinion, enables all students to succeed!"

"The use of settings in more subjects worked successfully in the pilot study carried out in these last five years. Students had no problem to accept that they can be in different settings in different subjects."

Indeed, as one respondent argued:

"If setting is effective why not apply it to all subjects?"

Another respondent is so much in favour of setting that he/she felt that:

"... (it) should also be used at Primary Level not just at Secondary Level."

In spite of this widespread support for setting some expressed some reservation and concerns including:

"I feel that certain subjects are being completely ignored and treated as unimportant when compared to other subjects (main subjects: English, Maltese and Maths). The latter will have a setting and lessons everyday while other subjects (History, Geography and Social Studies especially) will have no settings and one or two lessons a week. The reform will make it impossible for us to teach these subjects and students will learn much less than before. Students will perceive these subjects as unimportant."

"The... system is definitely going to hinder the good achievers especially in subjects where there is no setting."

As suggested earlier, the size of the class and the school may negatively impact on the quality of education. In fact, an overwhelming majority of the 1366 respondents (more than nine in ten) felt that the size of the class will influence the quality of student learning (Fig 76). As two respondents observed:

"The student population in the classroom/school should be smaller for the reforms to succeed."

"Quality with large (student) numbers is difficult to maintain."

Results also showed that almost eight in ten felt the same about the size of the school (i.e. student population) (Fig 77). This finding highlights two major concerns for school personnel: first, the problems that large schools bring with them in terms of management (*"large school populations make discipline*

difficult to keep"); one teacher described large schools as "uncontrollable", with students being regarded more as "numbers" than individuals. Secondly, the concern that particularly teachers will not be in a position to know well their students and thereby making it difficult for them to cater for the social and personal needs that some of the students may have. The following comments say it all:

"The problem of control and order in such schools (i.e. very large schools)."

"Discussing the progress of a pupil informally in a staffroom is now something impossible to do."

"... big schools are taxing on SMT members as disciplinary problems increase and even staff members barely get to know each other well since they are so numerous."

Three in ten respondents (n=1366) did not feel comfortable with how school-based self-evaluation are being conducted (Fig 78); nor are about half the respondents comfortable with how external reviews are being conducted (Fig 79).

"External reviews must not be a bullying exercise and the culture of fear instilled in teachers and administrators has to be surpassed."

Results also showed that mixed ability teaching tops the list of reforms the 1366 respondents felt most uncertain about; this is followed by new assessment practices, external reviews, and benchmarking (all of which were indicated by at least half the respondents) (Fig 80).

"I am still very uncertain about mixed ability classes. I can't see how some students (not a few) can mix with other students. Different students have mixed types of learning methods. It is impossible for the teacher to cater for all of them in one class."

The least uncertainty is expressed in regard to the transition from primary to secondary and setting in the core subjects (with less than three in ten respondents indicating these) (Fig 80).

A set of eight questions sought to unravel to what extent respondents are in favour of the several reforms that are being implemented. Of the 1273 respondents, more

than two in three were in favour of the College System, to one extent or another (Fig 126).

"I agree with the College System but strongly agree with settings throughout all subjects not only the core subjects! This in my opinion enables all students to succeed!"

"As a parent and a teacher I feel very worried with the new College System."

In addition to the issues regarding mixed ability teaching discussed earlier, respondents are almost equally divided on mixed ability teaching with just over half of them being in favour of it to some degree (Fig 127). Yet, an overwhelming majority of more than eight in ten of the 1273 respondents are in favour to some degree of streaming (Fig 128) and more than nine in ten are in favour of setting (Fig 129). This unequivocally shows the vast majority of school personnel want to see some form of student grouping on the basis of scholastic achievement.

Results also showed that an overwhelming majority of more than eight in ten of the 1273 respondents are in favour of benchmarking to some degree (Fig 130) and of new forms of assessment (Fig 131). In spite of the widespread support for benchmarking some respondents expressed some concerns, including that:

"Children are not taking the benchmark exams seriously now like they did the Junior Lyceum exams, because they claim they will still go to the same college in the end."

Another respondents brought up the issue of how it was introduced:

The manner in which the Benchmarking examination was introduced was inappropriate for students, parents and educators at school level.

A similar overwhelming majority (more than eight in ten of the 1273 respondents) were to some extent or other in favour of the new forms of assessment (Fig 131).

While overwhelming nine in ten respondents are in favour to some degree of school-based self-evaluation (Fig 132), slightly less than two-thirds are not in favour of external reviews (Fig 133). It was pointed out earlier that about half the respondents were not comfortable with how external reviews have been conducted so far,

quoting one respondent who remarked that these reviews should not be a bullying exercise which instils a culture of fear in teaching personnel and school leaders. A Head of School added:

"... I simply cannot understand how personnel from the QAD carrying out such reviews, most of which have no prior experience at administration and leadership positions in a school, are the persons being asked to judge, evaluate and criticize my operation as a Head of School when these same people are not even Assistant Directors but EO's having (the) same scale as I (have), apart from little or no experience in such a post. This is baffling and an anomaly. It should never have (been allowed to happen)."

The Student Load in a Mixed Ability Class

It has already been established that mixed ability teaching is a central issue for most teachers. Related to this is the issue of class load. Indeed, several respondents commented on this, including the following:

"... for mixed ability teaching to be effective, class size has to be reduced to 15 to enable the teacher to reach (out to) all the pupils in class."

"In my opinion, one cannot cater successfully for mixed ability classes with more than 18 in the class."

Respondent teachers/instructors were specifically asked what the student load of a mixed ability class should be. An overwhelming majority of just less than nine in ten of the 902 respondents indicated that this should not be more than fifteen pupils. In addition, slightly more than three in ten felt that class size should be lower still - it should not be more than 10 students.

Then and Now

Teaching grade personnel and school leaders constitute a workforce and not unlike any other workforce it is essential if they are to give their very best in their work then they must experience a degree of happiness in their work, as well as deriving from it a good level of job satisfaction. Undue pressure in their work is bound to be counter-productive and even debilitating. The present study sought to determine how these personnel perceived their level of happiness, job satisfaction and pressure in their work compared to five years ago. Six in ten of the 1043 respondents with at least five years experience in education did not agree that compared to about five

years ago they are now deriving more satisfaction from their work (Fig 134). Moreover, slightly less that number of respondents did not agree that they feel happier now in their work (Fig 135). This implies that there has certainly been no change in their perceived level of job satisfaction and happiness; one may speculate that at worse there may have been a decrease. An overwhelming number of these 1043 respondents are in agreement that compared to about five years ago they now feel that the pressure in their work has increased (Fig 136). The following comments eloquently illustrate these findings:

"I have never been so stressed and with no job satisfaction in my whole professional career as I am right now."

"As a teacher, I feel that the (reforms have)... created further demands on teaching grades resulting in less job satisfaction, extra stress and a diminished quality in educational outcomes."

"I believe that teaching has become far too stressful in the last, say 8 yrs, especially in the early years of primary, where so much attention needs to be given to the so demanding young children."

"Any real educator is a professional, and thus has the holistic good of the student (at) heart... It (would have been) a great pity if we were... to agree with all the negative comments in the previous question and that a few minds have been allowed to create (such a) havoc in our (educational) system... Already stress levels are reaching dangerous levels in some! Surely not a healthy, positive (sign that) augurs (well) for the success of this reform!"

"Shame that this reform has caused much anxiety, stress and lack of motivation to highly dedicated teachers."

Positive and Negative Aspects

The last two questions presented participants with a series of positive and negative statements and requested to choose one from each which best encapsulate how they felt about and/or perceived the College System and the accompanying reforms. The two positive statements as endorsed by about two in ten of the 1264 respondents were 'A means by which ingrained and outdated notions of education are replaced by more contemporary ones' and 'A way of bringing education in this country in line with that of other EU member countries' (Fig 137). It is pertinent to point out that both these statements underline a desire for updating the country's educational system. The

least popular statement was *'It represents all that I would have liked to see realized in education in our country'*.

Although for some the need for updating the educational system is paramount, others feel that *'Rather than simplifying things it has confounded them'* (Fig 138); this being the top negative statement drawing more than one in four respondents. Only a very small proportion of respondents felt that the reforms are merely an ego trip for some, as indicated by the least popular negative statement *'It is an ego-massaging exercise'*.

CONCLUSION

Teaching personnel and school leaders are often accused of being very conservative and thereby resistant to reforms. The present findings have shown otherwise. They have shown that most teachers are very much in favour of many of the proposed reforms, even if this means that they have to change their ways. As one respondent remarked:

"I (am) in favour of (the) reforms. I am ready to change as I always did in every teaching year in my experience, but I need (the) tools... and reasonable time to prepare my lessons... It is my great duty to teach and I do it lovingly even if I am 55 and I intend to continue but please let me work in a humane way. All this change at one go is imposing on me."

Teaching personnel and school leaders are attuned to many of the reforms even if it means more commitment and more work on their part. As one teacher pointed out:

"Some might think that teachers are afraid of the reforms just because it increases their work but that's far from the truth."

The importance of the events that are unfolding does not escape them; nor does the implication for the future of this country.

"(The College Reform) serves as an experiment for future generations. If it succeeds it's OK but if not,... our society will pay."

Not unlike any other experiment the impact of these reforms can go either way. As one respondent remarked:

"Only time will show any negative impacts of the reforms. My main concern is that such negative impact, if any, will unfortunately be at the expense of our students."

Clearly, the potential success of the reforms hinges on a number of factors ranging from the provision of adequate support and resources, collegiality and collaboration.

Indeed, one teacher observed that:

"If teachers and all concerned parties are not ready to collaborate for the success of the proposed changes, the system will not work effectively as it should."

A sour point that appeared over and over again is the perceived lack of proper preparation for the reforms. Personnel in the various teaching grades feel that they have not been properly prepared for these reforms, not for their own sake as for the sake of the children they teach. Even if they do not necessarily agree with the reforms, and even if they feel that they are not prepared for them, they felt that they need to get on with the job, as one respondent put it:

"... now we have started this new package and I believe that we have to give our best in order for our Maltese pupils to succeed in life."

An equally sour point is the perception of most respondents that they were not properly consulted about the reforms; that they were not given the opportunity to sound their objections, concerns or advice. A great deal of indignation was expressed in this regard, as illustrated by the following comment:

"... they (i.e. the policy-makers) have not consulted those who are on the job - neither to benefit from their hands on experience, nor to address the difficulties they (were) perceiving."

Some of these salient issues will be the concern of the next and final stage of the present research project. The series of one-on-one interviews with a sample of teaching grade personnel and members of school Senior Management Teams selected from across all the ten Colleges, together with all College Principals and the Directors General shall try to explore the views and opinions of interviewees on the selected issues.

**ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS:
IN CONVERSATION WITH THE DGs, PRINCIPALS,
SMTs, AND TEACHING GRADES PERSONNEL**

INTRODUCTION

As explained in the methodology chapter, the goal of the interviewing phase was to seek a deeper understanding on particular issues in order to comprehend and interpret better the results obtained in the quantitative section of the research. One understands that it is practically impossible to ask questions on each and every result obtain in the questionnaire survey (some 130 results in all). Still it was made sure that questions were set in the interview schedule that covered topics within each section of the questionnaire. The transcripts presented here, arising from 90 interviews, are organised accordingly.

The College System

Theme: **Decentralisation**

Focus: **Autonomy**

Question Q1: **(DG: 1)**

The following question was asked to the Directors General:

More than 2 in 3 of the 1474 respondents indicated that colleges should have greater autonomy [Fig 7]. In addition, more than 4 in 5 feel that the College System has still not delivered in terms of devolution and flexibility on central issues as syllabi and textbooks [Fig 11].

How would you react to these findings?

The reactions indicate that autonomy is still one of the primary goals of the new College System, but it will take place with caution and over a greater span of time, following the success achieved in the decentralisation of particular services within the College System.

The following are the reactions of the Directors General:

DG1

"In principle I agree that the College model is planned to have more autonomy and flexibility. However, having started from a very centralized system, this process is proceeding with caution. Rather than simply moving from a centralized system to a decentralized system, I think we are still working on identifying which of the processes can be centralized or decentralized.

The process of decentralization is not complete; we are proceeding with a lot of caution.

In principle I agree with devolution [of power] but it also depends on which aspects."

DG2

"Ir-riċerċaturi għażlu żewġ issues (syllabi u textbooks) illi ma' jaqgħux that id-dekasteru tiegħi.

Jagħmel żball jekk xi edukatur jaqbad u jagħti l-awtonomija f'salt. L-awtonomija trid tippjanaha, trid tiddjaloga, trid tiddiskuti, trid tara kif se tiġi iddecentralizzata.

F'dawn l-erba` snin minn mindu bdejna niddecentralizzaw hafna servizzi... illum il-ġurnata m'għadx għandna servizzi ta' appoġġ centralizzati imma għandna dawn at a college level u l-feedback li għandi mill-maġġoranza assoluta tal-Kapijiet u teaching grades oħrajn qed ihossu li dawn is-servizzi qegħdin iżjed viċin."

The researchers chose two issues (syllabi and textbooks) that lie outside my responsibilities.

An educator would make a mistake if he/she cedes all the autonomy at once. You have to plan autonomy, to dialogue, to discuss, to see how it will be decentralized.

In these past four years since we started decentralizing many of the services ... today we no longer have centralized support services but we have them at a college level and the feedback that I got from the absolute majority of heads and other teaching grades is that they feel that these services are now more accessible.

Theme: **Competition**

Question Q2: (DG: 2, P: 1, SMT: 1, T: 1)

The following question was asked to Directors General, the College Principals, the Senior Management Teams as well as Teaching Grades:

49% (n=1474) agreed that the College System has given rise to unhealthy competition among colleges [Fig 28].

Why do you feel that this is the case? Who do you think is responsible for promoting this unhealthy competition?

In general the Directors General as well as most of the College Principals feel that there is no unhealthy competition among the colleges. The views of the SMTs and teachers vary, with some claiming that yes there is unhealthy competition, while others say that by and large there is not. Teachers seem to identify this unhealthy competition in terms of the amount of exposure time on the media some College Principals have more than others, or the number of activities Colleges take part in – the more activities and the greater the media coverage, the better a college it is.

DG1

"Personally I do not understand the basis of this question because if I take one example of an area I am responsible for, which is the benchmark, the fact that we did not issue the results per college was one way of ensuring that this unhealthy competition between colleges is not augmented.

Great care was taken not to create league tables amongst the colleges.

At the ELC, decisions are taken as a group and people share good experiences and good practices in the different colleges."

DG2

"Jien fl-erba` snin li għaddew ma kellix kummenti mit-teaching grades li niltaqa' magħhom ta' kuljum, minn filghodu sa filghaxija... jiena ngħix ma' l-iskejjel, ngħix man-nies li qegħdin jaħdmu fl-iskejjel... illi hemm unhealthy competition.

Li jkun hemm kompetizzjoni hija in-natura umana, u ċertu element ta' kompetizzjoni hija healthy... pero' fejn hija unhealthy nistaqsi lir-riċerkaturi jipprovdu il-provi ċari halli jien inkun nista' nivvettjaha!

Aktar ma jgħaddi iż-żmien... iktar id-deċiżjonijiet jittieħdu at the grassroot levels u hekk irridu imma ċertu elementi se jibqgħu ċentralizzati [eż. it-trasport, mentri l-uniformijiet ġew decentralizzati]."

In the past four years I heard no comments from teaching grades that I meet every day, from morning till evening... I live in schools; I live with people who are working in schools... that there is unhealthy competition.

Competition is innate to human nature, and a certain element of competition is healthy... but where it is unhealthy I will ask the researchers to provide clear evidence so that I can deal with it!

The more time passes ... the more decisions are taken at a grassroots' level and this is what we strive for but certain elements will remain centralized [e.g. transport whereas uniforms have been decentralized]

P_1

"I don't think it is the case at this point in time... In the past, speaking about the colleges, there might have been over-enthusiasm from some of the colleges which have given this impression... but I think people have learnt... most of the colleges have moved on; anzi there is a strong sense of collaboration between College Principals who work together on similar issues and push these issues forward together.

It is unfair to generalize about all colleges about this issue."

P_10

This Principal categorically denied the statement that there is unhealthy competition between Colleges is true and specifically said that such a statement not only hurts but is offensive. He/she asked what the researcher meant by "unhealthy competition" and emphasised that his/her style was certainly not one generating competition. He/she said that his/her experience as College Principal was not similar to the respondents' perception and also noted that he/she understood that 51% actually argued that such unhealthy competition does not exist.

In order to back up his statement, the Principal referred to two concrete examples to illustrate how colleges and their staff share knowledge and information for the collective good... [details provided] These examples, he/she argued, are real examples of knowledge sharing amongst colleges contrary to the perceptions of nearly 50% of the respondents in the survey.

He/she insisted that the current working atmosphere is not one of unhealthy competition but more one of "let's do it"; "let's work together".

The Principal stated that every project initiated by the College is a collective effort agreed upon by the Council of Heads with the eventual involvement of teachers who actively engage in providing support to any new project. He/she further emphasised that these projects are always part and parcel of the curriculum and hence they do not create extra work.

P_2

"Hemm aspetti differenti bejn kullegġ u ieħor imma I do not take that to be unhealthy! That is not competition... dik hija diversita`"

Colleges vary from one to another but I do not take that to be unhealthy! That is not competition... that is diversity.

P_3

*"Ma narahix din il-kompetizzjoni jiena.
Kien ikun żball kieku il-kulleġġi ġew ippreżentati b'dan il-mod... illi għandek xi grupp ta' skejjel li qegħdin jikkompetu ma' xulxin.
L-iskop tal-kulleġġi, anki bil-liġi, hi li tipprova tagħmel differenza fil-kwalita' tat-tagħlim tat-tifel fil-klassi.
Li kieku hemm kompetizzjoni hija unhealthy... dik kif nifhima jien."*

I do not look at it as being competition.

It would be a mistake if colleges were presented in this way... as a group of schools that are competing with each other.

The purpose of colleges is, and this is stipulated in the law, to try to make a difference in the quality of learning of the child in class.

If there is actually competition that is unhealthy... that is how I look at it.

P_5

"Kull riċerka turi illi xi tip ta' kompetizzjoni hija tajba imma x'tip ta' kompetizzjoni qegħdin nitkellmu fuqha... Jiena dejjem kont kontra l-kompetizzjoni li kien hemm bejn skejjel differenti... Jiena kontra l-kompetizzjoni fejn hemm xi forma ta' klassifikazzjoni ta' għalliema... Konna hloqna kultura perikoluża ħafna illi l-kompetizzjoni kienet tkisser u tagħmel il-ħsara. Però jiena favur kompetizzjoni fejn jien u inti intejbu il-performances tagħna... biex nikbru flimkien.

Irridu nikkontestwalizzaw (contextualise) u naraw fejn, jekk hu il-każ, hemm kompetizzjoni mhux sana u nindirizzawha b'mod professjonali."

All research shows that some sort of competition is beneficial but what kind of competition are we talking about... I have always been against competition between different schools... I am against any form of competition where there is some form of classification of teachers... we have created a very dangerous culture where competition was damaging and creating problems. But I am in favour of competition where we improve our performances... to grow together.

We have to contextualize and see where, if any, there is unhealthy competition and address the problem in a professional manner.

P_6

*"Ma' dan l-istatement jien ma naqbilx illi hemm unhealthy competition.
Fil-bidu l-iskejjel bdew jaraw kif se jingħaqdu... mhux faċli fil-bidu.*

L-ewwel haġa li jien għamilt biex innexxi s-seduzzjoni ta' bejniethom li kien hemm, kull skola tistieden hi il-Council of Heads... mela b'dik neħhejt physically [dik is-sens ta' 'aħna' u 'huma'].
Jekk inti m'intix kapaċi tneħhi l-unhealthy competition fil-micro [skola ma' skola] inti kif se tneħhiha fil-macro [kullgħi ma' kullgħi]? ... Jiena elimenajt l-unhealthy competition.
Ħloqt win-win situation."

I do not agree with the statement that there exists unhealthy competition,

At the beginning schools tried to understand how they could merge... it is not easy at first.

The first thing that I've done to dispel the apprehension that existed between them was for each school to start inviting the Council of Heads... through this I removed the physical barrier [in the sense of 'them' and 'us' as two separate entities]

If you are not able to remove the unhealthy competition at the micro level [between schools] how can you remove it at a macro level [between colleges]?

... I eliminated unhealthy competition.

I've created a win-win situation.

P_7

The Principal specifically stated that he/she cannot conceive any competition between Colleges let alone 'unhealthy' competition given that every College had adopted its own style of working. Every Principal is obliged to look into his or her College's needs and address them rather than competing with other Colleges. He/She stated that he/she was personally against competition and, as an example, he/she referred to events which he/she organized across his/her College and which was then followed up by other Colleges. However he/she was hesitant to call this competition; rather he/she viewed this as a sharing of good practice and he/she argued that different fora like the Educational Leadership Council propagates the need to share good practice rather than compete. At the same time, he/she said that he/she found no problem in the fact that every College builds its own identity. This helps, he/she said, keeping a good working relationship with all personnel in the College and which facilitates feedback to improve on all practices.

P_8

The Principal denied the fact that colleges engaged in unhealthy competition. He/she said that this could have been the case during their early stages of development as they strived to find their identity and to establish their ethos but this subsided over time. In fact, on the contrary, he/she argued that colleges are currently more likely to be engaged in collaboration and there was indeed close collaborative process as colleges were also involved in managing projects together.

He/she argued that the Education Act of 2006 promoted and encouraged collaboration not only between schools but also between state and non-state colleges.

He/she also remarked about the exact meaning of “unhealthy”. He/she asked the interviewer whether respondents had provided any specific examples in order to be more accurate in one’s assertions.

P_9

With reference to the issue of unhealthy competition between colleges, the Principal stated that since the College System is still relatively in its initial stages, he/she personally found it difficult to believe that there was such unhealthy competition taking place. He/she said that such unhealthy competition can only come from Principals and Principals are too busy focussing on making their colleges work optimally and certainly do not have the time to engage in such competing behaviours.

Furthermore, he/she argued that rather than competition, the choice is more towards collaboration between colleges. He/she mentioned one of his/her college initiatives which has been diffused to other colleges. He/she also referred to the collaboration and support shared between college student support staff of two colleges who worked together in the transition phase of Year 6 students. Hence he/she cannot understand why a strong number of respondents opted to state that the College System has given rise to unhealthy competitions among colleges.

SMT_P_2

“Iva hemm realta’ fiha. Ghaliex hemm ċertu skemi. Dan l-ewwel joħorgu b’mod sottili mbaħħad dejjem jiġu nfurzati fuqna. Issa bejn kullegġ u iehor meta wiehed jaddotta wahda minnhom, awtomitakment l-iehor irid jagħmel bħalu wkoll. Huma kollha tajbin imma alla ħares tidħol f’kollox. Ghaliex ma ssibx ħin għat-tagħlim u għall-akkademiku. Kultant, jiġifieri jkolli pressure “Isma idħol ipprova”, ngħid “Le? L-iskola miniex ser indaħħalha.” Kemm minħabba nuqqas ta’ staff u nħoss li t-teachers għandhom ħafna u ħafna x’jagħmlu allura ha nħoss li ha nagħmel iżjed ħsara milli gid...”

Yes, it is a reality. There are certain schemes which eventually end up being imposed on us. If a particular college adopts a particular practice, well automatically, the other college feels it needs to do the same. All the initiatives are positive, but we don’t have time to participate in every activity. Sometimes there is pressure to actually take part in certain initiatives. However I decide not to for a number of reasons: lack of staff and a busy workload. Sometimes I feel that if I participate, it would do more harm than good...

SMT_P_5

“Iva nħoss li dan huwa l-każ għax oovjament il-principali kulħadd ikun irid ikun l-aħjar wiehed u għal dan il-għan ikun hemm mela xi tip ta’ pressjoni biex aħna nħegġu l-għalliema tagħna jieħdu sehem f’ċertu attivitajiet. Jien din il-

problema m'għandiex għax l-għalliema tiegħi ngħaddilhom l-emails kollha li jaslu u ntihom free reign u ngħidilhom li jekk iridu jipparteċipaw jgħiduli. Jiena forsi xxurtjata li hafna mill-għalliema tiegħi jipparteċipaw f'hafna mill-attivitajiet u allura jiena nidher f'dawl tajjeb. Pero` nhoss li jkun hemm pressjoni iva."

Yes I believe it is the case. Obviously each principal would like to appear the best. So they pressure us in order to encourage our teachers to participate in certain activities. It's not a problem I actually face because I pass on all the e-mails to my teachers and give them free reign, on whether they want to participate or not. I'm lucky because my teachers actually participate in most activities and therefore I'm looked upon favourably. However I do feel there's a lot of pressure, yes definitely.

SMT_P_7

"Iva realta', kultant ikollna pressure żejda biex kullegġ jispikka minn ieħor. Meetings żejda, activities żejda... li ovoġament jirrizulta fi stress għall-membri kollha. Hemm ċertu kullegġi - mhux kollha - li iva jkun hemm pressure biex jispikkaw iżjed. Ġieli tiġi mistiedna l-media wkoll biex iktar nidhru jew artikli fil-gazzetti.

Min huwa responsabbli għal din il-kompetizzjoni? Il-prinċipali. Għax huma mbagħad jigwidawna huwx. Jien nista' ngħid iktar minn haddieħor għax dan huwa r-raba' kullegġ tiegħi f'erba' snin. U nara differenza minn kullegġ għall-ieħor."

Yes it's a reality. Sometimes we have too much pressure so that one college appears even better than another college. Extra meeting, extra activities... Obviously this results in stress in all members of staff. Sometimes the media is also invited to such events.

The principals are responsible for this competition. They're the ones guiding us right? I know better than anyone else, because this is my fourth college and I can tell the difference between the colleges.

SMT_P_8

"Kompetizzjoni bejn kullegġi? No I don't agree. Iktar it-teachers forsi jhossu Hekk għax jibzġhu li jkunu qed jikkumparawhom ma' skejjel oħra. Ahna bhala heads ma nhossuhiex."

Competition between the Colleges? No I don't agree. Perhaps teachers might feel that way, because they might fear that they're being compared with other schools. As Heads of school we don't feel it.

SMT_P_9

"Heqq mhux il-Prinċipal! Jekk hemm dil-competition. Jien hekk naħseb. Għax jien naħseb anke' il-Prinċipali bejniethom, nimmagina li għandhom naqra competition bejniethom."

It's the Principal's fault if there such competition! That is what I think. I also think there is some degree of competition amongst the Principals themselves.

SMT_S_2

"Jekk il-competition qed isservi biex it-tfal immorru aħjar, tagħmel sens. Imma l-competition qiegħda ssir f'affarijiet bla sens. Eżempju, min jagħmel l-aktar affarijiet, it-tfexfix, il-frilli... imma issa qed tinħass il-competition qiegħda fuq affarijiet li huma l-frilli tas-sistema. Min jagħmel l-iktar affarijiet, min jagħmel affarijiet ikbar. Speċi qegħdin niffukaw wisq fuq is-soċjal. Allura jekk pereżempju nagħmlu sports day għall-argument, mela ta' San Ġwakkin jagħmlu sports day ikbar minna.... Tinħass wkoll li l-Prinċipal irid jagħmel tlett snin mandate u mbagħad wara jridu jagħmlu l-interview biex jibqgħu tal-post... Qed tinħass minn fuq, qisna we have to show our mettle, how good we are. It's being understood that we have to show and produce."

If the competition is serving to help students fair better in school, it makes sense. However I believe the present competition is pointless. For instance, it's about showing off how many activities you carry out, trying to impress. We're focusing too much on the social. So if we have a sports day, another college has to do a bigger sports day. I think it's also because the Principal has a 3 year mandate. After that mandate they need to do another interview in order to keep their post. It's a ripple effect. It's like we have to show our mettle, how good we are. It's being understood that we have to show and produce.

SMT_S_7

"Sfortunatament inħoss li l-Prinċipali spiċċaw qishom prima donna min ser jidher l-iktar. U ċertu inizzjattivi jsiru sempliciment biex nagħtu l-impressjoni li kollox miexi tajjeb, b'mod korrett. Pero' fil-verita', qed naħbu l-problemi taħt it-tapit biex ma joħorgux fl-apert... Is-sistema giet iċċentralizzata fi grupp żgħir ta' nies li huma l-Prinċipali. Id-deċiżjonijiet qed jittieħdu waqt l-Educational Leaders Council u allura kulhadd irid jiftaħar b'rixu u kemm l-affarijiet sejr in tajjeb fil-kulleġġ tiegħu. Fil-fatt ġieli jintqal diskors anke' fil-College of Heads, "Isma jien l-importanti li ma ġratx fil-kulleġġ tiegħi."

Unfortunately I feel that the Principals have become like prima donnas competing to be in the limelight. Certain initiatives are undertaken simply to give the impression that everything is running smoothly, in the correct manner. However in reality, we're sweeping the problems under the carpet so that they don't come out in the open. The system has become centralised within a small group of Principals. The decisions are being taken in the Educational Leadership Council, and so everyone is showing off and saying how things are going well in their college. In fact in the College of Heads, sometimes people say, "Listen, for me the important thing is that it didn't happen in my college".

T_P_2

"Meta wieħed iqis il-programmi li jkun hemm fuq ix-xandir fuq ċertu suġġetti tal-edukazzjoni qed jidher li hemm ċertu Principali li qed ikollhom aċċess biex jidhru iżjed fuq it-televixin minn Principali oħra. Allura tinholq diġa' diskrepanza. Jiġifieri jekk wieħed jinnota kemm ċertu Principali dehru fuq ix-xandir u oħrajn li qatt ma dehru. Tara li hemm ċertu pressure biex jidhru iktar minn haddiehor."

When one considers the programmes aired on TV on certain educational topics, it's clear that certain Principals have more access to go on certain television programmes than other Principals. This creates a discrepancy. Certain Principals go on TV regularly, while others are never on TV. It shows that there's a certain pressure on some of them to be more visible than others.

T_P_5

"Ifhimni, bħala kompetizzjoni hemm bejn kullegġ u ieħor. Ovvjament imdaħħlin ħafna fiha l-Principali għax dawn iridu jiġġustifikaw xogħolhom fl-aħħar mill-aħħar, bil-benedizzjoni tad-Direttorat."

Listen, there is competition between one college and another. Obviously this competition stems from the Principals, because they need to justify their work at the end of the day, with the blessing of the Directorate.

T_S_1

"Il-competition inħossha bejn kullegġ u ieħor. Anki bejn skola u oħra. Pereżempju fis-suġġett tiegħi kien hemm kompetizzjonijiet li suppost li kienu biex tipparteċipa u ngħinu lit-tfal f'ċerti affarijiet biex ikun ta' inizjattiva spicċaw f'kompetizzjoni bejn l-akbar żewġ kullegġi li kien hemm. Il-Principal jiddandan kemm rebħu kompetizzjonijiet, l-ieħor ma jridx ikun b'inqas u noqogħdu sejr in hekk. If I had to blame someone naħseb il-Principali jahtu; il-kullegġ hu il-baby tagħhom; dan kulhadd irid jidher bħala min l-aktar qed jagħmel xogħol tajjeb. Mill-banda tiegħi wkoll, il-Principal li kien hemm fil-kullegġ meta bdiet tara dawn l-affarijiet ippruvat tgħaqqad it-teachers tas-suġġett tagħna biex nagħmlu xi haġa joint, prattikament, għalkemm ma qaltilniex b'mod ċar, biex ma nkunux anqas minn haddiehor."

I feel the competition between one college and another and one school and another. For example, there were competitions in my subject area where the aim was for students to participate and get help in some aspects. These ended up as competitions between the two participating larger colleges. The Principal boasted about how many competitions his/her college won, the other one does not want to be second fiddle and so forth. If I had to blame someone I would blame the Principals. The college is their baby where everyone wants to show off as who is doing the best job ever. On my part, when my Principal realised how

matters where being run, he/she tried to gather the teachers in my subject area so that we work together on a joint matter; practically, though this was never uttered clearly, he/she wanted us to be au par with the rest.

T_S_3

“Responsabbli nahseb huma l-Principala tal-Kulleġġi, mhux tal-kulleġġi kollha. Imma f’haġġa minnhom hekk qiegħed jġri. Haġġa mill-Principala qegħdin hemm biex jidhru, qed jippretendu mit-teachers l-impossibbli allura l-fatt li kulhadd irid jidher sabiħ hu, qed iġieghel lit-teachers jaġmlu affarijiet li qabel, kienu jew jogħġbu lilhom jew fuq inizjattiva personali tagħhom jew fuq tal-iskola. Issa qisek thossok kwazi mġieghel li tagħmilhom ċerti affarijiet. U dan qed johloq ċerta kompetizzjoni li m’għadhiex healthy u sabiħa bħalma kienet qabel. Saret xi haġġa ta’ sforz din kwazi.”

I think that the College Principals are responsible, and not all the colleges. But it’s what’s going on in the majority of them. Many of the Principals are there to show off, pretend the impossible from the teachers and hence, since everybody wants to show off, they are asking things from teachers that teachers used to do because they (i.e teachers) liked doing or it used to be their initiative or on behalf of the school. Now we feel that you are almost forced to do certain things. This is thus creating competition that is not healthy and good as before. Participation has become a forced thing, almost.

T_S_4

“Naqbel magħha perfettament, jiena l-aktar li niġi minn College [name supplied]. Għandna reputazzjoni hażina, forsi hemm raġunijiet... imma jekk hemm stil ta’ familji, m’hemmx x’tara, pero’ ma nħossx li din għandha tirrifletti kemm min hu student tajjeb u kemm min hu teacher tajjeb. Għax it-tagħlim u x-xogħol xorta jsir anzi pjuttost trid taħdem aktar milli jaħdem haddiehor imma r-reputazzjoni hażina hemm qiegħda.”

I agree with it perfectly. I come from a College [name supplied] which has a bad reputation. Maybe there are reasons for this since our students come from families with certain backgrounds. That is how it is. However, I do not think that this should reflect on all those students who are good at school and on those teachers who are doing a good job. Learning is still taking place and good work is still being done. If anything t we must work harder than anyone else (in other colleges) but unfortunately, the bad reputation is still there.

T_S_7

“Kultant inwaħħal f’xi Principali li ikunu super ambizzjużi, li jippruvaw jippromowtjaw iktar il-kulleġġ tagħhom milli... biex bħal speċi biex juru li tagħhom huwa l-aħjar...”

Sometimes I blame some of the Principals who are super ambitious, who try to promote their college more than... to sort of show that theirs is the best...

Theme: **Impact on Personnel and Operations**

Focus: **Volume of Work**

Question Q3: (DG: 3, P: 2, SMT: 6, T: 2)

The following question was asked to the Directors General, the College Principals, the Senior Management Teams and Teaching Grades:

Almost 85% of respondents (n=1474) were in agreement that the College System has brought an increase in the volume of work both to personnel in the various teaching grades as well as SMTs [Fig 34].

Can you elaborate on this?

A number of College Principals echoed the main query of one of the DGs: "What is meant by 'volume of work'? Which work are we talking about?" SMTs and teachers, on the other hand, did not find it hard to identify what they understand by 'volume of work', and most claimed that work has increased considerably. The main increase in work seems to be that tied to administration - work that, according to the interviewees, can be done by administrative staff. Most SMTs prefer to spend time on tasks related to curricular activities, mentoring of new teachers as well as pastoral care. Identified elements that increased the workload seem to be due to the introduction of the interactive whiteboards as well as other 'new' technologies, the various modes of assessments being used, differentiated teaching, the preparation of multiple examination papers for the same subject/year, the amount of e-mails SMTs have to deal with, most of which have stringent deadlines to be dealt with, setting, adaptive work as well as the time taken to coordinate with the LSA the lessons of the week. Taken for granted but still part of the job one also has to mention lesson preparation and classwork/homework corrections.

DG2

"Irrid inkun naf iżjed xi tfisser 'volume of work'... jiġifieri volume of work għax qed nagħmlu affarijiet li qabel ma konniex nagħmluhom; minhabba burokrazija

žejda; volume of work ghax qabel ma kontx taħdem b'interactive whiteboards u issa qed nipprepara b'mod differenti?... Din il-mistoqsija impoġġija b'mod generiku wisq biex wieħed ikun jista' jirrispondiha.

Għallhekk qed niddjalogaw u niddiskutu halli daww l-affarijiet li se jrin tajbin insaħħuhom u daww l-affarijiet li mhumieħ inbiddluhom u la darba ir-riforma tkun implementata u titrabba dik il-kunfidenza, imbagħad, ma tibqax taraha bħala xi haġa estranja u negattiva."

I want to know more about what 'volume of work' means... i.e. "volume of work" because we are now doing things that previously we were not doing, due to extra bureaucracy; 'volume of work' because I was not using interactive whiteboards and now I have to prepare in a different manner ? ... this question is too generic for one to reply.

This is why we are dialoguing and discussing so that we support those things that are working and change those things which are not and once the reform is implemented and confidence is built, then, it is no longer viewed as something unknown and negative.

P_1

"This is one of the areas in the survey about what it means by the College System... therefore the increased work may not be linked to the College System per se but may be linked to these other changes happening simultaneously...that is the truth... I really cannot see exactly where all the volume of work has increased directly because of this network system."

P_10

The Principal questioned what one means by "volume". He/she stated that it would be good to try and qualify "volume of work". He/she made the point that teachers have to do more than merely the traditional teaching and this is done with the purpose of focussing on the holistic development of the child. Teachers are more conscious that they are duty bound to go beyond the traditional expectations if this principle is to be achieved and, he/she admitted, may at times increase one's perceptions of the volume of work. But he/she also added that this is absolutely necessary in order to improve the educational experience of the child.

For instance, he/she stated that classes are relatively smaller and that wherever possible he/she has always insisted and pushed for more teachers in order to satisfy this criterion.

P_3

"Narah statement generiku wisq.

Xi tfigser il-'volum tax-xogħol'? F'hiex żdied il-volum tax-xogħol?

Jiena ma naħsibx li hi minħabba s-sistema tal-kulleġġi għaliex inti għandek sensiela ta' tibdiliet marbutin ma' xulxin.

F'ċertu każijiet u f'xi uħud mit-tibdiliet li jsiru, iwa, iwa, ix-xogħol żdied u se jkompli jiżdied.

Għalhekk xi uħud mit-teachers iħarsu lejha b'dan il-mod għax uħud mit-teachers ma jridux jinbidlu.

Jekk aħna qegħdin issa nispustjaw bil-mod il-mod il-focus tagħna mill-proċess akkademiku għal fuq it-tfal... filwaqt li qabel kelli lezzjoni standard u hafna minnhom ippreparati snin qabel (għalhekk is-sistema tilfet hafna tfal)... jekk minn issa għedna li kulhadd għandu jitgħallem... fl-iskejjel tagħna din ma bditx issir.

Dahlet ukoll il-literacy support unit... l-ewwel reazzjoni tat-teachers x'kienet? Resistenza għax dik żiditilhom hafna xogħol! Imma hemm bżonn hafna xogħol biex inti tagħti servizz aħjar."

I think that this statement is too generic.

What do you mean by the 'volume of work'? Where has the volume of work increased?

I do not think that this results from the College System because there are a series of changes that took place and these are intertwined.

In certain cases and in some changes that happen, yes, yes, the work has increased and it will continue to increase.

This is why some teachers look at it in this way, because certain teachers do not want to change.

If we are now shifting slowly our focus from the academic process to the children ... while before, there was a standard lesson and many of these lessons were prepared years before (hence the system has lost so many children)... if from now we have said that everybody has to learn... in our schools, this has not yet started to happen.

The literacy support unit was also introduced ... what was the teachers' first reaction? That of resistance, because it increased their work load but more work is needed in order to give a better service.

P_5

"Kellna hafna bidliet... [li għabu l-bżonn tal-bidla fil-prassi] bħal metodi, interactive whiteboards, benchmarks, il-qafas tal-kurrikulum... li fin-natura tagħhom jitolbu impenn.

Dawn il-bidliet iżidu u ma jżidux ix-xogħol... [eż: isemmi il-karti tal-eżami tal-kulleġġi]... jiddependi kif inħarsu lejhom.

Jien ngħid li huwa il-mod ta' kif naħdmu illi jrid jinbidel.

Qegħdin fil-process transittiv."

We have had many changes ... [which brought the need of a change in praxis] such as methods (teaching), interactive whiteboards, benchmarks, the curriculum framework... which by their nature call for commitment.

These changes increase and reduce work at the same time... [e.g. I will mention college examination papers]... depends how we look at them.

In my opinion, it is the way of how we work that must change.

We are in the process of transition.

P_8

What is actually meant by 'volume of work'? He/she said that this was too generic and also found it quite paradoxical if not contradictory: on one hand teachers grumbled about the lack of support and on the other hand were reluctant to employ the support provided as this may have been interpreted as increasing one's workload.

As an example he/she argued that the College System had pioneered the introduction of new and better effective measures to combat illiteracy and he/she found it very surprising for teachers to complain about their lack of competence in this area.

This, he/she reflected, may be a strong indication that there are clear gaps between how the University prepares the student teacher in his/her formative years and whether new teachers have the necessary competencies to satisfy the requirement demands created by the new practices as initiated through the reforms.

He/she found it plausible that teachers were complaining about the volume of work for this specific reason in which case it was the role of University to ensure that it had the right professional development structures in place.

P_9

The Principal argued that rather than the volume of work, it was more the mode of work (how we work) that has changed. He/she linked this to the preparedness of every professional teacher to be an agent of change and he/she questioned whether there are still individuals within the teaching grades who are not adaptable to change and hence are stating that the volume of work has increased conveniently.

He/She asked himself/herself whether Principals have helped teachers adapt to the changes and he/she replied with an emphatic 'yes'. He/She elaborated on the issue that, in agreement with the MUT, teachers had attended several courses which were organised throughout the year rather than in summer to prepare them effectively to the new practices of work. Examples included courses in differentiated learning, English/Maltese basic skills, etc. In addition, the Principal added, Heads of School have the opportunity to facilitate communication lines effectively further down the ranks so that teachers could still feel involved and 'part of it'. He/She insisted that the Colleges employ a delegated leadership system. These, he/she argued, actually diminish the perceived volume of work and not increase it!

He/She showed concern in thinking of educators, and particularly teachers, as being highly resistant to change and argued that this could be for many reasons: either the University is not preparing the teachers for a realistic education environment which necessitates change or teachers are not being properly mentored.

SMT_P_5

"Jiena l-irwol tiegħi huwa li niddlega x-xogħol u li nkun overall manager ta' ħafna proġetti imma jiena nħossni stramba nagħti daqstant xogħol lin-nies li qegħdin taħti. Ma nistax inkun Head li nagħmel kollox jiena imma fl-istess ħin,

I feel nothing but a glorified clerk. Nothing because when push comes to shove I can't really take any decisions of my own accord. I just have to tow the line and then again it's always politics."

My work as Head of School is to delegate work and to be an overall manager of most projects. However I don't think it's fair to overload the Assistant Heads. I can't be a Head who carries out all the duties, however at the same time, I feel nothing but a glorified clerk. Nothing, because when push comes to shove I can't really take any decisions of my own accord. I just have to tow the line and then again it's always politics.

SMT_P_8

"Jien ma ngħidx li żdied ix-xogħol. Jiena ngħid li x-xogħol qed jiġi iżjed apprezzat u inti għandek iżjed direzzjoni!"

I don't think work has increased. I think that our work is being appreciated more than ever before. And we also have more direction!

SMT_S_2

"Jiena u l-Head hawnhekk jonqosna norqdu hawn. Immorru d-dar u nkomplu. Tgħidli qabel ma kontux hekk? Iva konna, imma at least... għax pereżempju jiena miniex qiegħdha mat-tfal Form 1. Imma jien niġi hawn nagħmel ix-xogħol mat-tfal. Il-paper work trid tagħmlu f'xi hin ieħor. Mela jew ħa nagħtu kas l-individwalita' tat-tifla... jew tispicċa magħluqa ġol-uffiċċju u taħdem. Issa dak mhuwiex xogħolna."

The Head and I spend most of our time here. We go home and we continue working. You might ask, wasn't it not always like this? Yes, true but at least it was still better then. My aim is to work with students. Paper work needs to be done at some other time. We have a choice. Either we're going to focus on the child's individuality or end up swamped with work in an office, which shouldn't be our job.

SMT_S_3

"B'mod negattiv. Qegħdin under stress, qegħdin stressjati ħafna t-teachers huwx. Anke' titkellem magħhom, qegħdin stressjati. Qed jitolbu ħafna paper work minnhom, apparti dawn ic-changes, speċjalment min ma kienx into technology, irid jitgħallem kif juza... hemm ħafna demands fuq kulhadd. Il-gradi kollha. Id-demands minn kullimkien ġejjin."

In a negative way. They're under stress. Teachers are under a lot of stress. Even when you speak to them, you realise that they're under a lot of stress. They request too much paper work from the teachers, besides all the changes. Not to mention those teachers who were not into technology. They had to learn how to use... Too many demands on everyone. All grades. Demands coming from all directions.

SMT_S_7

"Enormi! Jien qatt ma dahhalt Assistant Heads jahdmu fis-sajf. As from this year, definitely iridu jidhlu by roster. Tant ikkumplikat ruha s-sistema, tant jibdlu listi fuq listi. Pereżempju karti tal-half yearly qed isiru tlett karti fejn qabel kienet issir karta waħda... U kien hemm bżonn it-tfal kollha neħduhom fis-sets? Mhu vera xejn (li kien hemm bżonn)! Nagħmel is-setting fejn hemm il-batuti... Noħloq inqas paper work, inqas pressure fuq l-iskola, inqas problemi ta' rizorsi. Kulhadd jigr i l hawn u l hemm. Nomadi – niġru minn naħa għall-oħra tal-klassijiet. U din is-sistema ħadmet kontra dat-tfal li suppost dahlet għalihom."

Enormous! I have never asked Assistant Heads to work in summer. As from this year, they definitely have to come in by roster. The system has complicated itself so much... so many lists change... For example, three half-yearly papers are being set, while before there only used to be one ... And was it necessary for all the children to be on setting? It's not true (that there was a need for this)! I would have done the setting only with the weaker ones... There would have been less paper work, less pressure on the school, less shortages of resources. Everyone is running here and there. We're nomads – we run from one side to the other of the classrooms. And the system is working against the same children that it's supposed to be helping.

T_P_3

"Oh yes definitely... Right now teaching in a primary school is very very very frustrating! We have so much work and they want to put more work unto us. With the syllabus I have I cannot, I honestly cannot... you know with corrections I have to do, with discussions, I don't catch up. I do not know how I'm gonna get these children prepared for the exam. Why? Because... we do not have time to do all that, all they're asking... and they want to extend the time, but come on if you make it till half past three, in every school, there's half an hour and hour to have lunch, approximately it'll be the same, you know? The children do not have time to discuss, I'm all the time telling them, look 45 minutes,... how can I explain a lesson, how can I discuss something with you, it's impossible... I do not know what is in their heads. In a primary school, to teach social studies, to teach sciences, this and that, we are left breathless and exhausted. Very very exhausted, I go home, and I have corrections, to do then! I have a family! And most of the people who do this job are mothers, they have a family! I'm a single mother and I do not have time to teach my own children. The curriculum needs to be student based, yes I agree, but the teacher is the one giving the service, if she's not (all) right, how can she teach well. They don't even think of the teachers, at all! Teachers are just machines for them."

T_P_8

"Ifhem, ix-xogħol tat-teachers żdied, fil-bidu li bdejt ngħallem jiena... jiena ili ngħallem kważi tlettax-il-sena... emm... ix-xogħol kien differenti, fis-sens il-paper work kien inqas, emm... naħseb konna nirrikjedu xogħol differenti wkoll,

għaliex ma kienx hemm pereżempju l-adaptive work, li għandek hafna bżonn aktar hin biex tipprepara... ovvjament għandek il-corrections li jieħdu l-hin tagħhom, u għandek il-preparations tal-lezzjonijiet."

Teachers' workload has increased, when I first started teaching... I've been teaching for almost thirteen years... hmm... the workload was different, that is, there was less paper work, emm... I think different work was required, because there was no adaptive work, for example, which needs a lot of time for preparation... obviously corrections take up a lot of their time, as well as lesson preparation.

T_S_11

"Jiena naħseb, naqbel perfettament magħhom, 100% anzi naqbel magħhom li l-workload tagħna żdiedet immens. Żdiedet immens, one li minħabba issa dahhalna l-idea ta' differentiated learning li inti bilfors trid tipprepara lezzjonijiet differenti għal waqt l-istess lezzjoni, ovvjament riżorsi differenti għall-istess lezzjoni. Trid inti tirriċerka u tagħmel dijanjozi tat-tifel inti stess, għax fil-verita', ċerti affarijiet titgħallimhom as you go along. Pereżempju jiena ma kellix background knowledge daqstant ta' kif għandi niħhandilja a dyslexic student... Issa jien ma ilniex li ggradwajt, aħseb u ara min ilu iktar. Għax jiena dejjem hekk nistaqsi. Dawn in-nies hafna iktar qed iħossuhom mitlufin... M'aħniex preparati..."

I agree completely, actually I agree 100% that our workload has increased immensely. It has increased because we have now introduced the idea of differentiated teaching where you have to prepare different lessons within the same lesson, obviously with different resources for the same lesson. You have to research and make a diagnosis of the child, because in reality, you learn certain things as you go along. For example, I didn't have as much background knowledge of how to handle dyslexic students as I have now. And I haven't graduated long ago, let alone those who have been teaching longer. That is what I'm always asking. These people are feeling more lost... We're not prepared...

T_S_2

"Hafna... hafna żdiedet il-volum tax-xogħol. Pereżempju scheme of work jiena għandi sitta differenti, Taljan, Franciż, Form 1, Form 2, Form 5 Junior u Secondary. Franciż Form 2, għandi l-Form 4 tas-secondary, sitta differenti prattikament għandi... plus hekk il-volum tax-xogħol żdied wkoll minħabba li inti għandek id-differentiated learning fil-klassijiet, jigifieri mhux biss ... għalkemm nemmen li differentiated learning minn dejjem kienet issir, mhux għax dahlet dis-sena... just dahhalna l-kelma issa, għaliya dahk fil-wieċ biex inżidu x-xogħol u l-paper work, dak hu. Hafna paper work żejjed għax kolloxx iridu bil-miktub. Kull haġa li tagħmel, "iktibli", kważi kważi l-awtonomija tat-

teachers spiċċat għal kollox mhux imbilli bil-kulleġġi ġejna iktar awtonomi, mhux vera xejn!"

The amount of work has definitely increased. For example I have six different schemes of work, Italian, French, Form 1, Form 2, Form 5 junior and secondary. French Form 2, Form 4 secondary, 6 different schemes of work. Moreover you have differentiated learning in each class... although I do believe that differentiated learning has been taking place for a long time, not just this year... It's just a fancy word and an excuse to increase more paper work. Most of the paper work is unnecessary, because they need everything "in writing". Every single thing we do has to be noted down, to the point where the teacher's autonomy has been eroded. It's not true that with the new College System, teachers have become more autonomous.

Theme: **Impact on Student Entitlement**

Focus: **Implementation of the Curriculum**

Question Q4: (DG: 5, P: 3)

The following question was asked to the Directors General as well as to the College Principals:

57% of respondents (n=1474) felt that their school is being required to participate in several college activities which are leaving very little room for the curriculum to be implemented [Fig 40].

What do you have to say to this?

This is an example where college/school autonomy is being implemented. It is up to the school to decide whether to take part in an activity or not. Also, there are guidelines in place that actually stipulate how many college activities take place in a scholastic term. In some Colleges the Council of Heads actually discuss the activities as well as the implications these will have on the schools taking place, both in terms of time as well as their quality and educational value.

DG1

"When speaking about development, activities carried out by the college do not need the permission or the direction of the Directorate. Therefore I would only learn about them if they choose to inform me about them. I receive invitations on a regular basis and try to attend as my schedule allows."

DG2

"Jiena naf illi l-iskejjel jirċievu ħafna stedini biex jipparteċipaw f'ħafna attivitajiet u l-Kap ta' l-iskola għandu d-dover li jagħrbilhom u jara (u jiena dejjem ngħid li nipprezentawha b'ħala stedina u mhux impożizzjoni) u naraw liema huma daww l-attivitajiet li se jipparteċipaw fihom.

Minn naħa l-oħra li t-tfal jipparteċipaw hija importanti; din hija il-forma ġdida ta' l-edukazzjoni.

Jiena nagħti linji gwidi pereżempju kemm tista tagħmel outings per term...but we leave the decision in the hands of the teacher and the school."

I know that schools receive many invitations to participate in many activities and the Head of the school has a duty to go through them and see (and I always say that they should be presented as an invitation and not an obligation) which of those activities they will take part in.

On the other hand, it is important that the students participate; this is the new form of education.

I give guidelines, for example, as to how many outings should take place per term... but we leave the decision in the hands of the teacher and the school.

P_1

"The same issue as before... I don't think there are a lot of college activities that add extra load or take time from the curriculum from pupils.

What is happening is that there are much more activities organized for schools by different entities and NGOs in the same hours... and all these are focused on the schools and rightly so they may say that it is impossible for us to attend all of these.

It is at the discretion of the schools to attend or not to attend activities."

P_4

"Din il-ħaġa li ngħidulhom "Aghmlu hekk u aghmlu hekk" mhux veru.

Aħna ngħidu li hi invitation u ma naqbd u lil hadd minn widnejh.

Pereżempju l-attivitajiet tal-isports mhumieq imposti imma nipprova nbiegħha.

L-għalfejn mhix imnizzla fl-ebda question [ta' dan is-schedule]. Importanti nkunu nafu għaliex qed ighidu hekk."

This thing about us saying "you have to do this and you have to do that", it is not true.

We say that it is an invitation and we never pull anyone from the ears.

For example sports activities are not imposed but very much encouraged.

The reasons as to why (this is so) is not listed in any question [of this schedule]. It is important to know why they are saying that.

P_5

*“Kont nippreferi x’ qegħdin iġħidu fil-kulleġġ in-nies tiegħi.
Biex tibni identita’ ta’ kulleġġ dak ifisser illi trid tiegħu numru ta’ inizzjattivi.
Meta jkollna inizzjattivi tal-kulleġġ, fl-iskejjel nippermettu varjazzjonijiet.
Fil-kurrikulum hemm ħafna prinċipji li naqblu magħhom imma il-kif... hemm
ħafna kif nistgħu nwettquhom u hemm ħafna kulleġġi oħrajn li qed jagħmluhom
differenti.”*

I would have preferred what people in my college are saying.
Building the identity of a college means that one must take a number of initiatives.

When we have college initiatives, we allow school some free hand at doing things differently.

In the curriculum there are many principles with which we agree but regarding the how... there are many ways how to accomplish it and there are many colleges who are doing it differently.

P_6

“Ma nistgħux nibqgħu marbutin ma’ attivitajiet illi huma biss akkademiċi jekk irridu diversita’.

*Il-problema kienet tkun meta jieħu ordinijiet minn fuq u iħarbtuli it-timetables.
Il-kulleġġ irid ikun awtonomu!”*

We cannot remain tied down to activities that are merely academic if we want diversity.

Problems would emerge when orders from above arrive and disrupt the timetables.

The college must be autonomous!

P_9

The Principal explained that such activities are discussed at the Council of Heads and Heads of School do evaluate the impact and implications such activities might have on their staff. The Principal also said that the Directorates forward invitations for a lot of other activities organised by various entities. However, Heads are not obliged to accept every activity that is thrown at them

The Reforms

Theme: **Preparation and Support**

Question Q5: **(P: 4)**

The following question was asked to the College Principals:

89% of the 1374 respondents are in agreement that much more support from superiors is required for one to be able to fulfil the demands of the various reforms.

What are your views on this? What more do feel you can do to address this?

Most College Principals feel that support is indeed being given to teachers in various sectors. Examples were given of where much support has been provided, including the introduction of interactive whiteboards and preparation for the introduction of the oral component in the literacy benchmark examination. The biggest 'challenge of support' as identified by one of the Principals is that of offering support in mixed ability teaching and differentiated teaching. In the Form 1 syllabus, support is being given including websites where teachers can find teaching material (e.g. YouTube links) are included in the document. The various support services offered by the Support Services Section within the Directorate for Educational Services are also identified. An important point made is the promotion of the philosophy that support does not only come from 'above', but can be found 'around', in the school, particularly when teachers share their material and meet and discuss particular challenges. Distributed leadership promotes such a philosophy. The point is made that support is never enough and that it is an on-going process.

P_1

"All support is on-going...and is necessary and is important. One thing I have always mentioned and I think was a positive experience and which is a model that should be used in the other reforms was the way the oral aspect of the Year 6 benchmark exam was introduced...

The way it was implemented many teacher felt they were prepared for it and were supported for that...

It doesn't mean that for all types of reforms it is possible to have this support but in all cases there was an effort... perhaps the biggest challenge is to give support to differentiated teaching and mixed ability classes.

Many of the changes were accompanied by some form of training... For example as in the case of the introduction of interactive whiteboards. Does this mean that there is enough? Of course not but better than having dumped interactive whiteboards (in classrooms)... so support is important and is on-going.

Teachers today have different forms of support... you have mentoring which has been introduced for newly qualified teachers."

P_10

The Principal provided several examples to illustrate that support is being given but admitted that there is always more one can do but re-iterated that support to Heads, teachers and staff is being provided.

In addition, The Principal also mentioned that schools are nowadays equipped with more than the core complement of teaching staff. He/she said that, in addition, there are also support services including counsellors, psychologists, trainee career advisors, College Prefect of Discipline, guidance teachers, trainee counsellors and social workers many of whom are based at the College and do frequent rounds. Hence they are on-site.

P_2

[Il-Prinċipal iddikkjara li ma jaqbilx/taqbilx ma din il-mistoqsija.]

"Is-support system hija tajba kemm-il-darba nagħmluha aħna...imma a bażi tal-verita'.

Jiena nemmen ukoll li hafna mis-support mhux neċessarjament jiġi mis-superiors: jiġi mill-friends tiegħek, mill-kollegi tiegħek... Mela is-support staff tal-kulleġġi mhux qegħdin hawn ukoll? Hsibt li qegħdin għal xejn dawn? Li qrobna iżjed lejn l-iskejjel, din mhix narawha?"

[This Principal declared that he/she disagreed with this question.]

The support system is effective depending on how much we make it effective ... but based on facts.

I also believe that much of the support does not necessarily come from superiors: it can come from your friends, from your colleagues ... the college support staff isn't it there too? Did you think that they're of no use?

Has it not been taken into consideration that we are now more accessible to schools?

P_4

"Dawn in-nies huma edukaturi li qegħdin jirkellmu jew huma n-nies ta' barra t-triq?"

It-teachers hemm bżonn li jirkellmu jaqsmu iżjed bejniethom l-esperjenzi għax dan forma ta' support ukoll.

Fil-każ tas-sillabu tal-Form One sal-websites għandhom miktubin fejn jistgħu jfittxu biex jippreparaw ruħhom għal-lezzjoni..

Din il-kultura ta' sharing trid tidhol.

Jien ngħidilhom lill-SMTs li mhux jien qed immexxi imma aħna qegħdin immexxu."

These people, who are talking, are they educators or are they people in the streets?

[Teachers need to learn how to share experiences because this is another form of support.]

There is even written on the websites where they can search in order to prepare themselves.

This culture of sharing must be introduced.

I say to SMTs that I'm not the one who is leading but that we are leading.

P_5

*"Li kieku wiehed kellu joqghod isemmi s-support li qed jinghata... jinghata hafna!
Ma rridux ninnegaw is-support li qieghed jinghata fil-livelli kollha."*

If one were to mention the support that is being given... much is being given!

One must not deny the support that is being given on all levels.

P_7

The Principal enlisted a number of support services that teachers are getting and which in the past were either absent or remote. For example, he/she mentioned the support by counsellors, career advisors, Prefect of Discipline, precincts officers, social workers (who also do work in the homes of students) and LSAs. He/She argued that teachers will always say they need more support but one has to appreciate that they have much more support today than they ever had... and these are easily accessible.

With regard to training needs, the Principal said that the issue is that training time is contracted with the Union. He/She explained that there are two forms of training provisions: those that teachers are obliged to go through because it is needed directly for their work and these are being addressed. E.g. giving training on the use of interactive whiteboards, training on benchmarking, etc. Then there are training opportunities that do not oblige the teachers to attend but are voluntarily. On this he/she said that you still get teachers who simply do not take this opportunity but numbers are increasing. The Principal said that teachers need to understand more that while authorities can provide training opportunities, it is up to every personal teacher to seek his/her personal development and hence the need to take initiative.

P_9

The Principal said that it is true SMTs have more access to Principals than do teachers, and perhaps may reflect the results, but it is also true that support is widely available. He/She said it would be good for teachers to specify what support they need more of. The Principal explained the several support systems that exists including: support for curricular implementation, basic skill support, mentoring for newly qualified staff, counsellors, prefect of discipline, career advisors, social workers, learning zones, nurture groups and complementary teaching. He/She argued that these are all available and are housed within the College. He/She also insisted that teachers are fully aware that these services are readily accessible.

P_8

The Principal provided several concrete examples to show how support was available at the Colleges and what support structures existed to illustrate this. He/She mentioned the following:

The Council of Heads (CoH): He/She said one can view this as a mechanism for support. He/She said that the CoH tackles issues pertaining to the College

schools and these include issues that are affecting the classroom level. To this end, teachers were involved indirectly through the Head of School to put forward specific issues to be discussed at the CoH. The Principal insisted that the CoH is one strong voice to make teachers' issues heard and addressed and it was normative for their college to dedicate one full day for the CoH.

Another form of support is in the form of distributed leadership: As an example the Principal explained the setting up of a common exam paper across the schools of the College thus facilitating the work of the respective teachers. Another example is the entrepreneurship project which was initiated as a committee by teachers in the different colleges.

He/She also mentioned the introduction of the 90 minute slot for primary schools of the Colleges which was agreed with the Union as a measure to encourage teachers from similar respective classes in the College to meet up formerly, discuss areas of concern, minute the discussion and take actions. Sadly, he/she said, the MUT also tried to stop this minute-taking practice.

Last but not least The Principal mentioned the psycho-social team support services and the effective utilisation of the nurture groups and the learning support centres.

In view of these support structures the Principal insisted that teachers should also be responsible for setting up fora that create support initiatives amongst teachers, such as the setting up of professional learning communities and coaching and mentoring sessions, amongst others. However, the Principal argued that the Union is not always supportive of such initiatives. Another support structure was the Literary Triad Scheme, and although few teachers have participated so far, the scheme proved to be very successful.

Hence support structures are present but quite often under-utilised and not appreciated enough.

Theme: **Preparation and Support**

Focus: **Preparation for reforms**

Question Q6: (DG: 6, T: 3)

The following question was asked to the Directors General and Teaching Grades

75% of 1366 respondents did not feel that they were generally being properly prepared for the several reforms that are being introduced. Moreover, 78% (n=1366) felt that personnel in the various teaching grades are not prepared for these reforms.

DGs: Why do feel so many should feel so unprepared? What are your views on the impact that this widespread lack of preparedness can have on the success of the reforms?

T: Do you share this view? What should have been done to address this need?

The point is made by one of the Directors General that one cannot prepare fully before the implementation of a change, since some of the challenges that change brings about are unpredictable. This is in itself a strong case for on-going support and training. Support is always made available by the DGs through the open means of communication available, and the information/support available online. Teachers feel that training should be provided prior to the introduction of a change. Most examples dealt with the introduction of the smartboards. One has to point out that the present study was carried out in June 2011, a few weeks after the NCF consultation process was launched. It also seems that for particular changes/innovation, preparation and training was better thought out and planned than for other innovations.

DG1

"My main take on this is that in educational reforms, training and support need to be ongoing but they cannot be prepared beforehand in a way that you say that you are 100% ready.

The nitty gritty of how to work the checklist comes into play when you start compiling it with your real students.

It is a new way of working."

DG2

"Il-NCF qiegħed juri bic-ċar il-konsultazzjoni shiħa li għaddejja.

L-informazzjoni qiegħda kollha on-line; dejjem hemm email fejn wieħed jista' jibgħat il-feedback.

Irridu nitgħallmu niddjalogaw iżjed ma' l-għalliema.

L-għalliema fil-klassijiet għandhom diversi mezzi kif jikkomunikaw ma' dan l-ufficju."

The NCF is showing clearly that full consultation is underway.

All the information is available on-line, and there's always an e-mail where to send the feedback.

We must learn to discuss more with teachers.

Teachers in classrooms have several ways to communicate with this office.

LSA/KA_S_1

"Kellu jsir qabel it-training mhux issa. Issa too late la qegħdin fiha! Fis-sens issa ħafna teachers qed imorru għax-xogħol qed jaffaċċjaw l-affarijiet u qed jimxu skont il-ġurnata hux. Qed jaraw x'għandhom u qed jadattaw dak il-ħin."

Training should have been done before, not now. Now it's too late, we're already in it! A lot of teachers are going to work and facing this situation and they're coping the best they can, day by day. They're adapting according to the students they have in class.

LSA/KA_S_2

"Speċi... jien, min-naħa tiegħi, meta kien ikollna xi meeting, jiġi xi hadd għat-talk, huma jgħidu... u kważi hadd ma kien ikollu ċ-ċans iġid il-views tiegħu... issa jew hawnhekk għax qiegħdin grupp kbir... u nhoss li min ipprova jagħti l-views tiegħu.. hemm qisu ir-regoli diġa'... is-sistema diġa'... emm... ippjata minn above, u speċi dik hi... dik is-sistema li hemm, u trid tużagħha."

Sort of, on my part, when we used to have a meeting, someone used to come to give the talk, they used to do all the talking, and almost no one had the chance to give his or her views... it could have been the case that this was because this is a large group... and I feel that whoever tried to give his or her views... it's like the rules had already been made... the system was... hmm... planned from above, and sort of that's it... you have to use the system that is there.

T_P_2

"It-tibdil irid isir imma min-naħa tat-teachers. Jiġifieri tigwida t-teachers u l-bidla trid tiġi minn isfel, għax minn isfel jistgħu jipprattikaw l-affarijiet."

Change needs to take place but from the teachers' end though. Thus, guide the teachers, and change will come from the grassroots, precisely because it's the teachers who need to put in practice these changes.

T_P_3

"In training, courses beforehand, I mean in summer there's the Insets, you know, prepare the teachers, go through it, differential teaching... how can it be done? If I have so much work to do, how can I?... I know the level of each student, but you have to give each student individual attention... I have for example 5 students, one of them hyper, the other dyslexic, how can I divide myself, with the amount of work I have, and explain to these children... there's too much work... too much work!

And now they want us to teach everything... Come on! Courses... but what are they doing? After school we have the course... and after school I know I have so

many corrections to do! So literally they are exhausting us! These should be done in summer."

T_P_8

"Jekk niehdu s-sena l-oħra il-benchmarks tal-Year 6, kien hemm preparation għalih, pero', emm... bqajna nkarkru sa l-aħħar speċi bil-... emm... bl-items godda, bil-proposals... speċi l-aħħar draft li hadna, pereżempju bħala sample, kienet end of January, meta aħna nkunu ppreparajna x-xogħol ... Alright, mhux kulhadd... imma is-sajf qiegħed hemmhekk biex tipprepara l-ischemes, etc... Mela inti kif... kif għandek l-ischeme lesta u f'January tajtni ix-xogħol li se jsir, l-ischeme qisni għamilta għalxejn u rrid nerga nifformatjaha... emm... kieku ċertu reforms jiġu deċiżi qabel, jiġifieri fis-sajf ikun hemm il-preparation kollu li hemm bżonn, u imbagħad il-materjal li għandhom bżonn jgħaddulna, tkun hafna iktar faċli. Issa jiena nifhem, ovojament li min qiegħed ... min qiegħed fl-uffiċċju, jiġifieri qed jagħmel dawn ir-reforms bħala paper work u hekk tiehu l-ħin, imma meta inti ġejt tiffaċċja klassi, għandek grupp ta' tfal quddiemek, ma tistax tgħidilhom: Ara, issa din, emm... mhux sa nagħmluha b'dal-mod, jew issa dil-karta ha tinbidel. Issa did-darba halluha hekk, imma imbagħad fl-eżami tal-aħħar mhux sa tkun hekk."

If we take last year as an example, the Year 6 benchmarks, there was preparation for it, but we continued dragging our feet till the end with new items, proposals, etc... for example, the last draft, which we were given as a sample, was given to us at the end of January, when we would have already prepared the work... Alright, not everyone would have prepared it... but the summer holidays are there for us to prepare schemes, etc... How can you... how can you have the scheme ready and then be given the work that is to be covered in January... the scheme would have been done in vain, I would have to reformat it... hmm... if certain reforms should have been decided upon earlier, that is, in summer, all the necessary preparation would be done, and then they would hand over all the material they need to give us, and it would be much easier. I obviously understand that whoever is... whoever is in an office, that is, whoever is planning these reforms must have to do a lot of paper work, and this takes time, but when you are facing a class, when you have a group of children in front of you, you can't tell them: "Look, we won't be doing this in that manner, or the exam paper is going to be changed. Leave it like this for now, but in the end of year exam it will have to be different".

Theme: Preparation and Support

Focus: Resources

Question Q7: (DG: 7)

The following question was asked to the Directors General:

More than 3 in 4 [n=1366] did not agree that whatever support (e.g. resources) is needed for the reforms to be successful is available.

What do have to say about this?

Although one can agree with the DG that the term 'support' is a wide term, the question did include an example of what type of support it is eluding to. Clearly the question is not refereeing to training and support services, but to material support.

DG2

"Hija mistoqsija vaga: għal liema riżorsi? Riżorsi finanzjarji? Riżorsi fisici? Riżorsi ta' appoġġ? Riżorsi ta' teaching? What resources? Dawn il-mistoqsijiet huma vagi u allura min jirrispondihom ma jafx għal liema riżorsi qegħdin jirreferu?"

It is a vague question: which resources? Financial resources? Physical resources? Resources of support? Teaching resources? What resources? These questions are vague and therefore the respondent would not know to which resources one is referring to.

Theme: **Owning the Reforms**

Focus: **Consultation**

Question Q8: (DG: 8, P: 5, SMT: 2, T: 4)

The following question was asked to the Directors General, the College Principals, the Senior Management Teams and the Teaching Grades:

82% (n=1366) felt that they have not been adequately consulted about the several reforms; 73% felt that they have not even been adequately informed.

Would you agree that this is a very serious indictment to the inept manner in which those at the chalk face have been treated? Do you feel that this augurs well to the successful implementation of the reforms?

In their remarks teachers make the important distinction between information and consultation. Many of them do not feel that they were even informed of the changes, let alone consulted.

Again one has to point out that the NCF consultation process was launched a few weeks before the electronic questionnaire survey was carried out. The NCF consultative document was launched in December 2011, a good 6 months after the survey.

DG1

"I think this is an over-generalization. Having chaired the consultation of the new NCF I feel that it is very unfair that the results of this survey come out when the consultation process is taking place and people interpreted it as referring to the consultation we were going through whereas the survey results were collated before this consultation had taken place.

I think the study needs to be serious enough that when reporting its results it needs to make it explicit when this data was collated because a lot of the media have interpreted it as if this was related to the NCF consultation."

DG2

"Jiena nisma' dak li qed jintqal. Fuq liema riforma qegħdin nitkellmu?"

I listen to what is being said. What reforms are we talking about?

P_1

"There is a strong feeling in the Directorate that there has to be respect for the teachers who will have to implement the reforms. That there is a perception that they have not been consulted in previous reforms may be the case... definitely now there is a strong awareness to consult.

Many times the Directorate does try to pace the reforms in a manner that nobody feels one is jumping on each other."

P_10

In respect of question 5, the Principal made one specific statement: "This question is invalid because the survey was conducted before the start of consultations"

P_2

"Jien nahseb li qatt ma ġejna ikkonsultati daqshekk ġejna kkonsultati. Kwazi spiċċajna on the verge li stressjajna ruhna waħda nobis. Tlabna t-teachers jiktbu, tlabna t-teachers jippartecipaw fl-iskejjel, tlabna t-teachers biex jiddiskutu fuq livell ta' SDP meeting; fuq livell ta' kulleggi, fuq livell personali!"

I do not think that we have ever been consulted so much, so much that we ended up on the verge of being stressed out. We asked the teachers to write, we asked the teachers to participate in schools, we asked the teachers to discuss in SDP meetings, at a college level, on a personal level!

P_3

"Għal-liema reforms qegħdin nghidu ?

L-għalliem jinbidel meta jkun fis-sitwazzjoni li jista' jiġi challenged u l-għalliem dejjem għandu jkun ippreparat biex jiffaċċja sitwazzjonijiet li jiġi challenged, li jġieghluh jaħseb u isib soluzzjonijiet, xi haġa li s-sistema il-qadima qerdita.

Biex jinbidel l-għalliem irid ukoll jinbidel min imexxi...u ġieli għamilna l-izball bħal pereżempju fil-każ ta' meta dahhalna il-Literacy Unit ma dahhalniex biżżejjed il-SMTs.

Waħda mill-constraints hi li jrid ikun hemm organigram ċara ta' kulleggi li bżalissa mhix in place.

Jien irrid li nagixxi izjed bħala Educational Leader...u xorta ma tidhirx jew tidher b'mod limitat."

What reforms are we referring to?

The teacher changes when he/she is in a situation where he/she can be challenged and a teacher must always be prepared to face challenging situations, which makes him/her think and find solutions, this is something which the old system has abolished.

In order for a teacher to change, the management must also change ... and sometimes we made the mistake – as for example in the case when the Literacy Unit was introduced – where we did not sufficiently involve the SMT.

One of the constraints is that there must be a clear organigram of colleges, something which is not currently in place.

I would like to act more as an Educational Leader ... and this is not visible or is shown in a limited way.

P_4

"Jiena nahseb illi mingħajr konsultazzjoni ma timxix speċjalment meta tkun fil-pożizzjoni tagħna.

Fil-kulleggi ma nistax immexxi l-bidliet jien waħdi... nitkellem mal-Heads of School imbagħad huma jridu 'jbiegħuha' aktar 'l isfel.

Jiena ma rridx power bħala Prinċipal; jiena irrid guidelines, għanjnuna u support.

*Aħna m'aħniex nimponu... u l-aqas nistgħu nimponu.
 Hemm stampa ċara ta' kemm kien hemm konsultazzjoni bħal fil-każ tal-National Curriculum Framework.
 Aħna ma nistgħux nimponu imma to support and this is felt... inħoss li we have to keep the soldiers happy u jekk ma jkollokx il-Heads on board ma jistax ikollok lit-teachers.
 Jien inħoss illi l-konsultazzjonijiet qegħdin isiru."*

I think that without consultation we will get nowhere, especially when one is in our position.

I cannot make changes in colleges, I discuss with the Heads of School ... then they must sell it [to the members of staff].

I do not want power as a Principal, I want guidelines, assistance and support.

We are not imposing ... nor can we impose.

There is a clear picture of the amount of consultation which has taken place in the case of NCF.

We cannot impose but we can support and this is felt ... we have to keep the soldiers happy and if you do not have the Heads of Schoolson board you will not have the teachers.

I feel that consultations are taking place.

P_5

"Għal-liema riformi qegħdin nirreferu?

Jien iżjed minn riforma nsejhilha 'aġġornament'.

L-ewwel problema hawnhekk hi kif saret il-mistoqsija [kienet ġenerika u fuq l-ebda riforma speċifika]... qed issaqsi fuq kollox u fuq xejn.

It-tieni problema hi li jiena qed nitkellem fuq 100 fil-100 partecipazzjoni fil-kulleġġ tiegħi... u l-ammont ta' nies illi irrispondew dak il-kwestjonarju huwa baxx hafna... jien qed nirrakonta fejn ir-risposti mill-għalliema tiegħi huma 100 fil-100.

Il-feedback li irċevejna ikklassifikajnih."

Which reforms are we referring to?

More than a reform, I would call it an update.

The first problem here is how the question was presented [it was generic and about no specific reform] ... asking about everything and at the same time about nothing.

The second problem is that I am talking over 100% participation in my college ... and the amount of people that responded to that questionnaire is very low ... I'm talking about where the responses from my teachers are 100%.

We classified the feedback that we received.

P_6

"Mhux kull kulleġġ hađem l-istess"

Not every college worked in the same manner.

P_9

The Principal was blunt: "I don't accept this result". He/She specifically made reference to several consultations for on several reforms. In the case of the NCF he/she said that copies were given to staff to read through the summer, they were provided with questionnaires for feedback, seminars were organized to listen to teachers' concerns (90 minutes), a full day seminar was organised to this effect and staff could also send emails. In addition, the DG DQSE, at the initial stages of the drafting of the NCF had asked for dreamers – teachers who would produce a wish list from teachers regarding what they wished to have considered and possibly included into the NCF. The same with the benchmarking reforms: meeting for Year 6 teachers were organized with the heads to listen and provide feedback. In the case of oral benchmarking, he/she said that the Assistant Director responsible had actually gone to most schools to support and provide help in this regard. So certainly the results in the survey were not reflective of reality, he/she reiterated.

SMT_P_10

"Saru diversi laqgħat kemm għat-teachers, issa jekk ma marrux għalihom ma nafx. Kemm għall-SMT fuq ir-riforma u anki għall-ġenituri. Laqgħat kien hemm. Qatt mhu biżżejjed. Jista' jkun hemm lok għall-improvement. Pero' lok għall-konsultazzjoni in ġenerali kien hemm."

Several meetings have taken place with teachers, but I don't know whether they attended. There have also been meetings about the reform with the SMT and the parents, but it's never enough. There could be room for improvement. However, general consultation seems to have taken place.

SMT_P_2

"Jiena naqbel magħha. Il mod kif ġew infurmati kien wara li seħhu l-affarijiet. Attendejna għall-talks fejn ġejna nfurmati li dan ha jibda jsir b'dan il-mod. Jiġifieri konsultazzjoni qabel ma kienx hemm. Jiena nemmen li meta xi haġa timponiha fuq xi hadd, bil-mod biex ikollok l-ownership tagħha. Qabel ma xi haġa tiġi imposta... fis-seħh irid ikun hemm l-ownership."

I agree with this. A lot of teachers were informed when things were already in place. We attended talks, where we were informed that certain things will start happening in a certain way. No consultation took place beforehand. When ideas are imposed on others, it takes time for people to actually achieve ownership of the idea. Ownership needs to take place before imposition.

SMT_P_3

"Ġieli ma jkunx hemm konsultazzjoni biżżejjed. Miniex qed ngħid li xejn, imma ġieli... Naħseb li għandna fiż-żmien li nistgħu nirrangaw. Hemm bżonn imma li ssir il-konsultazzjoni. Ġieli ssir u li l-affarijiet ma jsirux mgħaġġla. Għaliex

ikun hemm hafna pressjoni żejda u xejn ma jagħmel tajjeb għall-edukazzjoni tat-tfal."

Sometimes not enough consultation takes place. I'm not saying consultation didn't happen... We're still in time to correct things. However consultation needs to take place. Things need to adopt a calmer pace too. There's too much pressure and this is not beneficial to our students.

SMT_P_7

"Huwa nuqqas kbir lejn il-professjoni tal-għalliema. Konsultazzjoni falza. Kellna laqgħat, tibgħat e-mails, tircievi acknowledgement. Pero fl-aħħar mill-aħħar dak li tkun qed tipproponi normalment, ikunu diġa' deċiżjonijiet ittiehdu. Eżempju klassiku f'Diċembru li għadda kellna s-seminar tal-Kurrikulum. Kien hemm xi għaxar workshops u għaxar panels u f'kull workshop li hu magħmul minn xi hamsa minn nies ma kienx hemm teacher wieħed. U ma kienx hemm teacher wieħed mhux għax ma ġewx it-teachers, imma għax ma ġewx mistiednin. Professuri mill-Universita, Headmasters...u magħżulin il-Headmasters. Jiġifieri mhux ingħatajt għażla jien biex nipparteċipa. Magħżulin, handpicked. Imma t-teachers nitkellmu fuqhom u x'ha jsir fil-klassi imma ... konsultazzjoni mgħaġġla, aggressiva. Ir-riforma hija aggressiva."

It's a very serious indictment towards the teaching profession. We had meetings and we sent e-mails and you do get an acknowledgement. However at the end of the day most decisions would have already been taken. A classic example of this is last December. We had a Curriculum Seminar. There were 10 workshops and each workshop was made up of about 5 members. Not even one teacher! And the teachers weren't there because they were not invited. There were Professors from University, headmasters – and when I say headmasters, they were handpicked. We were talking about the teachers and what was happening in the classroom and not even one teacher was present. Consultation was hurried and aggressive. The whole reform is aggressive.

SMT_P_8

"U Ejja! Ha ngħidlek it-teachers jiehdu pjaċir bl-istatus quo allura mbagħad meta jkun hemm xi haġa li ma toġġobhomx, they shut off their minds. Biss biss kien hemm xi seba' darbiex chances ta' questionnaires, laqgħat. Imma we're aware li kien hemm hafna ma marrux! Issa jekk jiena ser nippretendi li ser jagħmluli l-laqgħa waqt school hours u ma jsirux il-lezzjonijiet? No that's not true. Kien hemm proċess twil tant ta' consultation!"

Oh come on! I think teachers enjoy the status quo, so when there is something which they don't like, they just shut off their minds to it. If anything there were about at least seven instances for questionnaires and meetings. But we all know that a lot of teachers didn't attend. Unless they were expecting to have all these meetings during school

hours and not carry out lessons? No that's not true. There was a very long process of consultation.

SMT_S_1

"Il-mod kif kienu qed jikkellmu huwa ovojja li minn day one kienu jafu kif ser isiru l-affarijiet. Imbagħad saret il-konsultazzjoni, biex taparsi ikkonsultajnihom lill-għalliema. Imma fil-verita' ma sar xejn. Meta sar dan l-aħħar, xi Novembru, kellna dik il-ġurnata kulleġġ b'kulleġġ fejn smajna lil gruppi kollha minn kulleġġi differenti. Il-maġġoranza assoluta tal-għalliema, kollha ħassejna l-istess ħaġa. Li aħna ġejna kkonsultati taparsi meta l-affarijiet diġa' saru. Issa dik ħa twegġa' iktar milli kieku ma saret l-ebda konsultazzjoni."

It's obvious that they knew from the very beginning how things were going to proceed. The consultation that took place was merely cosmetic. But in reality nothing happened. Last November we had a meeting involving different colleges. The majority of the teachers all felt the same way – that we were consulted after rather than before. It's actually worse than no consultation at all.

SMT_S_2

"Qegħdin niġu mitluba ngħumu qabel ma nitgħallmu ngħumu. Orrajt tajjeb li jkollok il-plunge. Perezempju aħna tkellimna fuq l-NCF, ma nafux is-sena d-dieħla x'ser jiġri aħna? We are preparing for next year? Is-syllabus tal-Form 2 qed isir? It-teachers ħa jiġi Ġunju, bħalma sar is-sena l-oħra f'April, u jiġu mitluba jippajlitjaw il-Form 1 syllabus f'Mejju u f'Ottubru ser nibdew? Everything is demanded. Everything is requested. Jiena nifhem li t-teachers huma di natura konservattivi. Imma jiena naħseb li we are being demanded a lot without being able to ask: "X'kien hemm feedback?", "X'għara?". Perezempju bdejna s-syllabus tal-Form 1, ma tajnieħx sena, sentejn biex naraw kif marru u ħa nibdew il-Form 2 mingħajr ma kellna evaluation tal-Form 1's, għaliġa ma tagħmilx sens."

We're being asked to swim before we actually know how. It's good to take the plunge. For example we've discussed the NCF. Now what's going to happen next year? Are we preparing for next year? What's happening to the Form 2 syllabus? Are the teachers, yet again, in June going to be asked, like last year, to pilot the Form 1 syllabus in May and in October we start? Everything is demanded. Everything is requested. I understand that teachers are by nature conservative. However I believe there are too many demands without ever considering feedback. They never stop and ask "What is happening? Is it working?" For example, in my opinion the fact that we started the Form 1 syllabus and now straightaway we're starting the Form 2 syllabus, without even evaluating the Form 1 syllabus, is complete nonsense.

SMT_S_7

"Dwar ir-riformi? Jien lanqas għandi awtorita' nressaq item għall-agenda tal-College of Heads. Aħseb u ara kemm jikkonsultaw!... Kien hemm fejn ikkonsultaw magħna pero l-affarijiet kienu diga' jidhru li ħadu l-forma. Kienu diga' half baked."

Meta inti m'għandekx ownership, diga' tlaqt fuq sieq ħażina... Issa li qed jiġri hu li qed jiġu ħafna affarijiet f'daqqa. Pereżempju fuq lat kurrikulari – pereżempju t-teachers qed iħossuhom mitlufin, Mitlufin. L-ewwel joħorgulhom syllabi godda, issa diga' ha joħorgu revised syllabi. Għadhom lanqas sena ma' ilhom hemm!"

About the reforms? I don't even have the authority to put an item on the agenda of the College of Heads, let alone be consulted... There were instances when we were consulted; however, it seemed that things had already been taking form. They were already half-baked.

If you don't have ownership, you've already started on the wrong foot. What is happening now is that a lot of things are happening at the same time. For example, when it comes to the curriculum, for example the teachers are already feeling lost... lost. First, new syllabi came out, and now the revised syllabi are already coming out. They haven't even been in place for a year!

LSA/KA_S_1

"U żgur! Kulhadd anki parents tat-tfal! Jiena nara li hadd ma kellu daqshekk say! Qisha giet deċiżjoni minn fuq u daqshekk u ttiehdet... hadd ma kellu say."

Definitely! Everyone including parents! I think that no one had a say in all this! It's like a decision had been taken from high up and that's it, it was taken... no one had a say.

T_P_3

"In their minds, they've spoken to the teachers, they've spoken to the children, they've spoken to the parents, however when you express your opinion, when I expressed my opinion, and I told them "Listen the curriculum is just student based, the teachers are forgotten", ... excuses, excuses, excuses, ... and I felt I was not being heard. So the reforms are there, and every teacher in that room felt that you can say whatever you want but at the end of the day, it is what they want that is going to go through."

T_P_5

"Huwa nuqqas serjissimu fl-opinjoni tiegħi, dejjem għax, dan kif qed ngħidu, jekk bniedem mhux ħa jinformat minn qabel x'qed jiġri u għaliex qed isiru dawn ir-riformi... Naħseb you have to belong and you have to believe in what you're going to change. Allura aħna qisna qegħdin hemm qisna haddiema go uffiċċju, "ittajpjali dan u għamilli hekk". No questions asked, ejja ħa mmorru. Għalhekk naħseb li hija sitwazzjoni serja."

It's a very serious shortcoming in my opinion, because if someone doesn't inform you beforehand what's going to happen, and why these reforms are happening... I believe you have to belong and you have to believe in what you're going to change. It's like we're office workers, "type this and do that". No questions asked, and let's get on with it. That's why I believe it's a serious situation.

T_S_4

"Iva għax l-ewwel jiġu jgħidu x'se jsir u mbagħad isaqsuk wara jekk taqbilx which is ridiculous really."

Yes because first we are told what is going to be done and then we are asked if we agree or not. This is really ridiculous!

T_S_7

"Kultant inħossni li ġejna iffaccjati minn fait accompli... jekk nista' f'dal-każ nitkellem bħala parent ukoll, meta għamlu tal-end of year benchmark, emm... iltqajna għal-laqgħa ta' consultation, pero' il-laqgħa kienet iktar t'information ta' x'ha jiġri, iktar milli consultation."

Sometime I feel that were faced by a fait accompli... if I can talk as a parent in this case, when the end of year benchmark started, hmm... we met for a consultation meeting, however, the meeting was more of an information meeting about what was going to happen, rather than consultation.

T_S_3

"Naqbel mija fil-mija li t-teachers ma kinux la kkonsultati u lanqas ippreparati għall-bidla. Aktar minn hekk ma setgħux kienu ppreparati għax il-bidla lanqas hi definita' u x'se jiġri. Jiġifieri waqt li qegħdin isiru l-bidliet, insaqsu x'se jiġri u jgħidulna "Ma nafux". Pereżempju, issaqsi x'se jiġri mit-tfal la jaslu fil-Form 3. Jgħidulek "Ma nafux". La jiġu fil-Form 3 naraw. Ma tistax tkun ippreparat għal xi haġa li lanqas huma stess ma ppjanaw. Hemm nuqqas kbir ta' planning all over jiġifieri. Ma tistax tkun ippreparat għal xi haġa li lanqas hemm pjan għaliha."

I agree 100% that the teachers were neither consulted nor prepared for this change. More than that, it's obvious that they were not prepared because not even the change in itself is definite and certain. Nobody knows what is going to happen. This means that while changes are being carried out, we ask what is going to happen and we are told 'We don't know'. For example, we ask what will happen once the students get to Form 3. We are told 'We don't know. When they come to Form 3, we will see'. We cannot be prepared for something that not even they haven't planned. There is lack of planning. You cannot be prepared for something that is unplanned.

T_S_12

"Ma kienx hemm hafna preparation. Ma ġejniex consulted. Jagħmlu consultation, and it was basically telling us, rather than consulting us... Inservice saru tal-Form 1 b'mod partikolari. Saru tard wisq. For example għamlulna l-interactive whiteboard. Till now we haven't had a course yet."

There wasn't much preparation. We were not consulted. They did hold meetings for consultation, but it was basically telling us, rather than consulting us... Inservice training for Form 1 in particular has been held. For example, we now have the interactive whiteboard. Till now we haven't had a course yet.

Theme: **Owning the Reforms**

Focus: **Consultation**

Question Q9: (DG: 9, P: 6, SMT: 3, T: 5)

The following question was asked to the Directors General, the College Principals, the Senior Management Teams and the Teaching Grades:

No one can deny that some degree of consultation did take place. However, almost 9 in 10 (n=1366) felt that in spite of this the decisions had already been taken. Moreover, 92% (n=1366) felt that for the most part they are being led rather than being actively involved in the reforms. Why should 82% feel that their voices are not being heard?

Why should the vast majority of respondents feel the way they do? What went wrong? Again, shouldn't this give you reason for grave concern for the success of the reforms?

A number of Principals stressed the point that suggestions made by SMTs and teachers were taken on board. Still the general feeling is that there is a plan and this is not up for discussion, but for implementation. Internal school meetings do not deal on what changes should be introduced and how, but more on how to cope with the changes now that these are in place. Teachers do not feel that they own the changes; that they are instigators of the changes, but they are solely the implementers of such changes. Interestingly one Principal used the metaphor of the teacher as the soldier at the front of the battlefield, the one who needs to implement the changes in the classroom.

P_10

The Principal repeated that had this questionnaire been replicated today, he/she would be sure that the percentage responses would be completely different and the other way round because stakeholders now

realise that the consultation meetings undertaken by the Directorates and at College level were meant to really listen to what everybody wished to say and that the observations and suggestions would be taken very seriously. He/She also stated that he/she was nearly certain that the reason why respondents had replied that way was because of a new Form 1 syllabus designed to facilitate the work of Form 1 teachers some of whom took it negatively. But he/she also added that any feedback that had been received was being addressed.

P_5

"Din il-mistoqsija tas-survey kienet hazina ghax għalliema riformi qiegħda titkellem?

Kien hemm hafna riformi illi l-għalliema kellhom say fit-thaddim tagħhom."

This question in the survey was wrong, because which reforms is it referring to?

There were many reforms in which the teachers had a say in their implementation."

P_9

The Principal... said that there were many occasions where teachers were not only consulted but also had their suggestions implemented. One such case was the NCF where teachers were given ample space and time to cooperate with the authorities in its drafting. Moreover, he/she argued that sometimes over-unionisation may impede this degree of cooperation and it was at this moment that he/she stated that the MUT should shift more of its energies towards the development of the profession. He/She also argued that it is imperative that teachers must understand better and internalise the reforms more effectively.

SMT_P_8

"Jiena kienet saret l-iskola tiegħi stess u kienu tawna nofs ta' nhar apposta. U kien hemm wahda mit-teachers u lil min kien qed imexxi u qaltlu "Għalfejn ser tagħmluha l-laqgħa? Mhux diġa' iddeċidejtu kollox?" Jiġifieri kellha l-arġir li tagħmel hekk! It was not true. Kien hemm hafna affarijiet li kienu qed jiġu pproposti, ma ġewx aċċettati mit-teachers u eventwalment ma sarux."

Consultation actually happened in my own school and we were allocated half a day just for that. One of my teachers actually asked the person leading the meeting, "Why are you doing this meeting? Haven't you all decided everything already?" How rude! It was not true. A lot of things which were being proposed, were not done because teachers didn't accept them, and eventually they didn't happen.

SMT_S_6

"Jiena nahseb li riedet issir kif riedu huma. Ma riedu lil hadd li jindahal. Qed nirreferi għal min gietu l-idea li jagħmel dawn il-Kulleġġi... Ġieli nisma' haddiehor igerger għaliex m'għadux liberu kif kien qabel. Naqset hafna l-awtonomija."

I think it had to be the way they wanted it. They didn't want anyone to interfere. I'm referring to whoever came up with the idea of the colleges ... Sometimes I hear others complain that they don't have the same freedom they had before. Autonomy has diminished a lot.

LSA/KA_S_1

"Għax hekk graw l-affarijiet. Hadd fil-verita' ma kellu say. Jien eżempju naħdem normali u just ġejt introdotta din il-ħaġa fuq il-post tax-xogħol. Ma kelliex say fiha just ġrat u issa qiegħda fiha u ħafna huma bħali, kull min jaħdem miegħi."

Inkwetanti jekk ma taħdimx (is-sistema tal-kulleġġi), għax ara kemm intefqu flus u kemm inbidlu affarijiet għal xejn hux. Jekk ma taħdimx vera telf għall-pajjiż."

Because that's the way things happened. No one had a say in reality. In my case I just went normally to work and I've been introduced to this system. I didn't have a say, it just happened and now I'm in it! A lot of people faced the same situation, to start with all my colleagues.

It's definitely worrying if it doesn't work (the College System), because a lot of money has been spent and a lot of things have been changed for nothing. If it doesn't work, it's a loss for the whole country.

T_P_3

"Because when we had the meeting as a group, for teachers, and I asked a particular question, I was shot down straight away! When I told them listen yes you're concentrating on the student, granted, but you're not taking any notice of the teachers, he said... but but but... for me let me tell you ... they do not listen. Secondly when we were in the schools themselves, and we were discussing with the Heads of the schools, they (Heads of schools) were very understanding... in the discussion, the Heads of schools and teachers themselves could see the problem, but one thing that was said was, I don't know what can be done about this, because most probably decisions have already been taken. What we can do is... this is what really came out... how we are going to handle the new situation. So, wasn't it already there?"

T_S_10

"Ha ngħidlek il-għala... għax kull darba jgħidulna li ġejjin jirkellmu magħna imma meta ġew jirkellmu, they didn't talk with us, they talked at us! Ġew jgħidulna x'sar u x'se jsir u mhux intom x'taħsbu?"

You want to know why... because every time they told us they're going to come to discuss certain issues, when they came, they didn't talk with us, they talked at us! They just came and told us what's going to be done, rather than what we think should be done!

T_S_11

"Ormai, hafna nies m'għadhomx jemmnun illi jekk issemmgħu l-vuċi tagħhom, din il-vuċi vera ha tinstema... Ha nkun onesta naħseb li din (i.e. l-NCF) kienet l-ewwel darba li kien hemm xi tip ta' konsultazzjoni u kienet pozittiva li kien hemm konsultazzjoni. Imma yet again ma naħsibx li l-konsultazzjoni saret kif kellha tkun."

As things are, many people don't believe any more that if they voice their opinion it would be taken into consideration. To be honest, I think that this (i.e. the NCF) was the first time that there was some kind of consultation, and the fact that there was consultation was positive. But yet again, I don't think that this consultation was done in the right manner.

T_S_2

"Il-proċess mar hażin għax id-deċiżjoni ttieħdet mill-ewwel. Fis-sens għax irridu nagħmlu t-tibdil mill-ewwel hekk u ma kienx hemm proċess fejn naraw, eżempju... minnu li sar taparsi l-pilot project, għaliex ma ġejniex ikkonsultati mal-ewwel sena li għamilna: "X'deherilkom?" Ahna qatt ma ġew l-iskola tagħna."

The whole process went wrong, because the decision was taken from the word go. They wanted to change the system immediately and there wasn't a process where, for example... it is truth that a supposedly pilot project was carried out, why weren't we consulted from the very first year, "What do you think?" They never came to our school.

T_S_3

"Meta ġejna biex taparsi niġu kkonsultati ahna hassejna li d-deċiżjonijiet kienu diġa' ttieħdu, vera għax meta inti tiġini b'dokument u tgħidli li dan huwa għall-konsultazzjoni mentri diġa' qed jiġi mplimentat, jien għaliya dik mhix konsultazzjoni. Dik qed tinfurmani b'dak li ha jiġri. Jiġifieri stajt m'għamiltux għaladarba inti diġa' hadthom id-deċiżjonijiet u diġa' qed timplimentahom. Ehe, naqbel ukoll mal-fatt li ahna qegħdin niġu mġieghla insegwu dak li qed jiġi mitlub minna, mhux qed niġu nkunu involuti biex nagħmlu r-riformi. M'ahniex qegħdin niġu mismugħin. Meta nagħtu l-feedback tagħna dal-feedback qatt ma naraw riżultat tiegħu u fid-deċiżjonijiet li jittieħdu wara. Heqq li hemm hażin hu li l-affarijiet qed ngħodsu rasna, isiru u mbagħad wara naraw jekk it-teachers u min hu involut direttament jaqbilx magħhom. U kif għidt l-ewwel diġa', ovvja li din mhix ha tkun suċċess jekk ha nibqgħu sejr in b'dan il-mod."

When we were supposedly consulted we felt that the decisions were already taken because when you come forward with a document, and you tell me that this is for consultation, whilst this is already being implemented, that for me is not consultation. I call that informing me about what is going to happen. It means that you could have done without it since you already took the decisions and you are already

implementing them. Yes, I also agree with the fact that we are being forced to simply follow and do what is being asked of us, and we are not being involved in the reforms. We are not being heard. We never see the result of the feedback we give in the decisions taken later. What's wrong is that in the first place things are being done, and then later on we see if teachers and all those directly involved agree with them or not. And as I have already said, it's obvious that this is not going to be successful, especially if we are going to keep the same attitude.

Theme: **The Rate and Pacing of the Reforms**

Focus: **Coordination and implementation**

Question Q10: (P: 8)

The following question was asked to the College Principals:

69% (n=1366) do not feel that the various reforms are properly coordinated; nor do 60% feel that they are being properly implemented.

What do you have to say to these?

P_1

"What reforms are we talking about? If you ask the same question following the NCF process the replies would be that there has been consultation and voice given to teachers.

At the end of the day someone has to decide.

To say that every feedback is taken on board is not the case but to say that there is someone from the Directorate who is bulldozing is certainly unfair.

To say that everything was imposed is not fair.

There has to be an acknowledgement that this was not an Arriva type of reform".

Theme: **The Rate and Pacing of the Reforms**

Focus: **Pace of reforms**

Question Q11: (DG: 10, P: 7, SMT: 5, T: 6)

The following question was asked to the Directors Generals, the College Principals, the Senior Management Teams and the Teaching Grades:

89% (n=1366) felt that there are too many reforms taking place at the same time.

What can you tell me about this?

Who determined the tight time-frame for the implementation of the reforms?

In general most teachers feel that too many changes are taking place in parallel, without the time to consolidate and evaluate what is taking place. Such rapid changes are creating significant stress on the teachers, with most of their energy being taken away by paper work as well as the understand and implementation of innovative approaches, possibly at the expense of the quality of teaching. On the other hand, most of the reforms have implications on other 'happenings' in schools, and one cannot change one thing without changing the other. Some of these changes are interlinked, and it could well be argued that the College System could never have taken place without other parallel reforms (e.g. the abolition of streaming automatically brings with it a change in the way schools are organised, new forms of assessment, differentiated teaching etc), even though this view is not universally shared.

P_1

"When you have all these positive reforms being pushed by the Directorate, teachers may see these positive reforms being pushed at the same time in a negative light. So our role is to try and communicate the positive aspects of these reforms."

P_10

"What reforms are we talking about?" He/she questioned whether it is correct to call every improvement a "reform" and suggested that instead on many occasions all that was happening was "emphasising the points". He/She stated that not everything can be considered as a reform as in reality educational reforms had not started with the inception of Colleges but had been going on for a number of years. He/She opined that making everything look like a reform was creating a storm in a teacup.

P_2

"Iva jista jkun hemm dak il-feeling ta' fatigue u irridu noqghodu attenti hafna u irridu inkunu sensittivi ghaliha.

Iva, hemm awareness min-naħa tal-Principals fejn... oj... bil-mod (Ejja nimxu b'mod differenti.).

Imma dan qed isiru ghax nemmnu illi huma ta' gid għall-istudent.

Tajjeb pero' nghidu illi l-bażi tar-riformi huwa il-ftehim bejn il-MUT u il-Gvern.

Kull riforma iġġib bidla f'riforma oħra... huma illinkjati. Tista' tneħhiha? Jekk le għalhekk irridu inkunu ukoll sensittivi maż-żewġ naħat."

Yes there may be a feeling of fatigue and we must be very careful and must be sensitive to it.

Yes there is awareness on the part of Principals where ... oj... slowly.
(Let's do things differently.)

But this is happening because we believe that it will be of benefit for the student.

Good but let's say that the basis of the reforms is the agreement between the MUT and the Government.

Every reform will bring about other changes ... they are linked. Can you remove it? If not, that is why we must be sensitive to both sides.

P_3

*"Iktar l-ghalliema milli t-tfal qegħdin isibuha diffiċli, fhimtni ?
Ir-riformi qegħdin jitolbu mill-ghalliema illi jinbidlu malajr kemm jista' jkun, u meta hemm id-diskors tal-professjonalizmu naf illi huwa ta' skozzjatura għat-teachers"*

It is the teachers, rather than the children, who are finding it difficult, do you understand?

Reforms are necessitating teachers to change as quickly as possible, and where professionalism is concerned, I am aware that this could be a sore point for teachers.

P_4

*"Jekk ahna se nagħmlu riforma fil-Year 1 biss iridu jgħaddu 11-il-sena biex iħossuha l-oħrajn... hafna riformi iridu jsiru flimkien.
X'hemm ħażin fir-riformi?
Dawn huma kollha paradigm shifts: qabel kien ikolli dak is-sillabu u kont nagħmlu u kulhadd ried jidhol fil-kaxxa partikolari... Illum il-ġurnata irridu nagħmlu l-affarijiet differenti u nagħtu attenzjoni partikolari lil kull student."*

If we are implementing a reform in Year 1 only, say, 11 years have to pass in order to obtain results ... many reforms must be carried out together.

What's wrong with reforms?

These are all paradigms shifts: before I had the syllabus and I followed it and everyone had to fit in a particular box ... Today we have to do things differently and we give particular attention to each student.

P_5

*"Għal-liema riformi qegħdin nitkellmu?... għax f'dan il-pajjiż qisu kollox sar riforma.
Illum ir-rittmu huwa mgħaġġel fis-socjeta' u l-edukazzjoni trid timxi ma' dak it-rittmu... Ma nistgħux nagħmlu kif konna nagħmlu fil-passat li nippreparaw it-tfal għas-socjeta' tal-bierah."*

Which reforms are we talking about?.. because in this country it looks like everything is a reform.

In today's society, the pace is fast and education must follow that pace... We cannot do what we used to do in the past; preparing children for the society of yesterday.

P_6

"Dan huwa kollox mill-premessa għax jista' jkollok affarijiet tajbin hekk u il-premessi ikunu hekk.

Il-premessa hija waħda: li l-kulleġġ irid ikun awtonomu! Hu jaf x'riformi irid ikun hemm. Għalfejn jien pereżempju irrid nagħmel bilfors learning platform? Forsi jien għadni ma wasaltx għal-learning platform, imma wasalt għal xi hekk oħra. Ma jfissirx li kulhadd irid jibda' at the same time.

Tista' [imbagħad] tagħmel unit li jipprepara lit-tifel minn kulleġġ għall-iehor... Pero' imbagħad irid ikun hemm accountability."

This wholly depends on the premise, because there could be very beneficial things but then the premise could be wrong.

The premise should be that the college should be autonomous! Only the college knows what reforms should take place. Why should I, for example, be obliged to do a compulsory learning platform? Maybe I still have not yet reached the point of setting up a learning platform, but maybe I have managed some other thing. Does it mean that everyone has to start doing something at the same time?

You can [then] make a unit that prepares the child from one college to another... But then one has to be accountable.

P_7

The Principal argued that the pace and rate of reforms can be appreciated. However, he/she explained that this is quite inevitable because reforms are linked one to the other. For instance he/she explained that one cannot remove the JL exams and not include benchmarking. The Principal is of the strong opinion that every reform was implemented with a specific vision in mind and he/she also mentioned that such reforms need to be taken within the international context of education and not just locally. Moreover, he/she insisted that these reforms were not done for the sake of change but were implemented as a form of social justice to encourage more children to succeed rather than failing them because of labelling.

The Principal also explained that teachers have now more role space where they can actually be involved in these reforms and while some teachers may resist the reforms, he/she also stated that they are being given so much support that he/she finds it difficult to comprehend why some of them resist them so much.

P_8

The Principal explained that in order to view the full perspective of the rate of reforms, one needs to go back to their inception. According to the Principal, their inception can be traced back to the enactment of the Education Act of 2006 and which was also endorsed in the MUT agreement of 17th July 2007. So, he/she argued, the MUT is in agreement with the reforms and consequently understands that in bringing them to fruition there will inevitably be implications and changes.

The Principal admitted that some reforms were necessary since many of them were linked. He/she mentioned the following examples:

The removal of the JL exams and the enactment of benchmarking;

The move from streaming to setting which involved concurrent changes;

The set up of The National Policy and Strategy for the Attainment of Core Competences in Primary Education for Years 1 to 3; and the development of the Statutory Action Plan (SAP)

In view of the respondents' replies, the Principal asked whether the respondents had identified which specific reforms had been introduced at a fast pace?

P_9

The Principal stated that reforms are naturally sequential (one follows the other). As an example he/she argued that had we removed the JL exams (in agreement with the MUT) without a substitution, then it would have been ineffective. In addition, he/she insisted that not all reforms had affected all teachers. For example, he/she explained that the removal of streaming effected mostly Year 5 and 6 teachers; the introduction of setting, on the other hand, affected mostly secondary school teachers.

SMT_P_10

"Iva nahseb li ma tajnihix çans it-tranzazzjoni tal-bidla giet fuqna malajr wisq. Ma tajnihiex çans. Naqbel magħha dal-punt. Ċertu bidliet isiru tant mghaġġla li xi kultant ikunu ta' detriment għall-istudent stess. Il-bidla trid issir, imma bi proċess. Minbarra proċess konsultattiv anki iktar b'mod leġġer... Xi kultant inħoss li nadottaw ċertu strateġiji li jkunu jaħdmu f'pajjiżi kbar pero' li ma jkunux adattati għaċ-ċokon tagħna."

Yes, I think we haven't given it enough time, the transition came too suddenly. We haven't given it time. I agree with this point. Certain changes were too sudden and sometimes they were to the students' detriment. Change has to happen, but it has to be part of a process. Not just in a process of consultation, but at a more leisurely pace... Sometimes I feel that we adopt certain strategies that work in bigger countries, which however, are not suitable for our small island.

SMT_P_5

"Jien sfortunatament naħseb illi l-politika hija wisq involuta. Il-politiċi jagħmlu ċertu pressjonijiet fuq id-Direttorat tagħna, allura il-Prinċipal, sort of għandek il-backlash effect u nibqgħu sejrin hekk."

Unfortunately I believe that politics is too much in it. Politicians put pressure on the Directorate, in turn the Directorate puts pressure on the Principal and you have a backlash effect.

SMT_P_2

"Jien nixtieq illi l-affarijiet jimxu naqra iżjed bil-mod. Inlestu waħda u ngħidu isma issa ħa nerġgħu nippreparaw għall-tibdil ieħor. Veru li l-edukazzjoni hija ħajja u għandha bżonn tibdil kontinwu. Imma ma jistax ikun li jkollna ħafna tibdil fl-istess sena. Eżempju klassiku tal-Year 4's. Mela dawn qed ikollhom l-SAP (Statutory Action Plan), Mixed Ability, il-Fronter issa. Ikollhom iċ-checklist. Dawn huma kollha innovattivi. They're too much. Biżżejjed ngħidlek illi t-teachers tal-Year 4 kollha talbu li ma jibqgħux Year 4. Teachers tajbin ħafna."

I would like these reforms to take place at a slower pace. It's true that education is dynamic and change is ingrained in it. However too many reforms in the same year is detrimental. A classic example is the Year 4. They have the SAP (Statutory Action Plan), mixed ability, Fronter as well as the checklist. They're all new and it's all too much. Teachers teaching the Year 4 have all asked to be changed next year. And they're all very good teachers.

SMT_P_7

"Jien naqbel mar-riforma imma ma jistax ikun ir-riformi kollha fl-istess ħin, ma jtukx ċans toqgħod. Sakemm qed tipprova timplimenta, tinbidel u trid terġa' tbiddel id-direzzjoni. Ir-riforma tal-qari. Ir-riforma tal-benchmark exam – riforma kbira. Ir-riforma fl-audits. Ir-riforma fis-sekondarja. Riforma fil-Matsec. Sadanittant infethu ħafna openings. Bdejna n-nurture groups, il-learning support zones..."

I believe we needed reforms, however reforms cannot happen at the same time allowing you barely enough time to adjust. While you're trying to implement something, another change comes along and it puts you off course once again. We had the reading reform, the benchmark exam reform – a major one indeed – the audit reform, reforms in secondary schools, within the MATSEC. In the meantime we had other initiatives to attend to. We started the nurture groups, the learning support zones... etc.

SMT_S_6

"Ir-riformi fl-edukazzjoni jridu jieħdu t-temp (iż-żmien) tagħhom. Ma jistax inti tagħmel hafna riformi f'daqqa. Bħalissa kellna din tal-kulleġġi, l-NCF, l-interactive whiteboards, kollha f'salt dawn! Saru wisq bidliet f'daqqa."

Reforms in education should take their time. You can't implement too many reforms at one go. Now we have the colleges, the NCF, the interactive whiteboards, all at the same time! There have been too many simultaneous changes.

T_P_5

"Naħseb li hemm pressjoni kbira mid-Direttorat, apparti d-Direttorat, 'il fuq mid-Direttorat, mill-Ministeru tal-Edukazzjoni. Ovvjament jiġifieri biex nidhru kompetenti li qed nagħmlu xi ħaġa f'isem il-poplu u allura nagħmlu aktar pressjoni fuq id-Direttorat, id-Direttorat fuq il-Prinċipali, il-Prinċipali fuq l-SMT u vice versa ... Sakemm naslu għalina u dejjem naqilgħawha fuq rasna aħna jiġifieri ... the lesser beings!"

I think there's a lot of pressure from the Directorate, and even higher up than the Directorate, from the Ministry of Education. Obviously, so we can seem competent and show that things are being done on behalf of the people, thus more pressure on the Directorate, the Directorate in turn puts more pressure on the Principals, the Principals on the SMT and vice versa... until they get to us, and we're the ones who always get it in the end... the lesser beings!

T_S_11

"It was too abrupt, too many things happening at one go. Daħħalna l-idea ta' school profiling, ta' class profiling, ta' student profiling, għall-ewwel darba. Daħħalna l-idea ta' assessments differenti, rotot differenti, schemes differenti. Daħħalna l-idea ta' interactive whiteboard. Too many things happening all at one go."

It was too abrupt, too many things happening at one go. We introduced the idea of school profiling, class profiling, student profiling for the first time. We introduced the idea of different assessments, different routes and different schemes... Too many things happening all at one go.

T_S_2

"L-ewwel ħaġa kellha din il-ħaġa tidhol bil-mod mhux ċum paq pum. Mill-bidu tas-sena, tal-ewwel sena li ġejt hawn kellna ċertu affarijiet li kienu bidla radikali, allahares ma tkunx kapaċi tikkopja. Kellna teachers min irriżenja u telaq."

First of all this reform had to take place over a number of years, not all of a sudden. From the very beginning of my first year here, there were radical changes and we had to cope. We had teachers who resigned.

Theme: **The Rate and Pacing of the Reforms**

Focus: **Pace of reforms**

Question Q12: (P: 9)

The following question was asked to the College Principals:

56% (n=1366) felt that students are finding it difficult to cope with the pace of the reforms, and 58% felt that students are finding it difficult to cope with the many changes that are taking place.

Do you have evidence that contradicts this?

P_8

The Principal repeated the same question, namely which reforms were the respondents talking about. He/She took this as one of the questionnaire's limitations in that it did not ask respondents about specific reforms and why respondents believed that on specific reforms the pace was too fast.

P_9

The Principal found it personally difficult to be convinced that students are finding it difficult to cope. He/She said that many of the reforms consisted of measures to help and support the student him/herself. These included measures to remove the stigma of some students being labelled and also the removal of excessive stress. In what ways could these be damaging to the student, he/she asked in a surprising tone?

Theme: **Impact on Students, Teachers and Parents**

Focus: **Teacher's work in class**

Question Q13: (DG: 11, P: 10, SMT: 4, T: 7)

The following question was asked to the Directors General, the College Principals, the Senior Management Teams and the Teaching Grades:

69% (n=1366) felt that the many reforms that are taking place are negatively affecting teachers' work in class.

Should this be a cause for concern?

From the interviews it emerged that there are two elements that seem to be taxing on the teacher's performance in class, these being the increase in workload and disciplinary problems. The issue of misbehaviour by some students, and the inability to take appropriate disciplinary action is a recurring topic in most interviews. Another exhausting factor that is tiring teachers out is having to deal with students with special needs who have not as yet been assigned an LSA. One observation by a member of the SMT is that he/she noted an increase in sick leave, as well as a larger number of teachers opting for appointments in the area of education but outside the classroom, (peripatetic, complementary etc.). Another SMT notices 'burn out' in his/her staff. One cannot but not contrast these statements with the statement by a College Principal who is not aware that the volume of work has increased in class. Teachers, on the other hand, are very understanding and sympathetic to the amount of work that has increased for the SMTs.

DG2

"B'liema mod żdidilhom ix-xogħol? Kellhom jippreparaw xogħol ġdid u jitolqu dak li kellhom ippreparat?"

Din il-mistoqsija: I would have been concerned kieku kelli iżjed informazzjoni imma m'għandix informazzjoni biżżejjed u I don't know what I should be worried about at the end of the day."

In what way has their work increased? They had to prepare fresh material and discard that which they had prepared?

This question: I would have been concerned if I had more information but I do not have sufficient information and I do not know what I should be worried about at the end of the day.

P_10

The Principal plainly stated "I don't agree with this statement". He/She argued that quality standards in terms of the quality of education are increasing and nobody can negate that fact. In fact he/she pointed out that parents of students going to either independent schools or church schools were calling to have their children admitted to the College.

He/She did however try and understand a bit better why teachers in their majority were stating that the many reforms taking place were impacting them negatively. Perhaps, he/she suggested, the fact that there never seems to be enough time to digest properly all that is happening or perhaps that teachers do not have the management skills to prioritise and manage an expanding role space may be the reasons why they think of them as negative. He/she commented that perhaps training them and preparing them to occupy a role beyond the traditional teaching was required.

P_2

"Fuq liema riforma qegħdin nitkellmu? Dawn il-mistoqsijiet huma ġeneriċi ħafna... le mhux ġeneriċi... wiesgħa ħafna."

Kull bidla ha ġgħib ix-xogħol magħha imma kemm ġew issapportjati! Jiena nemmen illi ġew issapportjati biex igorri dik il-bidla. Qatt m'int se tissodisfa lil kulhadd!"

Which reform are we talking about? These questions are very generic... not generic... very vague.

Each change will bring more work along with it but how much were they supported! I believe that they have been supported to carry that change. You can never satisfy everyone!

P_4

"Din hija riżultat ta' l-Education Act illi sar fit-2006 plus il-ftehim li sar flimkien mal-MUT.

Biex issir ir-riforma trid tipprepara għaliha. Ma tistax tgħid: ara ha naqbad ta' Year 1, ha nagħmel ic-checklists imbagħad meta jaslu Year 4 x'se jiġri lilna ?

Jista' jkun li ċertu teachers huma fitti u jaħsbu li mhumix ippreparati biżżejjed biex jiffaċċjaw dik il-biċċa xogħol. Jista' jkun li ċertu teachers jibzgu minn ċerti sitwazzjonijiet... li they are not going to cope.

Hemm hafna riżorsi biex ngħinu intaffu ix-xogħol tat-teachers bħaċ-checklists.

Jiena bħala Principal ma ninsiex meta jien kont teacher... allura meta qed titkellem ma'xi Head of School naf x'jiġifieri.

Jiena għadni qatt ma ltqajt ma' teacher illi tgħidli: ..., "... Kif qed taffettwani fin-negativ (ir-riforma)!"

Anki meta nkunu żewġ kulleġġi fl-in-service courses, insiru hbieb ta'xulxin.

Jiena qatt ma ngħid "il-Kulleġġ tiegħi" imma "l-Kulleġġ tagħna."

This is the result of the Education Act made in 2006 plus the agreement made with the MUT.

For the reform to take place, one must prepare for it, you cannot say: let me take those in Year 1, I do the checklists and then when they are in Year 4 what will happen?

It may be that certain teachers like to do things to perfection and think that they are not prepared enough to face this piece of work. It may be that certain teachers are afraid of certain situations ... that they would not be able to cope.

There are many resources to help alleviate the work of teachers such as checklists.

I, as a Principal, have not forgotten about when I was a teacher... therefore when talk with a HoS, I know what it means.

I've never met a teacher who told me: "The reform is affecting me in a negative manner?"

Even when two colleges are together at the in-service courses, we befriend each other.

I never say "my college", but "our college".

P_5

"Again wiehed irid jikkwalifika liema riforma qed ixekkel ix-xoghol tat-teacher fil-klassi.

Jiena wiehed minn daww, kif ukoll shabi, illi top priority fl-agenda ghandha tkun il-hin tat-teacher fil-klassi mal-istudenti tieghu... u kollox idur maghha. Kellna instances fejn gejna mitlubin nipparteicipaw u irriffjutajna.

Imma din hi xi haga illi irridu nirriflettu fuqha: il-hrug li jsir fl-iskejjel huwa kollu marbut mal-kurrikulum? Huwa kollu necessarju?

Again one must qualify which reform is hampering the teacher's work in class."

I am one of those - as well as my colleagues - whose top priority in the agenda should be the time that the teacher spends in the classroom with his/her students ... and everything else revolves around it.

We had instances where we were asked to participate and we refused.

But this is something that we must reflect on: are all the outings taking place in schools linked with the curriculum? Is it all necessary?

P_7

The Principal admitted that he/she was not aware that the volume of work had increased or that College life was affecting negatively teachers' work in class. He/She argued that he/she has never forced anyone to do anything by imposition and neither have higher authorities. For example, he/she mentioned that it is the Heads who often decide whether they choose to participate in specific projects as they have a very good understanding of their teachers' workload. At this point he/she commented that had the survey been more defined to elicit College differences, the results would have been more informative.

P_8

The argument flowing from the Principal's replies to previous questions also tied in to this question. He/She repeated: "I would have appreciated to know exactly which reforms". The Principal stated that most probably one reform that teachers resisted most was the mixed ability teaching but, he/she argued, that teachers should have been prepared after all from University. He/She questioned to what extent University was preparing student teachers in subject matters like differentiated teaching (and hence anticipating question 15) and asked where is the source of the deficiency for teachers to argue that "many reforms are negatively affecting their work in class" was it at University level or was it at the employers' level?

In view of this the Principal argued for the need to create more bridges and more partnerships between relevant entities that represented separate but highly related activities such as higher education, compulsory education institutions and employers.

Moreover, he/she explained that his/her College has been taking this initiative to set up partnerships. He/She explained how his/her College has a partnership deal with ITS, ETC and the MHRA to support Form 5 students

interested in a hospitality career to take basic courses at MQF level 1 from ITS and this was a college-based voluntary initiative.

P_9

The Principal found it hard to comprehend in what ways had the reforms impacted negatively on the teachers' work in class. He/She argued that teachers have been given instruments and methods to work better. For example, he/she referred to the fact that because teachers can now identify students with literacy problems before it escalates and possibly becomes a disciplinary issue, the fact that one can address the issue effectively means that colleagues will not have to deal with an escalating problem in the future. The Principal also said that the system has removed the stress associated with the JL exams and training has been provided to reinforce differentiated learning. These are issues that should make the teachers' work better and not worse, he/she insisted

SMT_P_2

"Qed taffettwa lil għalliema pero' mhux fix-xogħol tagħhom fi klassi. Beżlien kienu u beżlien għadhom u ha jibqgħu. Li qed taffettwa hija li l-għalliema qed jippruvaw isibu xogħol ieħor fid-dipartiment (i.e. id-Direttorat) – peripatetic, complimentary, imorru ma tal-SPLD. Qed imorruli hafna u qed japplikaw. Għandi wiehed li telaq minn mal-gvern u mar ma' tal-knisja. Qalli ghax hemmhekk m'ghandniex dik il-pressure. Pero' qed jaffetwalhom il-hajja personali tagħhom. Li qed nintona hafna, illi fejn snin ohra, qed ikolli hafna sick leave. Meta bniedem ikun ma jiflahx qed jirtira mil-ewwel. Illum il-pressure hija enormi."

I believe it does affect teachers but not directly teacher's work in class. Teachers were, are, and will be hardworking. I think they're being affected in that most teachers are looking for work elsewhere within the Directorate. I have a particular teacher who actually left government employment and now works in a church school, precisely because he felt he had too much pressure here. It is affecting their personal life. I've noticed the amount of sick leave, when compared to previous years, has definitely increased. The pressure is getting too much.

SMT_P_5

"Iva nahseb ghax inti meta ser timplimenta xi haga, inti tkun trid it-teachers tieghek on board. Kemm ser tohnoqhom b'xogħol? Jekk jiena rridhom jagħmlu xogħol sura, kieku nippreferi kieku kienu jimxu b'ritmu iżjed kajman... It-teachers qed iħossu elementi ta' burnout. Qed iħossuhom swamped hafna bil-bidliet kollha, u bir-riformi kollha li jridu jagħmlu."

When you're implementing something you need your teachers on board. How much work can you give them? If I really expect them to carry out certain tasks professionally, I would prefer if things took a calmer pace ... Teachers are feeling elements of a burnout. They feel swamped with

all the changes that have happened and with all the reforms that took place.

SMT_P_8

"I smile. They became more accountable. So hija xi haġa li lilhom ma toġġobhomx. Because they know that they're being checked directly or indirectly. Sta għall-Head – jekk inti ser tpingihelhom sabiha, ha jarawha sabiha. Jekk ser tpingihelhom kerha ha jarawha kerha ... It-teachers minnhom nfushom huma against change. Imma that's the nature of the teacher. It's a body that they expect li ahna nafu hafna u mhemmx għalfejn iċċaqlaq hafna għax ahna qegħdin sew. Imma l-istatus quo gatt ma jhalli l-edukazzjoni timxi 'l quddiem. This is my 41st year in the Division. Alla hares ma jkunx hawn dawn il-bidliet, għax inkella you grow stagnant like stale water... Jiena ngħidlek dik hi l-bravura tar-riforma, li we are reaching all students."

I smile. They became more accountable. Therefore they don't like it. Because they know they're being checked directly or indirectly. It all depends on the Head. If the Head presents a positive picture, that's how they will view it. If the Head presents a dull and negative picture, that's how they will see it. Teachers are against change and that's the nature of a teacher. They believe they know a lot and therefore they don't want anyone else telling them what to do or change things. However you can't have status quo in education. This is my 41st year in the Division. God forbid, there should be no changes. Otherwise you grow stagnant like stale water... I believe that is exactly the highlight of this reform, we're reaching all students. "

SMT_S_2

"Jiena naf li hawnhekk għandna hafna teachers li jaħdmu hafna, għandhom interess kbir fl-istudent and they're feeling stressed out. Li ma jistgħux ilaħħqu mal-expectations, għax qed jippreparaw hafna materjal id-dar u jiġu hawnhekk drained. Naħseb li r-riformi qegħdin jagħmlu ġid but it is at a high cost of preparation... Dawn kollha add ons. Kif għedt qabel we're groping in the dark."

In this school most of the teachers are very hard working. They're interested in the wellbeing of the student and they're feeling stressed out. They feel they can't attain the expectations for them. They're preparing a lot of material at home and they're coming to school drained. The reforms are beneficial, but at a very high cost of preparation. We're groping in the dark.

SMT_S_3

"It's true huwx. Qed ikun hawn wisq, wisq! Kwazi kwazi it's leading to instability. Ma' kull min titkellem, lanqas taf x'inhu ġej round the corner."

Hafna nies anqas ikunu jafu x'laqathom u jridu jerġgħu ilestu għal change oħra."

It's true. There's too many. It's almost leading to instability. It's the word on everyone's lips. You never know what's round the corner. Some people still haven't realised the changes that have taken place and they need to prepare for yet another change.

SMT_S_7

"Jien naħseb it-teachers qed iħossu hom helpless. Tant ġejjin tibdiliet. Tibdiliet sbieħ wkoll. Tibdiliet li suppost huma għodda li suppost tagħmel it-teaching aħjar. Pero' tant ġejjin b'rata mgħaġġla li t-teachers qed iħossu hom helpless."

I think teachers are already feeling helpless. There are so many changes taking place. Some of these changes will be good. Changes that should serve as tools that improve teaching. However they are coming at such a fast rate that teachers are feeling helpless.

T_S_1

"Nerga' ngħid, hafna minn shabi qed igergru b'ammont ta' xogħol li qed ikollhom u l-aktar għax l-atitudni tal-istudent mhux qed tkun pro-active... Meta nitkellem ma' kull għalliem f'kulleggi differenti, id-dixxiplina marret lura..."

Many of my friends not only grumble about the amount of work but about the student's attitude who is not being pro-active at all. When I exchange concerns with other teachers from different colleges, we all agree that discipline has taken a downturn...

T_S_3

"Ultimately ir-riformi kollha lit-teachers fil-klassi qed jinfluwenzaw għax hemmhekk qed nittargitjaw u t-teachers qegħdin jiffaċċjaw il-problemi kollha Waħda minnhom hi tal-mixed ability teaching fejn aħna qed nispiċċaw ngħallmu range sħiħa tat-tfal kollha f'daqqa b'numru kbir ta' tfal fil-klassi, li hu impossibbli li tikkejterja għan-needs individwali tagħhom kollha. Problema oħra hija tad-dixxiplina li mhux qed tiġi kkejterjata għaliha b'mod adegwat. Tfal qed jispiċċaw jagħmlu x'jagħmlu jibqgħu għaddejnin l-aqwa li l-affarijiet inżommuhom fl-iskola u ma joħorgux barra minn hemmhekk. Problema oħra hija tal-inclusion. Għandna hafna tfal li għandhom special needs li m'għandhomx LSA magħhom u m'għandhomx għajnuna u t-teacher trid tara wkoll dawk kif se tintegrahom fil-klassi, b'numri kbar, b'nuqqas ta' riżorsi hafna drabi u l-problemi tad-dixxiplina dejjem qegħdin jikbru. U anki f'każ ta' riformi f'każ ta' l-IT pereżempju, it-teachers m'għandhomx training biżżejjed, m'għandhomx hin biex jippreparaw għalihom, ir-riżorsi li għandhom bżonn biex jużaw l-IT b'mod adegwat u kif suppost."

Ultimately all reforms are influencing the teachers in class because the class is the target. All teachers are facing problems. One of them is that of mixed ability teaching where we are ending up teaching a range of

students in a big class, where it is impossible to cater for all their individual needs. Another problem is that of discipline, which is not being catered for in an adequate way. Some students do what they want continuously as long as all is kept within the confines of the school. Another problem is that of inclusion. We got students with special needs that do not have an LSA with them, thus, no individual help. The teacher must see how to integrate these students in class as well, in a large group, with lack of resources and disciplinary problems on the rise. Teachers do not have adequate training, adequate preparation time and resources when it comes to IT teaching, for example, as well.

Theme: **Specific Reforms**

Focus: **Streaming**

Question Q14: **(DG: 12)**

The following question was asked to the Directors General:

Just about 2 in 3 respondents (n=1366) do not agree that the abolition of streaming was a good decision.

Where SMT and personnel in the various teaching grades consulted before this decision was taken? If they were, what was the outcome?

DG1

"As a Directorate we carried out a survey with those classes which were no longer streamed after one year of experiencing differentiated. Our results are very different from what is stated in this question.

Some teachers have made the argument that they do not like the abolition of streaming when interviewed in the transition reform because they felt more comfortable in the professional sense in that they can cater better for students in a small range of capabilities but then they speak freely of sending their own children to schools where streaming is not practiced. And there we have to question: is it a matter of principle or a matter of performance?"

Section D: School Management Team

Theme: **The Role of the SMT**

Focus: **Administration**

Question Q15: (SMT: 7)

The following question was asked to the Senior Management Teams:

94% of SMT respondents (n=153) reported that paper work still dominates much of the SMT work [Fig 82].

Is this reality familiar to you? Can you kindly elaborate?

During the interview most SMTs gave a list of administrative roles that they have to take on that can easily be done by an administrator who is not necessarily an educator. One example of this is the inventory which seems to take a lot of energy to keep updated. The accounts and the school budget is another example. The lists given by SMTs varies, and includes, apart from the items mentioned above, the requests and follow up for the various school services provided, arrangements for outings, parliamentary questions (PQs), classifications, books, administrative meetings they have to attend to, the many meetings they have with teachers (mostly one to one on issues that concern the teacher and/or particular students), as well as meetings they have with parents. SMTs have to complete many 'returns', as well as deal with requests made by the DGs as well as the College Principal. E-mail correspondence seems to take much of their time as well.

SMT_P_10

"Bla dubju ... eżempju l-inventarju, li wahdu biss wkoll jehodlok ammont ta' hin. Il-leave tal-staff. Ammont ta' xogħol fejn jidhol formoli ghax it-tfal qed jiehdu l-frott u l-haxix. Trid timla l-paper work fuqha. Paper work fuq outings – parental consent. Tfal li jkunu ma jiflhux. Dak hafna paper work, hafna xogħol irqiq li ma jidhirx imma li fil-verita' jahlilek hafna hin... Barra hafna paper work mid-DG's u l-PQ's. Li jehdulek hafna hin u trid tirrispondihom immediately. Il-classifications, il-budget, il-kotba. Bizibilju ta' xogħol li jekk tghidhom biss wkoll taqta' nifsek aħseb u ara tagħmilhom."

Without doubt... for example the inventory, which in itself takes up a good amount of your time. The staff's leave. A lot of work that has to do with forms regarding the fruit and vegetables being given to the children... you have to fill in the paper work concerned. Paper work for outings – parental consent. Children who are sick... This is a lot of paper work, a lot of small jobs which are not very visible but in reality takes up a lot of your time... There is also a lot of paper work from the DG's and for the PQ's, which take up a lot of your time and require an immediate response. The classifications, the budget, the books... A lot of work which makes leaves you breathless even when listing it, let alone when you do it.

SMT_P_2

"Iva, għandek paper work kemm tal-Kulleġġ u tad-Direttorati. Għadni kemm lestejt l-emails. Dik l-ewwel stadju. Imbagħad iġġibli pile ieħor minn hawn u ftit ieħor. Imbagħad terġa' iġġibli għad-dar biex f'xi hin nohroġ, fit-3.30, neħodhom u nlestihom. Imbagħad għandek ir-reports tat-teachers, eżempju biex iġeddulu l-kuntratt. Imbagħad għandek il-ġenituri ġieli jitolbuna r-reports wkoll... Dejjem b'islienna barra. Barra l-paper work imbagħad hemm il-laqgħat li jsiru mid-Direttorat, li huwa time consuming."

We have a lot of paper work in connection with the College, as well as with the Directorates. I just finished the first batch of e-mails. That was just the first phase. I'll be getting another batch, soon. Before I leave work, around 3.30, I get another batch, to be taken home and finished there. I also have to write reports regarding teachers. Sometimes even parents request reports about their children ... We're constantly on the go. Besides the paper work, we have lots of meetings to attend to. It's all time consuming.

SMT_P_5

"Jiena bil-paper work li għandi u bix-xogħol amministrattiv li għandi, m'għandiex ċans nieħu rwol dirett fl-affarijiet tal-Kurrikulu, kif nixtieq nagħmel."

With the amount of paper work that I have, I find no time to participate in a direct way in Curriculum matters, the way I would like to.

SMT_S_1

"Iva għandhom ċertu ammont ta' paper work. Kultant inħossni ir-ragioner Fantozzi... tant iridu jagħmlu paper work li jekk jagħti kas biss il-paper work fir-realtà, ix-xogħol li vera suppost nagħmlu, li nieħdu ħsieb l-istudenta li għandha problema u ħa naraw kif ħa naffaċċawha, ma nkunux nistgħu nagħmluha. Fl-aħħar mill-aħħar, jien dak li rrid nagħmel hu li nagħti servizz tajjeb lit-tfal."

Yes, they have a certain amount of paper work. We have so much paper work, that it takes up most of our time. And in reality the work we're supposed to be doing, such as helping a student overcome some problems, is swept aside. At the end of the day, my aim is to be of service to my students.

SMT_S_3

"Pereżempju l-emails li jibdew deġlin. Ikollna mal-għoxrin emails kuljum. Kulhadd bid-deadlines, kulhadd, il-Principal, għax qegħdin jiġru wara l-Principal, all breathing down your neck... iridu dik iridu l-oħra, kulhadd jitlob l-informazzjoni minn għandek, kollha bid-deadlines."

For example, e-mails start coming in. We get around 20 emails everyday. All with their deadlines. It's a domino effect, starting from the Principal, all breathing down your neck. They want this and that. Everyone requests information out of you, with specific deadlines.

SMT_S_3

"Dik kollha (kemm ahna) qed ngħiduha. Fil-fatt, ilhom jgħidu, għandu jkun hemm xi hadd għall-administration, u ahna curriculum managers. Għax l-iktar ħaga... li mhux suppost... imma l-iktar ħaga li qed titwarrab. Għax dik it can wait jew forsi tgħid it-teachers jaħdmu wehithom, imma dawn (l-emails etc), they have to be seen to, u trid tirrispondihom u trid tagħmilhom. Allura l-iktar li mhux ikollna ċans huwa li nissaportjaw lit-teachers u nimmmentorjaw lil newly qualified. Hija verita'."

We're all saying the same thing. In fact we've been saying for a long time that there has to be someone taking care of the administrative side and we should just focus on being curriculum managers. It's the most important thing, but it's being swept aside because it can wait. Or you can ask teachers to work on their own. But the e-mails need to be seen to. They need to be answered and followed up. So we barely have any time left to support our teachers and do mentoring to the newly qualified. That's the truth.

SMT_S_6

"Ċertu reports li rrid nagħmel jiena u ċertu korrispondenza jehduli mill-ħin tiegħi. Jien jidhirli li Surmast m'għandux jingħalaq f'uffiċċju. Inti rajtni, kif ġejt indur mal-iskola. Mort... kien hemm każ ta' bieb li qalghuwħ minn postu. M'għandhiex nies biżżejjed biex jaraw dawn l-affarijiet. Allura ha jehduli mill-ħin li nista' nalloka biex ikun hemm the smooth running of the school."

Certain reports that I write and certain correspondence take up a lot of my time. I believe that the Head should not lock himself/herself up in an office. You've seen how I go around the school. There was a situation where they lifted a door off its hinges. We don't have enough people to deal with these things. So it takes up some of the time that I could allocate to ensure the smooth running of the school.

SMT_S_7

"Jien spicċajt l-Aġenzija Appoġġ hawn. Għax kienet niltaqa' mas-social workers, nigri wara t-tfal biex ingibuhom l-iskola, naraw il-problemi soċjali tagħhom (ma naghmilx). Ingibulhom il-lunch għax hemm minnhom lanqas lunch m'għandhom. Dan ix-xogħol tagħna sar. Għandi Assistant Head fil-ghodu tagħmel lunch għax hemm tfal bla lunch. Qatt ma kellna din ir-realta'!"

I've become like the Appogg Agency, because I'm always meeting with social workers, chasing children so that they come to school, and seeing to their social problems. We bring them lunch, because some of them don't even have lunch. This is what our job has become. One of my Assistant Heads makes lunches in the morning because some children come without lunch. We were never in this situation before!

Theme: **The Role of the SMT**

Focus: **Curricular Work**

Question Q16: (SMT: 8)

The following question was asked to the Senior Management Teams:

Almost 93% (n=153) indicated that they have very little time to do curricular work or to mentor [Fig 85].

What are your views? Why is this so?

SMT_P_6

"True minhabba l-ammont ta' interruzzjonijiet tal-ġenituri (u) l-ammont ta' paper work. Issa kif tista' tnaqqsu l-paper work? Trid tkun bniedem effiċjenti! Curricular work huwa iktar importanti minn paper work u m'għandniex dak il-ħin għalih. U mod kif tista' tnaqqas il-paper work huwa li jkollok iżjed staff biex jgħinuk fil-paper work."

It's true because of the number of interruptions from parents (and) due to the amount of paper work that we have. How do you reduce the amount of paper work? Well you need to be efficient! Curricular work is by far more important than paper work and we barely have any time for it. Another way how to reduce paper work is to have more staff helping you out.

Theme: **The Role of the SMT**

Focus: **Selection of Staff**

Question Q17: (SMT: 9)

The following question was asked to the Senior Management Teams:

Almost 58% (n=153) feel that the Head of School should have the right to select teachers and other teaching personnel on his/her staff [Fig 87]; 54% feel the same about members of the SMT [Fig 88].

What do you think about this?

One SMT compared his/her role to someone who has a business to run in an efficient manner but cannot at the same time select his/her employees. In fact the extreme case taken was that of 'hire and fire', as well as the idea that there should not be a definite contract for teachers, but they need to reapply for the post from time to time, or at least have their warrant extended. There seems to be a problem with a small number of teachers who 'are a problem', teachers that 'nobody wants'. The question often asked is what happens or what does one do with such teachers?

SMT_P_10

Nemmen li l-Head għandu jkollha say fejn jidhol l-istaff tagħha, biss mhux il-Head biss. Nemmen li l-SMT kollu għandu jkun involut fejn tidhol l-għażla tat-teaching staff tiegħu. Fl-ideali hija tajba biss nista' npoġġiha through (dil-) mistoqsija: "Jekk ikun hemm teacher li hadd ma jridu, min ha jzommu?"

I believe that the Head should have a say when it comes to her staff, though it shouldn't be just the Head. I believe that the whole SMT should be involved in the choice of the teaching staff. The ideal way to put it is through (this) question: "If there's a teacher who nobody wants, who is going to keep him on?"

SMT_P_5

"Dik hija xabla ta' Damokle. Għaliex jekk jien nagħżel lil Ċikku u lil Peppi, mbagħad irrid nibqa' bihom. Issa nitkellmu mod ieħor. Kieku inti tajtni hire and fire power, jiġiefieri jien għazilt lilek, dejjaqtni (m'għamiltx xogħlok jiġiefieri) u għidtlek "Itlaq". Billi nagħżel l-istaff u ma nistax imbagħad nagħmillhom deployment... Inti jew ser ittini poter tajjeb u poter li nista' nseddaq xogħli jew inkella ttini xejn... Jekk int ser tagħtini l-awtorita' qis li tagħtini l-awtorita' ta' kollox. U l-awtorita' ta kollox huwa li jien nagħżillhom u jien inkeċċihom."

It's a double edged sword. If I choose X and Y, then I am stuck with them. It's another story if you give me the power to hire and fire. That would mean that if I choose you and you don't perform your job, I can ask you to leave. What's the use of choosing one's staff, if you can't deploy them? Either you're giving me full power or else I don't want

it... If you're giving me the authority, might as well be the full authority. That is, I can hire you and I can fire you.

SMT_S_2

"Miniex daqshekk favorevoli. Għax jiddependi mill-Head. It's very subjective. Pereżempju jekk inti... jekk inti tiffittja fil-persuna li għandha f'moħħha l-Head, ħa tidhol. Imma jekk jiena, naf ngħallem xorta waħda imma my techniques are completely different from what I think a teacher should be, but the results are valid. Pereżempju jien għandi grazzja ma ċertu tip ta' teachers 'cos they reflect my character. Pero fl-istess ħin naf li hemm teachers li huma validi... imma kif ser nagħżel what is valid and what is not valid?"

I'm not so much in favour of this. It all depends on the Head. It's very subjective. Example: If you fit within the ideal person the head has in mind, you're in. However, if I'm a good teacher but my techniques are completely different from what the Head expects, but the results are valid, I might not be chosen. For instance, I know that I have a soft spot for certain teachers who reflect my character. However I'm aware that there are teachers, with whom I don't get along so well, who are still valid. How am I going to determine who is valid, as a teacher, and who isn't?

SMT_S_7

"Iva jiena naqbel li l-kapijiet tal-iskejjel, għandhom jingħataw dan – fil-kas ta' nies li they're not delivering, hija fl-interess tas-sistema li t-teachers inżommuhom on tip toes u jekk hemm bzonn jiċċaqalqu, jiċċaqalqu. Why not?"

Yes, I agree that Heads of Schools should be given this (right) – if people are not delivering, it is within the interest of the system that the teachers are kept on tip toes and if needs be they would have to move... Why not?

Theme: **The College Principal**

Focus: **Supportive Principals**

Question Q18: (P: 11)

The following question was asked to the College Principals

77% of SMT respondents (n=153) reported that the College Principal is instrumental in fostering networking and collaboration; 71% indicated that the Principal is generally very supportive.

Can you elaborate on what you are doing for SMTs to be so positive about your leadership qualities?

Principals gave a list of what they consider to be good practices on their part. Most stressed that they act more as coordinators or facilitators, than (“dictatorial”) leaders. College Principals pointed out that they spend a considerable amount of time listening and trying to understand the issues particular schools or personnel have, and support in the best possible way. They also voice these concerns in the appropriate fora. Most make it a point to know all their teachers in their schools, and also to keep daily contact with their staff.

P_1

“One of our roles is to support schools to improve; it is not my role to be some sort of super head but as a coordinator and supporter to give direction; to be available as much as possible; to listen to them.

We are the buffers between the Directorate and the staff.

One of my roles is to voice their concerns.

Support services are more accessible e.g. social workers now don’t need to be accessed in Valletta or Floriana but working within the Colleges.

We should decentralize even more from the Directorate.”

P_5

“Qegħdin nagħmlu hafna hafna hafna xogħol ma’ l-iskejjel... Pereżempju: jiena nidhol l-uffiċċju wara it-tlieta għaliex filgħodijiet il-hin kollu gewwa l-iskejjel.

Jiena dahhalt sistema ukoll illi kull term l-SMT, jidhol jagħmel visit f’kull klassi, u ir-remit huwa ċarissimu... illi l-SMT irid josserva il-good practices biss... u li kull għalliem irridu intuh in-writing apprezzament ta’ dik il-good practice li rajna fil-klassi.”

We are working a lot and a lot with schools ... For example: I go to the office after 3.00 because, in the morning, I am all the time visiting schools.

I also introduced a practice where each term the SMT visits each class, and the remit is clear ... that the SMT must observe good practices only... and that each teacher is given, in writing, an appreciation of his/her good practice observed in the classroom.

P_7

The Principal argued that in principle he/she believes firmly that teachers must not be “far” from access to the relevant educational authorities and he/she is firmly convinced that most teachers and personnel see Principals as quite accessible and close to address their work and professional needs. In his/her own words he/she said “We are now more available than in the past”. In addition, while the Principal acknowledged that his/her position means that people can refer to him/her, he/she constantly insists that teachers should not by-pass their immediate superiors like Headmasters and this, he/she said, creates a more harmonious communication flow. He/She describes the role of Principal as a ‘leader’: *“We give direction and provide a forum for empowering decision-making; I therefore see my role as a facilitator in this process”*. Building this relationship empowers teachers to go the extra mile. And there are various moments in College life where teachers readily and voluntarily stay over time

even though they are not obliged to do it. But it all depends on the quality of the working relationships and adopted leadership style.

P_8

The Principal was pleased to note that the absolute majority of respondents do see College Principals as supportive and he/she insisted that his/her primary role is to act as a person who empowers others, supports others, facilitates and encourages his staff to achieve better and more effectively. He/She specifically said: "*Kemm nista, nkun magħhom*".

As an example he/she mentioned the College Principal's Day which, he/she said, is specifically intended to give him/her the opportunity to speak to every member of staff and visit every child over an academic year in the different schools constituting the College.

Theme: **The Directorates**

Focus: **Chain of Command**

Question Q19: **(DG: 4)**

The following question was asked to the Directors General:

71% of SMT respondents (n=153) indicated that the College System and the two directorates has effectively made the chain of command more complex [Fig 96].

What do you have to say about this? Are there plans for the situation to be made less complex?

DG1

"I think it is an over generalization... we work in such a complicated system that to me the chain of command needs to be broken down.

In my opinion it has become a more consultative process: a more collaborative process.

I think that the ELC and the CoH have become a regular channel of communication both ways.

What the Directorate needs to work continuously on is the support and training to schools all the time.

I think the biggest criticism we have is not being complacent but doing too many things at once."

DG2

"Jien ma nemminx li din hi ir-realta'."

Naħseb illi kieku kellek issaqsi kwalunkwe Kap ta' skola, kollha jgħidulek min hu il-Kap tagħhom... u l-istess għat-teacher... ma naħsibx illi hemm xi chain of command kumplessa.

Naħseb illi ċ-chain of command hija ċara."

I do not believe that this is reality.
I think that if you were to ask any Head of School, they all would tell you who their Head is ... and the same for the teacher ... I think that there is no complex chain of command.
I think that the chain of command is clear.

Theme: **The Directorates**

Focus: **Support: DES**

Question Q20: (SMT: 10)

The following question was asked to the Senior Management Teams:

42% felt that the DES is generally very supportive [Fig 99].

Do you share this view and why?

SMT_P_5

"Yes, because through personal experience when I went with a problem and I needed to be supported, I was supported. I was very pleasantly surprised. Yes, I felt much supported. And I realised that they're in as bad a position as I am and if my job is lonely so is theirs. Why? Bottom line. It's all Politics!... We are supported and they do know as I know that I am loading too much on my teachers. The Directorate knows that it's loading too much on our shoulders. But do they have any other choice? Bottom Line – It's all Politics!"

SMT_S_6

"Jiena sibt support hafna. Perezempju l-fatt li jien Acting Head. Kien hawn Assistant Head hawnhekk u dan kienu tawh transfer (għal) [details provided]. Meta giet l-affari tiegħi (Acting Head) kien ser ikolli Assistant Head wahda. Din hija a very difficult school. B'Assistant Head wahda mara, bir-rispett kollu lejhom, she's my right hand infatti, imma hawnhekk mhux biżżejjed. Meta tlabt għal Assitant Head, baġhtuli newly qualified. Li għaliya kien handicap. Pero' meta jiena tkellimt u mort id-dipartiment (i.e id-Direttorat) u avvicinajt lid-DG. Fehmitni u qaltli li għandi biċċa raġun u fil-fatt reggħet irriversjat it-transfer li kienet tat... Jiena ngħid li d-DES huma very supportive!"

"I've found a lot of support. For example, the fact that I'm an Acting Head. There was an Assistant Head here and he got transferred to [details provided]. When I was made Acting Head I was only going to have one Assistant Head. This is a very difficult school. With one female Assistant Head, with all due respect to them, she's my right hand in fact, but here it's not enough. When I asked for an Assistant Head, they sent me a newly qualified one, which for me was a handicap. However when I spoke up and went to the department (i.e. the

Directorate) and spoke to the DG, she understood my situation and said that I was partly right and in fact, she reversed the transfer... I say that the DES are very supportive!"

Theme: **The Directorates**

Focus: **Support: DQSE**

Question Q21: (SMT: 11)

The following question was asked to the Senior Management Teams:

39% indicated that the DQSE is generally very supportive [Fig 100].

Do you share this view and why?

SMT_P_10

"Jien narah supportive, pero' fl-istess hin hafna demanding. Qed jigu hafna istruzzjonijiet x'ghandek tagħmel. Pereżempju ġejjin hafna kwestjonarji fil-qasam primarju fejn jidhol literacy u hekk. Ikollok zieda ta' paper work. Pero' in ġenerali naqbel ma' dak il-kumment."

I think it's supportive, but at the same time it's very demanding. We're getting a lot of instructions about what we should do. For example, in the primary sector we're receiving a lot of questionnaires about literacy and so on. You'd have an increase in paper work. However, in general, I agree with that comment.

Section E: Teachers, Instructors, KAs and LSA's

Theme: Professional Training and Development

Focus: Training needs

Question Q22: (P: 12)

The following question was asked to the College Principals:

Almost 53% of 1141 respondents in the various teaching grades did not agree that their training needs are being adequately addressed within their college.

What do you have to say about this? What are you doing to address this?

One interesting comment/suggestion made by a College Principal is that the training needs of the College should not remain centralised, but should be decentralised to the College. It is the College that knows what its needs are, and Colleges should have funds available to be able to identify their needs and engage trainers that they feel are appropriate for the job of in-service training. Instances have been mentioned of personnel being sent to train College staff but who have limitations in what they could actually offer. The fact that professional training in schools is of not more than 18 hours per year is perceived as hindering the development of teachers. Another aspect mentioned is that the agenda for these 18 hours is mainly identified by the many changes taking place, at the exclusion of what the Principal/CoHs thinks is important, but for which there is no time to develop (e.g. issues of behaviour).

P_1

"At this stage I do not have the financial structure to work this out; it is still centralized."

P_2

"Iktar m'għandek iktar trid u din nifhimha jien.

Jiena personalment fejn nista` inżid it-training inżidu. Pereżempju jiena waqqaft dak li qed insejjahlu [details supplied]... li dan huwa responsabbli minn taħriġ volontarju, għax ma nistax nagħtih b'mod obbligatorju, lis-settur kollu.

Illum b'agreement mal-Union, ždiedu il-Professional Development sessions, għandek l-SDPs...

Kif tispjega mbagħad it-tgħirir kbir li jsir minhabba li jridu joqgħodu għall-PD wara?

Hawn min iġerger għax iridu iżjed training imbagħad iġergru għax qed ikollhom it-training wara nofs in-nhar u fis-sajf ukoll."

The more you have, the more you want and I understand this.

Whenever it is possible for me to increase training, I do so. For example I created, what I call [details supplied]... which is responsible for voluntary

training, because I cannot make this training compulsorily for the whole sector.

Today by agreement with the Union, there has been an increase in Professional Development sessions, there are SDPs ...

Then, how would you explain the resentment because they have to stay for the PD after [school hours]?

There are some who complain because they need more training then they complain because they are having training sessions in the afternoon and in summer as well?

P_3

"Ghandna numru ta' għalliema illi s-sistema stagnathom.

Inti taf li wahda mill-predictors tal-professjonalizmu hi li trid iżżomm ruhek aġġornat... fil-każ tagħna issib li hafna mill-għalliema, dan l-aġġornament professjonali li suppost jagħmlu, ma kienux qegħdin jagħmluh.

Il-kawża ta' din in-nuqqas ta' aġġornament giet minn sistema li għal hafna snin kienet stagnata.

Din naraha across the board.

[Jien kontra] il-mod kif jingħata it-training lill-għalliema.

Jiena nemmen illi l-għalliem jinbidel mhux meta jkollu t-training imma jinbidel meta il-bidla jibda jimplementaha u waqt li jimplementaha ikollu t-tahriġ".

We have a number of teachers who grew idle with the previous system.

As you are aware, one of the predictors of professionalism is to keep yourself up to date... in our case, you would find that many of these teachers who were supposed to do this updating, were not doing so.

The cause of this lack of updating is a system that for years has been stagnant.

I see this across the board.

[I'm against] the way that training is being given to teachers.

I believe that the teacher changes not when he/she undergoes training but when change starts being implemented and while being implemented, training is given.

P_8

The Principal argued that for these initiatives to be successful we need a culture of learning and above all a culture of professional learning. To this end, his/her attention was drawn to this question. The Principal questioned whether teachers would really want this (i.e. more training). He/She said that in the past it was the same MUT which had resisted from providing teachers more than their basic share of training.

The Principal argued that he/she personally had very serious reservations about the current structure of professional development provided to teachers. He/She explained that in total teachers receive approximately 18 hours of learning every year and these were by agreement with the Union. He/She said however that there is a dire need to revise this structure.

The Principal said that since the inception of Colleges, teacher training had improved slightly: not in amount but in the form it was being provided because Colleges have the discretion to organize training in the best ways that fit their needs.

He/She argued that PD sessions may also be organized at College level and hence these sessions can now be more focussed and developed to address the specific needs of the College.

He/She explained how in the case of his College, the Kinder Garten Assistants were invited to attend a three full day seminar before commencement of school in October. In addition, he/she provided examples of other training [details provided].

So, he/she insisted, colleges were doing their part to create a climate for teacher development and training and they were taking effective initiatives.

P_9

The Principal consented that there could be some truth in what was being reported but reminded that because many of the reforms were sequential and therefore had to be implemented within a specific time frame, this meant that most of the training time was taken up to prepare teachers for these changes. This left very little time if at all for college based training which he/she wholly supported and which he/she used to organize. The Principal also said that training time was part of the agreement with the MUT and that this was fixed.

Theme: **Curricular Collaboration and Cooperation (Networking)**

Focus: **Collaboration and cooperation**

Question Q23: (P: 13)

The following question was asked to the College Principals:

80% of teaching personnel (n=1141) feel that there is not enough time allocated for collaboration and cooperation within the college.

This is very disconcerting. How can networking take place if there is no sufficient time? What do you have to say about this?

P_7

The Principal said that teachers naturally always need more time for collaboration and cooperation but then referred to a paradox: on the one hand teachers more want time to be collaborating and cooperating with each other but at the same time many teachers are not ready to stay for more hours than those obliged by their job description. He/She insisted that the degree of cooperation and collaboration depends partly on the amount of initiatives by teachers. He/She also said that there were many occasions where teachers were not only consulted but also had their suggestions implemented. One such case was the NCF where teachers were given ample space and time to cooperate with the authorities in its drafting. Moreover, he/she argued that

sometimes over-unionisation may impede this degree of cooperation and it was at this moment that he/she stated that the MUT should shift more of its energies towards the development of the profession. He/She also argued that it is imperative that teachers must understand better and internalise the reforms more effectively.

Theme: **The SMT**

Focus: **Council of Heads**

Question Q24: (DG: 14, P: 14)

The following question was asked to the Directors General and College Principals:

Almost 93% of teaching personnel (n=1141) feel they, as well as members of the SMT, should be made aware of what is being discussed in the Council of Heads meetings.

*Why is it that what is discussed at these meetings is kept under tabs?
Are there particular reasons for this lack of information?*

There seems to be different perspectives on this issue depending on the College one happens to be in. It is standard practice that the minutes of these meetings are distributed to all Heads of School. It is also standard practice that it is then up to the Head of School to decide what to do with such minutes. The practice in one of the Colleges is to have two debriefing sessions by the Head, one with the teachers and one with the SMTs. The nature of what is discussed depends on the sensitivity of the issues. The Principal of this College also expects the minutes/reactions to these debriefing sessions to be sent to him/her, in such a way as to keep a two way communication open, thus being able to again feedback reactions/ideas to the CoH. In the question following this (question 25) teachers make it a point that they are at the chalk face and they have a democratic right to know what is being discussed with regards to their job as teachers and as teachers within that school. They are of the opinion that it is not a nice feeling to have the impression that some matters discussed are not for their ears, that things are being done behind their back. It is not a nice feeling to be treated like children by these 'adults' who feel they know what is good and right for you.

DG2

"Il-Council of Heads huwa stipulat mill-ligi u huwa forum għall-Kapijiet ta' l-iSkejjel...[il-minuti m'għandhoms jaslu għand il-membri l-oħrajn li mhumix fil-Council of Heads]. Il-minuti jiġu ċċirkulati mal-Kapijiet kollha mbagħad sta għall-Kap tal-iskola [jekk jiformax lill-għalliema]... this is not a council of teachers...this is a Council of Heads!"

The Council of Heads is set by law and is a forum for Heads of School ... [the minutes shall not reach the other members who are not in the Council of Heads]. The minutes are circulated to all Heads and then it is

for the Head of School [whether or not to inform the teachers] ... this is not a council of teachers ... this is a Council of Heads!

P_1

"I disagree that minutes should be distributed to everyone but they are circulated amongst Heads."

P_2

"M'hemmx xejn... mhu veru xejn, li hemm xi sigriet tal-istat li ma nitkellmuhx. Irid ikun verament xi haga li ġiet minn fuq u għadna ma nistgħux noħorġuha għax tkun qegħda tiġi magħġna. Fil-kulleġġi niddisktu fil-Council of Heads biex id-diskussjoni tkun manageable (u tkun iktar inklussiva)."

There is nothing ... it's not true at all that there is some state secret which we do not talk about. It must be really something coming from above and that cannot be leaked because it is still being put together trialled. In colleges we discuss in the Council of Heads simply so that discussion is manageable (so that it is more inclusive).

P_6

"Naqbel mat-teachers imma ma nistax nelimina li jkun hemm affarijiet li ma jistgħux ikunu jafuhom."

I agree with the teachers but I cannot rule out that there are things with which they cannot be acquainted.

P_8

The Principal explained that some issues are too sensitive to be divulged to all the teachers. He/She explained that the Council of Heads worked in such a way that Heads of School received the minutes after the meeting and it was then in their discretion to decide whether to divulge the information to their teachers.

He/She also said that there are two kinds of briefing sessions following the Council of Heads:

One briefing session was organized by the Heads of School to brief teachers. The format and design was chosen by the respective Head.

Another briefing session took place at SMT level whereby the Heads briefed the Assistant Heads.

As a norm, he/she also requested a copy of the minutes of the briefing sessions to keep him/her, as Principal, a' courant with what was happening.

Hence, according to the Principal, the Council of Heads was doing a fine job but like any other board (he/she compared it to the University Senate), it was at its discretion how much information is provided to the teaching staff, depending on confidentiality and sensitivity issues

P_9

The Principal stated that it is his/her practice that the meetings are held in the different schools (by rotation) and minutes are circulated. While he/she consented that it is up

to the respective Head of School to disseminate the minutes and decisions, he/she personally had no problem with that.

Theme: **The Senior Management Team**

Focus: **Council of Heads**

Question Q25: (T: 8)

The following question was asked to the Teaching Grades:

Almost 93% of teaching personnel (n=1141) feel they, as well as members of the SMT, should be made aware of what is being discussed in the Council of Heads meetings.

Why do feel that you should know what is being discussed at these meetings?

T_P_2

"Jekk ħa jkun hemm demokrazija fl-iskejjel u jekk ser ikun hemm parteċipazzjoni sħiħa, it-teachers għandhom ikunu jafu il-Heads x'qed jaħsbu. Jekk il-Heads qed jiddiskutu forsi xi ħaġa li tista' tkun kontra t-teacher stess allura t-teachers għandhom dritt ikunu jafu halli jispjegaw is-sitwazzjoni preżenti."

If there is to be democracy in our schools, and if there's to be total participation, the teachers need to know what the Heads are planning. If the Heads are discussing something, which could affect teachers negatively, the teachers have a right to know so that they can explain their current situation.

T_P_3

"Because it concerns us... I mean we are the ones meeting the students. The school is about students, but who is closer to the students? The teachers are closest to the students! We know what we experience in the classroom!"

T_P_6

"Ifhem, dan qed nitkellmu fuq ir-realtà edukattiva u r-realtà tal-iskejjel tagħna. Jiena qed naħdem f'din ir-realtà, naħseb by right irrid inkun naf x'inhu jiġri fl-iskejjel, I mean, dana xejn sigriet. Jiena ma niħux pjaċir li l-ewwel jiddeċiedu u mbaġħad jimponu fuqna..., ħlief konsultazzjoni kosmetika mhix qed issir. Dawn l-ewwel jiddeċiedu u mbaġħad iġhidulna nimplimentawhom. Hemm bżonn li nkunu nafu ħafna (aktar) affarijiet (li qed iseħħu fil-Council of Heads)"

Here we are talking about educational reality and the reality in our schools. I am working in such a reality and hence I have, by right, to get to know what is going on. Nothing should be that secretive. I do not like

the fact that first they decide and then all their decisions are imposed on us... the consultation that is not being done is only cosmetic. We should be informed more of what is going on (in the Council of Heads).

Theme: **The Directorates**

Focus: **Professional training for curricula implementation**

Question Q26: (DG: 15)

This question was asked to the Director General DQSE

47% of the 1141 respondents in the various teaching grades do not agree that the DQSE is ensuring that the necessary professional training and development for the implementation of the curriculum is taking place, nor is the DQSE providing sufficient guidelines that will ensure a better implementation of education policy and services.

How would you react to this? What is being done to address this need?

DG1

"I would react that we are doing what we can within the parameters of the agreement with the MUT."

Theme: **The Directorates**

Focus: **Supply of professional personnel**

Question Q27: (DG: 16)

This question was asked to the Director General DES:

While about 42% teaching personnel (n=1141) feel that the DES is providing effective professional support (e.g. counsellors, psychologists, social workers) in addressing students' needs, 47% feel that the supply of these professional is inadequate.

How would you react to this? What is being done to address this need?

DG2

"Hadd ma jista` jinnega l-injection qawwiya ta' rizorsi umani, l-investment qawwi li qed jagħmel il-Gvern fis-servizzi tal-appoġġ għall-istudenti. Issa irridu naħdmu biex nġhinu lil dawn il-professjonisti jaħdmu flimkien għax din l-area għadha fluid."

No one can deny the enormous input in human resources, the heavy investment that the Government is dedicating in support services for students.

Now we must work to support these professionals to work together because this area is still fluid.

Theme: **Professional Preparation (Teachers and Instructors only)**

Focus: **Mixed ability teaching**

Question Q28: (DG: 13, P: 15, SMT: 12, T: 9)

The following question was asked to the Directors General, the Senior Management Teams and Teaching Grades:

Of the several reforms, the one which is creating the greatest uncertainty among respondents (n=1366) is mixed ability classes (64%) [Fig 80]. In fact 71% of the 902 teachers/instructors do not agree that they have been properly prepared to teach a mixed ability class [Fig 121].

What are your views on this? What could have been done to address this?

The highlighted issues surrounding mixed ability teaching are many. One important distinction made during the interviews is that between the views of primary schoolteachers and secondary schoolteachers. It is clearly the case that in the primary school, teachers are more used to teaching in a mixed ability setting, particularly in the early years. And although in the past streaming was in place in the late primary years, this was in effect only in large schools. In smaller schools, where one had only one or two classes in a grade, the classes were in practice mixed ability classes.

The situation in secondary schools is different. Teachers reported a large student load in some classes, citing more than 26 in a class. Their claim is that it is difficult to offer a differentiated lesson to such a group in a 40 minute lesson. Teachers seem to be in favour of a particular type of ability grouping which is setting, and cannot reconcile the fact that setting is acceptable in particular subjects and not in others. This in itself is giving the impression that some subjects (i.e. the core subjects) are more important than other subjects, and that the most effective way of teaching is through setting. It seems that mixed messages are being given here. It also seems the case that in previous Area Secondary Schools the classroom population was in general less than that in Junior Lyceums, and individual attention was easier to provide. Teachers pointed out to the compound nature of challenges some students have not only of an academic or a behavioural nature. This would be difficult to deal with in large classes. In general teachers feel that they have been trained to deal with

mixed ability classes but the environment to take such an approach is not ideal, in particular with the pressure made on them to cover the syllabus (with the danger that those who fall back keep on falling back) as well as the amount of material to be covered in a specific time. The 'fear' or reluctance of teaching a mixed ability class stems also from the fact that one cannot expect teachers who for many years taught either an Area Secondary class or a Junior Lyceum class (where there was some degree of homogeneity in ability) to all of a sudden switch to teaching a class with a whole range of abilities. Moreover, the cumulative effect of some students missing out on particular topics manifests itself in the later years of the secondary schooling system. Another concern for teachers is whether there will in reality be movement from one set to the other between successive scholastic years, particularly if different examination papers are set for different sets at the end of the year.

P_1

"This is the biggest concern for teachers but given that they have worked in this setting for more than 3 years they are getting more used to this setting. What really worries me is that the students coming out of the Faculty of Education lack skills for differentiated teaching."

P_10

The Principal was surprised because he/she made the comment that this is in reality old wine in new bottles as differentiated teaching had been going on for decades. The only difference between then and now is the context. He/She argued that today's educational system is based on setting in the secondary schools as the main tool which is facilitated by the benchmark system. Back then it was streaming which had to accommodate the system and not the needs of the child. But even in a streaming system, there were ability variations in the children so teachers were obliged to provide differentiated teaching. So he/she cannot really understand the fuss and the uncertainty being projected by the respondents.

"It worries me to hear someone state that they don't know how to teach a mixed ability class" because he/she reiterated that at University they were always taught about differentiated teaching.

P_2

*"Dawn l-għalliema... fl-Universita' x'għew mghallma?
Dawn mhux hekk għew mghallma l-Universita'... biex jgħallmu mixed ability?
Li qed jġgri hu hekk: meta qed ngħidu "riforma" qed inkun hawn dawn il-bidliet
kollha u allura billi issa qegħdin inċaqalqu l-ilmijiet f'kull livell... se
taffetwahom iżjed!
Li se jkollu issa l-għalliem... se jkollu abiltajiet iżjed wiesgħa x'jgħallem."*

These teachers... where they trained at the University?
Weren't they trained thus at the University... to teach mixed-ability?
This is what is happening: when we say "reform" there are all these changes taking place and therefore because we are bringing about changes at every level, it will affect them even more!

The teacher will now have to teach a wider range of abilities.

P_3

"Meta jien mort inkellimhom għeditilhom illi intom għalliema li suppost ġejtu imharrġa biex tghallmu lil kulhadd... is-sitwazzjoni għabitkom f'sitwazzjoni li din ma tagħmilhiex... issa ġejtu f'sitwazzjoni fejn ha jkollkom ir-range kollha tat-tfal... nofs l-għalliema diga' jagħmluha dik il-ħaġa u hafna minnhom kienu jiffunzjonaw.

Bħalma tghallem dak u bħal ma għandu dak, inti kellek l-istess kors, għandek l-istess background... allura inti kapaċi ukoll.

A teacher is always in the state of becoming... jekk teacher mhux kapaċi jitghallem... teacher kif se jikber?

Fuq liema għalliema qegħdin nitkellmu?

Fl-Universita' suppost qegħdin jitharrġu biex jagħmlu range tat-tfal."

When I went to talk to them, I told them that they are teachers who are supposed to have been trained to teach all children... circumstances were such that they did not need not do so... now they the situation requires that they have to teach a whole range of children ... half of the teachers already do this and many of them were effective.

They were trained like these teachers, they attended the same course and had the same background ... therefore they are also able to do this.

A teacher is always in the state of becoming ... if a teacher is not able to learn, how can he/she grow?

Which teachers are we talking about?

At the University, they are supposedly being trained to teach a whole range of children (ability).

P_4

"Skejjel żgħar bħal l-iskola primarja ta'... [name supplied] dejjem kienet mixed ability; l-istess il-primarja ta'... [name supplied] dejjem kienet mixed ability... dawn huma teachers illi bla ma jafu dejjem għalmu mixed ability.

L-ewwel il-klassijiet huma iżgħar... minn 30 hemm average ta' 22-24; number two hemm hafna riżorsi li jistgħu jużaw it-teachers... imma ma nistgħux nippretendu illi se nużaw l-istess sistemi li kont ngħallem bihom 20 sena ilu għax l-affarijiet inbidlu.

Għax jien naf illi biex nilhaq kull student fil-klassi irrid nipprepara iżjed!"

The primary school in... [name supplied], being a small school, has always been a mixed ability school; the same applies for the primary school in... [name supplied] these are teachers who, unknowingly, have always taught mixed ability students.

First of all, classes are smaller... from 30 there are now an average of 22-24 students; secondly, there are many resources that the teachers can use ... but we cannot expect to use the same systems that I used 20 years ago; things have changed.

Because I know that if I want to address the needs of every student in class, I need be more prepared.

P_5

“Jiena naħseb li hawnhekk Malta għandha hafna x’tinvesti... din hija issue tagħna lkoll.

Jien nixtieq li l-Fakulta’ ta’ l-Edukazzjoni taħdem iżjed fuq dan l-aspett fil-pre-service li huma joffru.

Nistenna iżjed kollaborazzjoni bejn il-kulleġġi, Direttorati, Ministeru u l-MUT... għax naħseb illi l-MUT jista’ jkollha rwol attiv f’dan il-qasam billi toffri taħriġ.”

I think that here Malta has much to invest ... this is an issue pertaining to all of us

I would like the Faculty of Education to work more on this aspect in the pre-service they offer.

I expect more collaboration between colleges, Directorates, the Ministry and the MUT... because I think that the MUT can play an active role in this field by offering training.

P_6

“Hawnhekk trid tagħmel distinzjoni bejn il-primarja u s-sekondarja.

Fis-sekondarja mhux faċli tintegrahom.

[Ridna hafna u hafna preparazzjoni... dawn ma jsirux mil-lum għall-għada]

Ma tagħmilx sew li tagħmel setting biss fl-Ingliż u fis-somom għax allura fejn hi il-varjeta’? ... jekk trid tagħmel setting aghmlu f’kollox.

Is-setting huwa forma oħra ta’ streaming; forsi tikka aħjar. Jekk inti se tissettja il-benchmark, mela il-benchmark se jsir eżami u mhux benchmark.”

Here, one must make a distinction between primary and secondary schools.

It is not easy in secondary schools.

[We needed a lot of preparation ... these could not be done overnight]

It is not right to use setting only for English and Mathematics because if so, where is variety? If you want to use setting, this should be done in all subjects.

Setting is another form of streaming; perhaps a bit better. If you are setting a benchmark, then the benchmark becomes an exam and not a benchmark.

P_7

The Principal argued that this reform was mostly difficult for the JL teachers but he/she insisted that all other teachers have in the past been teaching diversity for many years. He/She admitted that teachers who were more used to teaching only top-scoring students now have to prepare more material but this is what being professional is all about.

P_9

The Principal asked: *"Why are teachers saying this?"* He/She said that many teachers have been engaged in mixed ability teaching for a long time. This is always the case in schools with one class per year group. He/She explained that after all teachers are expected to get good training about mixed ability classes and differentiated teaching and learning from University. EOs are constantly available to support teachers and help in the follow-up of these children. He/She said that teachers should be prepared and are obliged to keep abreast of the changes in the field of education and should seek help and support whenever they need it. Should one not avail oneself of the help that is available, then it is understandable that one feels pressurised. No wonder he/she said, that such teachers would then be not adaptable to change. However, he/she was certain that these were the minority unlike the findings in this survey.

SMT_P_10

"Jien nemmen li fejn jidhol il-mixed ability teaching, faċli tgħidha imma diffiċli biex tipprattikaha. Iktar kemm ikollok skejjel kbar, klassijiet kbar, diffiċli biex tgħallim il-mixed ability classes. Diffiċli. Tinsiex li kull persuna jkollu l-istorja tiegħu... Irid iktar preparazzjoni min-naħa tal-għalliema u iktar training mill-mod kif għandu jsir. Mhux just għamilna mixed ability classes, tfajthom kollha ma' xulxin (i.e it-tfal) u tippretendi li kollha ha jitgħallmu l-istess. No way. Kulhadd jitgħallim bl-abilita' tiegħu.

X'seta sar aħjar?

Li t-teachers ikollhom aktar support... iktar training speċifiku kemm għat-teachers kif ukoll l-LSA's biex jgħollu iktar il-livell tal-edukazzjoni (i.e tat-taħriġ) tagħhom."

I believe that when it comes to mixed ability teaching, it is easier said than done---. The larger schools become, with large classes, the more difficult it is to teach mixed ability classes. It's difficult. Don't forget that every person has his or her own story... There has to be more preparation on the teacher's part and more training for it. We just introduced mixed ability classes, we lumped children together and expect them to learn in the same way. No way. Everyone learns according to their ability.

What could have been done better?

Teachers should have more support... more specific training for teachers as well as LSA to improve their level of training.

SMT_P_4

"Hemm sezzjoni ta' għalliema li forsi ma kinux ppreparati. L-għalliema tal-primarja ż-żgħar huma diġa' mdorrijin jgħallmu hekk... Naf li kellhom xi korsijiet, ġew ippreparati. Jista' jkun li għalihom ma kienx biżżejjed... Aħna fl-iskola mdorrijin biha hekk. Li forsi tgħin li fil-klassijiet ma jkunx hemm ammonti kbar (ta' tfal). Li jidhirli li m'għandux ikun hemm numru ta' 30 fil-

klassi. Barra mixed ability, qed ikollna s-sitwazzjoni tal-familji, fejn il-familji tbiddlu. Fejn it-tfal għandhom bżonnijiet oħra, differenti. Apparti tat-tagħlim għandhom bżonnijiet oħra li ma jistgħux jiffukaw fuq it-tagħlim qabel ma jissodisfaw dawn il-bżonnijiet. Għaliex gejjin minn strutturi ta' familji differenti."

Some teachers, perhaps, haven't been prepared for mixed ability classes. Teachers who teach in a small primary school are used to it... I believe they had some courses, so they were prepared. It could be, however, that it wasn't enough... We're used to it. What would definitely help is smaller classes. I feel that a class should not be of 30 children. Besides mixed ability, we're also facing the situation of how families have changed. We have children who have other (basic) needs that are not being met. Thus, these needs have to be met before actually focusing on learning. They come from various family structures.

SMT_P_7

"Ma ġewx preparati verissimu. Riedu jsiru iżjed courses fuq mixed ability teaching għat-teachers, matul is-sena u idealment u jkollna ġurnata kull term fejn it-tfal ma jiġux skola u ġurnata kull term it-teachers jiġu ttrejnati. A whole day per 3 months. L-ewwel ġurnata ta' kull term, bħall-private schools hekk jagħmlu hawn Malta."

I don't think they were prepared. There should have been more courses on mixed ability teaching for teachers, throughout the year. Ideally we would have a day each term, without students, where teachers would be trained. A whole day for a period of 3 months. The first day of every new term, as they do in private schools.

SMT_S_1

"Il-klassi dejjem kienet a mixed ability class. F'kull klassi dejjem kellna (mixed abilities)..."

Jien nemmen li ċertu teachers iridu jneħħu minn moħħhom li huma tajbin skont kemm jgħaddulhom tfal mill-eżami. U dik mhix faċli għax hija ingrained fis-sistema tagħna. U t-tieni, aħna bħala teachers maħniex qegħdin hemm biex intuhom biss l-akkademika, qed intuhom ħafna affarijiet oħra. Issa kemm inti kapaċi taħdem biex ittihom l-affarijiet l-oħra?"

Il-mixed ability classes huma daqshekk tal-biża? Ma naħsibx. Naħseb hija l-idea tal-bidla li hija tal-biża'... Ma naħsibx li t-teachers mhumix ippreparati. Aktar naħseb li ħafna teachers qegħdin f'sistema li għoġbithom l-istatus quo u qed jibzgu xi ftit mill-istatus quo (bidla)."

It-teachers huma kapaċi, nemmen fis-sistema edukattiva Maltija u naf li jekk it-teachers jiddeċiedu li it has to be a success, it will be a success."

We always had mixed ability classes... We need to change the mentality. The number of students who pass an exam does not determine how good a teacher you are. It's not easy to change this mentality, because

it's ingrained in our system. Another thing, we have to keep in mind is that as teachers we're not there to just equip them academically.

It's not mixed ability classes which are actually leading to panic amongst teachers. It's the idea of change that is feared in general... I think teachers are generally speaking prepared. I think a lot of teachers favour the status quo and therefore view change suspiciously.

I believe that teachers are capable of handling this reform and I believe in the Maltese Educational System. I also know that if teachers decide it'll be a success, then it will be a success.

SMT_S_2

"Kull teacher suppost ikun kapaci jgħalliem lil kulhadd. It's difficult, it's demanding imma it's available. Li t-teachers ma jkunux ippreparati naħseb jiena qed inkunu naqra ingusti. L-Universita', issa jiena gradwajt fl-1994, dak iż-żmien ukoll kienu jippridkawlna fuq il-mixed ability. Aħseb u ara lllum. It's harder to teach a mixed ability class. Jiġifieri r-reframing aħna rridu nagħmluh. Il-kollegi jgħiduli li d-dipartiment (i.e. id-Direttorat) ma ppreparaniex, imma d-dipartiment mhux ser jippreparana. Id-dipartiment għandu t-teachers. Li aħna għaddejna minn snin ta' Universita' li ppreparawna. Jien naħseb li t-teachers ha jsibuha diffiċli jirrifremjaw it-thinking tagħhom.

Minhabba r-riformi kbar li qed ikollna, m'għandniex cans nittekljaw dawn l-affarijiet li huma iżjed importanti. Għax jew ser noqgħod ninvesti l-hin tiegħi nipprepara s-syllabus jew ha ninvesti l-hin tiegħi nipprepara l-lezzjoni. Jiena kieku r-riformi ma ġewx hekk kollha f'daqqa waħda, ngħidlek jien li l-mixed ability kienet tidhol iktar komda. U haġa oħra, n-numru tal-klassijiet huma kbar. Dik mhijex faċli. Jkollok 25 go klassi mhijiex faċli b'mixed ability. Li nibqgħu naħdmu b'25 mhijiex komda. 15, 16 hemmhekk it's reachable. 25 b'mixed ability ma tagħmilix. Ma tistax tipprepara lezzjoni l-hin kollu qisek qiegħda teaching practice lanqas. Inkella s-syllabus irid jitqassam. Mhux nibqgħu b'kontenut daqs dinja u nibqgħu b'mixed ability. Aħna x'inhu (importanti) li nagħmlu l-kontenut, jew li t-tfal jifhemu?"

Each and every teacher should be capable of teaching everyone – all abilities. It's difficult, it's demanding but it's possible. I think teachers are being unfair when they say that they're not prepared (for mixed ability teaching). I graduated from University in 1994 and I remember that they used to emphasize mixed ability teaching. It's harder to teach a mixed ability class. There has to be a change in perception. The department (i.e. the Directorate) is not going to prepare us. The department recruits teachers who've been trained to teach all abilities. Teachers need to change their frame of mind.

Because of all the changes that are going on we do not have time to tackle the most important issues. It's either investing my time preparing a syllabus or preparing a lesson. Had all these changes been at a calmer pace, the introduction of mixed ability teaching would have been easier. Another issue is large classes. Teaching classes of 25 mixed ability children is not easy. 15 and 16 children would be reachable,

manageable. You can't constantly prepare a lesson as if you're undergoing a teaching practice. Or, the content of the syllabus needs to be reduced. We can't expect teachers to teach a never ending syllabus in a mixed ability classes. What is more important to us? To cover the content or that our children actually understand the content?

SMT_S_3

"It needs training. Għax inti jinsew... orrajt mixed ability class u tlesti x-xogħol differenti. S'hemmhekk tidher tajjeb. Imma inti trid tqis li ser ikollok daww l-istudenti li huma disruptive. Inti daww li ser jagħmlulek ix-xogħol diffiċli. Li tagħmlilhom x'tagħmlilhom ma jridux joqgħodu, u ma jridux jisimgħu. Lanqas jekk tagħmillhom ix-xogħol għal-livell tagħhom. Sakemm ikollok tfal li jridu jitgħallmu imma huma ta' low ability imbagħad għandek higher ability... Hemmhekk ser tlestilhom ix-xogħlijiet differenti u joqgħodu u ddur magħhom. Sakemm kollox miexi hekk. Imma they don't take into account li hemm disruptive students."

It needs training. They tend to forget that... Ok we have a mixed ability class and you prepare different levels. So far it looks doable. But you need to consider that they have disruptive students. And they're the ones who actually make your life difficult. Whatever you come up with, they don't want to learn. Not even if you grade the work according to their level. If you have students who want to learn but they're low ability students, that's fine. You prepare different levels of the same work and you can keep a close eye on them. However, they don't take into account that there are disruptive students.

T_S_10

"Jiena s'issa din tal-mixed ability u d-differentiated teaching, they are just words. Għadu hadd qatt ma gie xi hadd jgħidilna, "Isma s-sistema taħdem hekk, hekk u hekk." Jiena mdorrija naħdem ma' tfal b'mixed abilities, għal fatt li ngħalliem optional subject. Bi ftit tfal nista' nlaħhaq magħhom, imma jekk ikollok 30 fil-klassi hija haġa oħra..."

Kellna one day meeting fis-centre, mal-EO. L-ewwel li qalilna, "No student is to be ignored!" Imma mbagħad it turned out li kif inhu mfassal s-syllabus u kif inhuma mfasslin il-lessons u hekk, ma tistax tieqaf. Jigifieri jekk inti wasalt, suppost qiegħda unit 6, jekk tifel għadu f'unit 4, inti ma tistax tistennih jew tgħinu biex jigi level inti trid tkompli."

Mixed ability and differentiated teaching are just fancy words to me. No one has come over as yet and told us, "Look the system is going to work in the following way." I'm used to working with kids with mixed abilities, because my subject has always been taken as an option. As long as you have a small class, it's doable, but a class of 30, that's another story!

We had a one day meeting at the centre with the EO. First thing he told us, "No student is to be ignored!" However it turns out that the way the

syllabus and the lessons are planned, you just can't stop and wait for them [the students]. For example if the teacher got to Unit 6, and one of the students is still at Unit 4, the teacher can't wait for him or help him to get to the same level, you need to go on.

T_S_11

"Żgur kellhom isiru xi tip ta' courses jew PD sessions illi jgħinuk għal certu conditions li ser tiltaqa' magħhom fil-klassi u kif tista' tapproċċjhom. Dik hija l-iżjed haġa bażika li setgħet issir. Seta' jkun hemm xi konsultazzjoni mill-Universita' ta' Malta biex it-teachers li hergin minn issa, at least isiru credits li jinfurmahom biżżejjed fuq is-sitwazzjonijiet li ser jiltaqgħu magħhom biex tal-anqas tolqot lil daww li hergin issa."

There definitely should have been some kind of courses of PD sessions to help us deal with certain situations which we're going to face in class. This is the most basic thing that could have been done. There could have been some kind of consultation with the University of Malta so that the new generation of teachers would have some credits to inform them about the situation that they will face so that at least you we new graduates who are prepared.

T_S_2

"Haġa oħra, qed jiġu ċertu teachers redundant mill-iskola għax il-load qed tiżdied, naf li hemm ċertu regoli fuq suppost kemm ikollok load. Pereżempju aħna giet waħda redundant u 99% is-sena d-dieħla jkun hemm oħra redundant għax dis-sena daħlu tlett klassijiet biss tat-Taljan, alla jbierek, għax ziedu l-ammont ta'studenti fil-klassi, differentiated learning bi klassi ara x'kontradizzjoni... differentiated (teaching) bi klassi ta' xi 26, 27. Kif jista' jkun? Taparsi qed naħsbu fiż-żgħir, fejn?"

For example, a lot of teachers are becoming redundant, because the load is increasing in our school. I'm aware that there are certain guideline regarding the load. For example, this year another teacher became redundant and 99%, next year there will be another teacher redundant, because this year we only got 3 classes of Italian, precisely because they have increased the amount of students in each class... it's a contradiction... differentiated teaching in a class of 26 or 27 students. How is that possible? Supposedly we're thinking of the weaker students. How is that actually happening?

Concluding Questions

Theme: Positive and Negative Aspects.

Question Q29: (DG: 17, P: 16, SMT: 13, T: 10)

The following question was asked to the Directors Generals, the College Principals, the Senior Management Teams and the Teaching Grades:

Any final comment you wish to make?

The following are some general comments some of the participants made. In a nutshell the comments deal with the difficulties in switching from a streamed system to one that is mixed ability, at least in those subjects where there is no setting, the burden of changing lesson plans, notes etc. very often to very quick changes in policy and practices, the need for resources such as money to buy reading books, that colleges are treated in similar manners, the problem of difficult children (including children with behaviour problems), the size of the schools (the larger the schools, the more problematic they are becoming to handle), the need for LSAs to have their 'core' subjects at secondary level, the need for smaller classes as well as the felt need by teachers to be treated with respect by their superiors, rather than in a patronising manner.

SMT_P_2

"It-teachers qed nifhimhom u nagħdirhom. Mhux dejjem huwa possibli, illi meta għandek teacher mara li hija omm – anke' l-irġiel għandhom l-impenji tagħhom – kemm huwa possibbli li jkollok id-differentiated teaching. Tista' tgħid ha nagħmel exercise għat-tajbin u ieħor għal-batuti u tibbildja sena wara sena. Pero' hija diffiċli hafna. Illum il-ġurnata l-NQTs (i.e. newly qualified teachers) qed jiġu mharrġa għalhekk. Pero' qed idumu hafna fil-preparazzjoni. Tibda tgħid dawn għandhom iċ-ċans li jibnu naqra naqra. Dejjem jekk iħalluhom mal-istess year. Dik ha tħarbat... darba jien bdiltha u biex issettjat domt tlett snin... Ridt tlett snin anke' biex addattajt għall-mentalita' tagħhom... Hafna pressure fuq l-għalliema u ta' detriment għat-tfal."

I understand teachers completely. Differentiated teaching is not always possible, especially if besides being a teacher you're also a mother. Men have their familial responsibilities too, however it's mostly women who carry the family burden. It's very difficult. Most newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are being trained in preparing lessons for differentiated teaching, however at a cost. They spend a lot of time on preparation. At least NQT's have a chance of building material slowly slowly. As long as they keep on teaching the same year group. If they change that as well, it will just disrupt everyone ... I once changed year group and it took me three years to completely adapt to a new year group, including their mentality... At the end of the day a lot of pressure on teachers is detrimental on our students.

SMT_P_5

"Sfortunatament fadalli 19-il-sena biex nirtira. Igri jgħaddu. And that is saying a lot. Jien nagħmel mill-aħjar li nista' u mhemmx x'tagħmel. Tgħaddi mal-oħrajn. Having said that I love my job. But I never expected it to be this tough. I never expected this amount of pressure to affect my rosy view of headship. Which has drastically and dramatically changed from when I first became a Head of School. And it is upsetting. I would have thought it to be a better situation, especially since I'm a person who loves my job. But reality is what it is and it is unfortunate that I have to be thus jaded in only 5 years of headship."

Unfortunately I have 19 years of teaching left before I retire. I can't wait for those 19 years to be over. And that is saying a lot. I do the best I can. Having said that I love my job. But I never expected it to be this tough. I never expected this amount of pressure to affect my rosy view of headship. Which has drastically and dramatically changed from when I first became a Head of School. And it is upsetting. I would have thought it to be a better situation, especially since I'm a person who loves my job. But reality is what it is and it is unfortunate that I have to be thus jaded in only 5 years of headship.

SMT_P_7

"Li jagħmlu pjan biex ituna flus għall-kotba tal-qari. Għandna bżonnha iktar mill-ikel u mill-ilma li nixorbu. Inutli tkun waħda mill-aims tal-gvern tal-2015, waħda mit-targets lit t-fal ikunu jafu jaqraw u mbagħad m'għandniex kotba tal-qari. What's the point?"

I would like them to have a plan so we could get money in order to buy reading books. We need them badly. One of the aims of the government for 2015 is that our children improve their reading skills. How can we improve that without books? What's the point?

SMT_P_8

"Min ha training ta' Instructor u min ha training l-Universita', x'kienu jgħallmuna aħna? Li npoġġu bil-qiegħda u ngħallmu lil kulhadd l-istess? They are very much mistaken ta'! Hawn xi hadd li jitgħallem bl-istess mod? Mela aħna qegħdin ngħallmu r-robots? Let's admit that the teachers were not kept on their marks li jaħdmu hafna. Kienu jaħdmu ftit. Issa bdew iġegħluhom jaħdmu hafna and they don't like it. Jien l-aħħar staff meeting għidtilhom li wasal iż-żmien li min mhux lest li jilhaq dawn l-istandards, imur isib job iehor. You can't have the cake and eat it!... Jekk jiena nieħu l-paga u ma nagħmel xejn kulhadd toghgħbu ta!... Tigix tghidli ta' li tmur id-dar fis-sagħtejn u nofs u lesti ta' l-gurnata tagħna, għax iġhidulek jien għandi l-mara, r-raġel u t-tfal! I'm sorry you have the job mhux il-mara, ir-raġel u t-tfal! X'affarijiet dawn. Mela flus il-poplu hekk narmu hom aħna!"

What was the training at University all about then? Was it about sitting down and teaching a class of children in a uniform manner? They're

very much mistaken, if that is the case! Does anyone learn in the same way? We're not teaching robots, you know. Let's admit that the teachers were not kept on their marks. They were not used to working a lot. They were doing the bare minimum. Now they need to roll up their sleeves and they don't like it. In my last staff meeting I told them that it's about time, that those teachers who are not ready in reaching certain standards, should be looking for another job. You can't have the cake and eat it!... Everyone would be happy sitting pretty and getting paid for it!... We finish at 2.30. What do they expect to go home and carry on with their personal business? I'm sorry but you have a job to attend to before having a husband/wife and kids. Unbelievable! We tend to forget that we're paid through the people's taxes!

SMT_S_1

"Li ma jkunx hemm kulleġg ittimbrat aħjar mill-ieħor. Ma jkunx hemm fl-aħħar tas-sena li minn dak il-kulleġg għaddew daqshekk, minn dak daqshekk u mill-ieħor daqshekk. Nixtieq li bħala kulleġgi jiġu trattati ndaqs".

That no college will be labelled negatively. There should be no comparisons between colleges as to the amount of students who pass a particular exam. I would like to see each and every college treated in the same manner.

SMT_S_3

"Jaffaċċjaw ir-realta'. Għax din anke' meta morna s-seminars, semmejnihielhom u dejjem jaħarbu minnha, din tal-istudents li għandhom challenging behaviour. Qisu hadd ma jrid jaffaċċawha. Jiġu ttrenjati sewwa t-teachers u jammettu li hemm din il-problema."

They need to face reality. We've already mentioned the issue of students with challenging behaviour. It is as if (teachers) want to avoid this. Teachers need to acknowledge this problem, and they have to be trained properly to tackle it.

SMT_S_6

"Żball kbir fejn jagħmlu skejjel kbar! Jiena kelli x-xorti mmur fuq proġett ta'Comenius, f'Vicenza. Qadt nitkellem f'it mal-Assistant Heads u ma kellhomx iżjed minn 150 tifel. The smooth running of a school jiddependi hafna mill-population tagħha. Skejjel ta' 800 mitt ruħ, elf ruħ, allura l-problemi ser tkabbarhom huwx. Inqas kontroll, kemm fuq l-istudenti kif ukoll fuq l-istaff – l-għalliema u l-añċillari. Problema oħra l-iskejjel: m'għandhomx biżżejjed nies biex inaddfu... Dawn huma problemi li they hinder the smooth running of a school għax kolloxx mgħobbi fuq il-Head."

Having big schools is a big mistake. I was lucky enough to go to Vincenza on a Comenius project. I spent some time talking to the Assistant Heads, and they did not have more than 150 boys. The smooth

running of the school depends a lot on the school population. Schools of 800 or 1000 students have bigger problems. There is less control on the students and on the staff – the teachers and the ancillary staff. Another problem is that schools do not have enough people to keep them clean... These problems hinder the smooth running of a school because the Head carries all the responsibility.

SMT_S_7

"Jiena li nara perikoluż at this stage hu li ingħalaqna go torri tal-avorju u kull min qed ilissen xi forma ta' kritika, qed insiru isteriċi, u jattakkaww, u m'ahniex miftuħin biex nisimgħu ideat. U iktar u iktar il-grassroots x'inhuma jgħidu?... u r-review tagħha meta ħa jsir din? Hemm ippjanat li ssir review? Min qed jagħmel evaluation tagħha u jekk hemm bżonn nikkoreġu, ħa nikkoreġu jew m'ahniex ser nikkoreġu?"

The danger I see is that we have closed ourselves in an ivory tower and whoever criticises is in for a hard time; we are not open to hear new ideas. What is the grassroots saying to us? And when is the review coming? Are there plans for a review? Who is doing its evaluation, and if there is a need, we should adjust things as necessary, or are we not going to make adjustments?

LSA/KA_S_2

"L-LSA's fis-secondary... emm... nemmen li jrid ikollhom core subject, għax ma jistax ikun inti tkun expert tas-suġġetti kollha... u jiġu pprovduti bil-kotba u l-handouts... għax kultant tmur għal-lesson u ma tkunx taf x'se jiġri! Naħseb hadd m'hu ġenju biex ikun expert fis-suġġetti kollha, speċjalment jekk ikun xi suġġett li jien qatt ma tgħallimtu."

The LSA's in secondary... hmm, I believe that they should have a core subject, because they can't be experts in all the subjects... and they should be provided with books and handouts, because sometimes you go for a lesson and you don't know what's going to be covered! I think no one is a genius and an expert in all subjects, especially if I have never studied that subject.

T_S_1

"Iva, l-ewwel nett konsultazzjoni cara mal-ghalliema, u lill-ghalliema jitrattawhom bħala professjonisti mhux fejn irridu ngħidulhom li huma professionals u fejn irridu nittrattawhom b'mod mhux professjonali. Mill-banda l-oħra, anki' aħna bħala teachers, nimxu b'mod professjonali, kemm mal-Principal u anki mal-kollegi shabek għax dan ma tistax tippriedka haġa u tagħmel oħra. Li kull sistema tinbidel fiha challenge. U jiena naħseb li l-

għalliema ma jibzghux miċ-challenges basta jkollna t-tools biex nahdmu u l-hin biex inlahhquhom. L-għaġla qatt m'għamlet nies."

Yes, first of all consultation with teachers. Teachers are to be treated as professionals because they are not always treated as such. On the other hand, even us teachers should work in a professional way, with the Principal and colleagues. We can't not do what we preach. Each change is challenging. And I am sure that teachers are not afraid of challenges, as long as we have the necessary tools and the time to do things properly. Too much haste serves for nothing.

T_S_10

"Il-ħaġa li vera ddejjaqni hi kif niġi trattata – bħala għalliema – jew li jiena xi moron just ngħidlek jiena x'tagħmel u għamlu jew li qisni ma ngħix f'dinja. Qisni m'għandiex moħħ biex nahseb u biex niddeċiedi ċertu affarijiet. Meta jiġu jkellmuna they are very insulting and very patronising bil-mod kif ikellmuna".

I can't stand the way I'm being treated – as a teacher – it's as if I'm a moron just doing what I am told as if I do not inhabit the same planet. It's as if I don't have a brain to think with and decide on certain things. When they come to discuss issues, I find them very insulting and very patronising.

T_S_12

"For this reform, to really happen, there has to be small class sizes. For me even 15 is a lot but let's say 20. Form 1's are here and they're 30 in a class, 28 in a class... I feel core subjects are being left out of the main package. There is setting but the classes are still huge... English, Maths and Maltese we have full classes of 26. There are some classes with less students, but it's because they have behavioural problems. They did nothing in the reform to address the core subjects having smaller classes. Core subjects have been put on the sideline."

Comments and Criticism of the Research Study

Some comments were made (not by the SMTs and teaching grade personnel), about the validity and reliability of the present research. The comments were very similar in nature, and are reproduced below. The issues that irked these interviewees included the number of respondents to the questionnaire (28% of the whole

population), the methodology used in the research, its validity and reliability, the fact that more than one person could have answered the questionnaire (i.e. multiple replies), and anyone (even those outside the profession could do so), the lack of control on who was answering the questionnaire, it being an online questionnaire, the way some of the questions were set, with some questions set in a 'negative manner', that the research was not 'neutral', the fact that the sample does not represent all the teachers in Malta ("approx 10,000") [the research only focused on the various grades within the State school sector and the whole population was targeted] and the possibility of a 'hidden agenda'. All of these issues are discussed in the methodology chapter and in the concluding remarks to this report.

DG2

"Irrid nikkumenta illi kienu 29% biss illi irrispondew u jiena kurjuża biex inkun naf il-bqija tal-ghalliema x'jahsbu u ghaliex ma hassewx il-bżonn illi jirrispondu dan il-kwestjonarju. Jiena għandi mistoqsijiet serjissimi dwar il-metidologija illi ntuzat f'din ir-riċerka."

I must remark that only 29% responded and I am curious to know what the rest of the teachers think and why they did not feel the need to answer to this questionnaire.

I have very serious questions about the methodology of this research.

P_10

The Principal had some reservations about the methodology employed specifically about the fact that the survey could have been answered more than once by the same person.

He/She augured l that the survey is used to generate constructive debate rather than be used as a tool to attack someone or damage the processes going on

He/She pointed out that many of the questions were put negatively and inevitably would make someone replying them feel that the questions were not being presented fairly

P_2

"Nibda ninkwieta mill-bidu meta nixtieq nagħmilha cara li jien għandi ċerti misgivings, għandi ċertu inkwriet meta kont qed nara dawn il-questions... meta bdejt nara il-percentages u n-number of respondents... u bdejt insaqsi: ir-respondents veru nafu min huma? Għax meta tara kif sar il-kwestjonarju, kien hemm kontroll fuq min kienu?... allura ir-risposti illi se nagħti huma kollha ibbażati fuq dubbji kbar."

Jiena nieħu pjaċir li jkun hemm organizzazzjoni li tiegħu l-inizzjattiva u tagħmel riċerka... imma mbagħad daqstant napprezza ngħid illi l-ebda riċerka mhi newtrali.

However għandi dubbji serji dwar kif tqegħdu ċerti mistoqsijiet."

I am worried, and from the start I want to make it clear that I have certain misgivings, I have certain worries when I see these questions... when I gave a look at the percentages and the number of respondents... I asked myself: but do we know who these respondents truly are? Because when one sees how the questionnaire was carried out, was there any control and on whom? Therefore the answers I will be giving are all based on major doubts.

I am pleased with the fact that there is an organization that takes the initiative to carry out research ... but then I must say that no research is neutral.

However I have serious doubts about how certain questions were worded.

P_3

"Għandna problema bil-metodologija tiegħu, b'din ir-riċerka bil-mod li saret on-line u allura wieħed seta' jirrispondi erba' darbiet u m'għandekx eżatt verifika ta' min qed jagħtik id-data. U ċertu domandi li kien hemm u kif saru, deheru li kienu preġudizzjarji."

We have a problem with its methodology, the way this research was carried out, it was done on-line, therefore one could have answered four times and there is no verification of who has given you the data. And there are certain questions and the way they were put, they seemed to be prejudicial.

P_5

"Id-data li ngħabret mhix rappreżentattiva daqstant.

Jien naf ben tajjeb li persuna setgħet irrispondiet iżjed minn darba u din tnaqqas il-validita' tar-riċerka li saret."

Data collected is not so representative.

I know very well that a person could have answered more than once and this reduces the validity of the research too.

P_7

"Before commencing the interview, the Principal wished to register his/her personal concern about the accessibility of the questionnaires which, he/she argued, could be accessed by anybody including those who were not in the teaching profession and others unrelated to the scope of the study. He/She also added that he/she was concerned about the fact that anyone could have filled in the questionnaire more than once. In addition, he/she was worried by the fact that the sample does not represent all the teachers in Malta (approx 10,000)."

P_7

"The Principal reiterated his/her concerns about the reliability of the survey. He/She said that the reform is still in its infancy stages and there are still teething problems to be dealt with which are being addressed. However, He/she insisted that no reform is being imposed but that there is a wide consultation process going on."

P_8

Before commencing the interview the Principal wished to register his/her personal concern about the accessibility of the questionnaires which, he/she argued, given they were on-line, could be accessed by anybody including those who were not in the teaching profession and others unrelated to the scope of the study. He/She said that this methodology could have reinforced legitimately the suspicion of a hidden agenda. He/She did not say that this was the case but showed doubt on whether this could be a possibility. Furthermore, he/she argued that given the medium by which the questionnaire had been sent, he/she had serious concerns about both the reliability of the responses and the validity of the results.

P_9

Before commencing the interview the Principal noted that he/she had some concerns about the way this survey was conducted. He/She had doubts about multiple questionnaire fill-ins by the same persons. In addition, he/she questioned the survey's reliability in view of these concerns.

As a final comment, the Principal reiterated his/her concern about the true reliability of this study."

CONCLUSION

The interviews in general corroborated and gave more insight into the way the questions set in the quantitative section of the research were answered. Whereas the quantitative approach gave us a clear indication of the direction of thought of the majority of participants, this approach gave us an insight into the reasons why they answered the way they did.

Clearly the perception of all the participants in this research is very dependant on the place one is in the educational path of the students, on whether one is in the early years of education of a child or in the latter years of secondary schooling. On

whether one is in the classroom or in the area of administration, and on whether one is administering his/her school, or a cluster of schools. The key to understanding such perspectives is communication, as well as personality characteristics such as the ability to listen, emphasize and try to understand those involved in the education process. These are 'virtues' that need development; virtues that include being genuine and authentic, treating people with respect, being humble, having a commitment to grow and in building a community (Bezzina, 2009)). Developing such virtues may, at the end of the day, be more important than knowing how to use an interactive whiteboard. They are also more challenging, and take much more time to develop. At the end of the day, these virtues are the pillars of what is being promoted: distributed leadership as well as the building of educational communities (often referred to as colleges). Community, in itself, denotes the 'common' and the 'unity'. The unity of one particular aim: the wellbeing of school children.

In our opinion the 'communication' that leads to understanding between these various 'communities', that is the Minister and the personnel within the Ministry, the Permanent Committee for Education (PCE), the Education Leaders Council (ELC), the Council of Heads (CoH), the Directorates, the School Councils, the Students Councils, the Faculty of Education, the MUT, parents and various other stakeholders is crucial. Our hope is that these interviews have, in their own way, communicated some of these various thoughts and ideas. It is our hope that they are a means to instigate the conversation further.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

INTRODUCTION

In the forward of the document *For all Children to Succeed* (Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, 2005) Dr Louis Galea, the then Minister of Education, mentions a set of strategic initiatives to secure the proper implementation of the College Reform. Among these he mentions 'periodic evaluation' as a vehicle which monitors the progress along the journey of change and reform. In most ways, the present research can justifiably be conceived as one such 'periodic evaluation', nearly four scholastic years since the full complement of the ten Colleges was established.

It has to be acknowledged that such an evaluation of the on-going reforms and the reform process are essential if we want to gauge the situation so that these can be adjusted as need be, sustained and kept on track. One has to concede that the impact of some of the changes implemented so far still remain to be more properly gauged since these are still at an initial stage. Nevertheless, this should not diminish the value of this and any other researches that have looked into the impact of the College System and the accompanying reforms at different stages of their implementation. While it is good that we should indeed try to learn from our own mistakes and shortcomings and take appropriate actions to rectify these, it would be admirable if we do so in the course of the process of implementation rather than solely at the end of it, when all is said and done. There is too much at stake to adopt a 'wait and see' attitude. We owe it to all those school leaders and to all personnel in the various teaching grade who are at the forefront of these reforms (i.e. those who are at the chalk face) and who are instrumental in the success of these reforms. But most of all we owe it to the present and future generations of schoolchildren about whom all this is about.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The multitude of findings arising from the questionnaire survey show that there are many encouraging aspects which augur well for the success of the College Reform as well as to most of the changes that are being introduced. Of these findings, the most salient show that the majority of respondents are of the opinion that the College System has:

- facilitated increased collaboration and cooperation among schools within a college both in terms of sharing of facilities and resources;
- been instrumental in the introduction of new roles providing increased professional support to children;
- rendered schools more inclusive in the wider sense of the word.

Results also showed that the majority of respondents are in favour to some extent or other of the:

- College System,
- setting,
- benchmarking,
- new forms of assessment,
- school-based self-evaluation
- external reviews.

The majority of SMT participants indicated that their Principal is:

- instrumental in fostering networking and collaboration;
- generally very supportive.

The majority of Teachig Grade participants indicated that:

- the abolition of the Junior Lyceum Entrance Exam effectively has done away with the unnecessary stress and anxiety that Year 6 students used to experience.

It would have been unrealistic to expect that all education personnel in schools should be 100 per cent on-board with all the reforms and changes that are taking place. It seems inevitable that in such undertaking one will always find detractors and outright opponents no matter what. And most often than not, their stance could be justified by a hundred and one 'reasons'. Then again, one may have the overwhelming majority of personnel on-board but they become detracted because of the manner in which reform and change are implemented. It's as if we wholeheartedly agree where we want to go but agreeing how to get there proves a nightmare. That is why those at the helm of these reforms and their implementation must at all times do what needs to be done to secure the support and ownership of those at the chalk face; always of course within certain limits, not least that of reason and sustainability.

While, as pointed out above, some of the findings are truly encouraging others highlight several weakness which should be eye-openers and which can be improved. The most salient amongst these have to do with issues of ownership and implementation. The perception of the majority of respondents with regard to the former is that:

- they have not been adequately informed and consulted about the several reforms that are being introduced;
- their voices are not being heard;
- for the most part they are being led rather than being actively involved in these reforms.

With regard to the implementation process, the majority of respondents are in disagreement that the:

- pace with which the reforms are being implemented is reasonable,
- various reforms are being properly coordinated and implemented.

Another issue was the perceived level of preparedness of respondents, with the majority being in disagreement that:

- they are being properly prepared for the several reforms that are being introduced;
- the training needs of the teaching staff are being adequately addressed within the college, across the colleges, and at a national level;
- they (teachers / instructors) have been properly prepared to teach a mixed ability class and unmotivated pupils.

Not unlike any other workforce, it is essential that for teaching grade personnel and school leaders to give their very best in their work then they must harbour and experience a degree of happiness and satisfaction in their work. Whereas work pressures are inevitable one has to avoid situations where this becomes overwhelming and thereby counter-productive and debilitating. Present findings show that compared to five years ago the majority of respondents are in disagreement that they are now:

- deriving more satisfaction from their work;
- happier in their work.

That is, their experience of the change and innovation that is taking place has not impacted positively on their job happiness and satisfaction. In addition, an overwhelming majority are in agreement that the pressure in their work has increased.

In general the interviews confirmed some of the salient results obtained in the quantitative section of the research as highlighted above. Some teachers feel that initiatives that they used to put a lot of energy in, and which belonged to the school, have now been “hijacked” by the college. They feel that such activities are no longer “their own”, and this has killed their enthusiasm for the organization of such events.

“Iridha hu: mela ha jaghmila hu!”

If he wants it his way then he should do it.

Having said that, most are grateful and feel in general supported by both the SMTs and the College Principals. At this stage of analysis the study did not go in detail in

comparing one college to another, but clearly the 'personality' of the College Principal, his or her personal qualities, make a huge difference on the attitudes of the teachers, as illustrated by comments in regard to the Principal as *"Dak alright!"* or otherwise (it is not prudent to reproduce certain comments here). This kind of dynamics between the teachers and their superiors, and the implications for the success of the College System and the accompanying reforms needs to be further researched.

One of the striking differences between the views of the College Principals and the rest of the research cohort was in their perception of the increase or otherwise of their workload. While the College Principles were startled by this expression, with most asking:

"Xi tfisser il-volum tax-xogħol? F'hiex żdied il-volum tax-xogħol?"

What do you mean by 'workload'? In what ways has this increased?
clearly both SMTs and teachers feel overwhelmed with the amount of paper work they have to do.

In going through the replies, one gets the impression that teachers feel the need for training and retraining (i.e. CPD), and are willing to do so. But they also expect training to be realistic and practical.

"Kulhadd jiġi u jgħidilna li mixed ability teaching rah jaħdem. Imma hadd ma jurina kif!"

Everyone keeps on telling us that mixed ability teaching can work. But no one shows how.

Teachers also feel that there are too many reforms going on at the same time, with always something new cropping up. Although this confirms the dynamic pace in which the reforms in general are taking place, it might be too much of a good thing at the same time. Teachers hardly have time to digest one thing, when something new turns up. This is tiring them out. Some of the items often mentioned include the interactive whiteboard, the new syllabi, mentoring, and the way education leaders are changing assessment practices.

The transcribed sections on mixed ability teaching speak for themselves. There is resistance to this not least because teachers are worried as to how they are going to give 'four' lessons in a 40 min session to a group of 25 or more students. More consultation is necessary with the teachers here, and the issue of setting in the core subjects needs to be clarified. [Many seem confused that the move towards mixed ability teaching is at the same time accompanied by the introducing of setting which produces classes on the basis of ability in a curriculum subject (Ireson and Harlam, 2001).] Teachers are still not clear on what justifies setting in three curriculum subjects and not in others; that is, why there is ability grouping in some subjects but not in others. Clarifications on benchmarking are also necessary. For teachers do make the distinction and understand the importance of benchmarking, but then find it hard to understand how and why this exercise is being also used for the purposes of setting in Form One.

SMTs on their part are inundated with administrative work. They miss their curricular development role, and miss their presence in the classroom, comparing themselves more to glorified clerks than anything else. Teachers also feel that they are entitled to more information of what is discussed at the Council of Heads. As professionals they feel that they should at least be informed of the direction their college is taking, on what is being envisaged and planned, particularly on things that directly influence their day to day duties at school.

From the interviews it also clearly emerged that teachers need to 'talk', to have someone to 'listen' to them. The profession, of its very nature, is a lonely one. This is particularly so at the primary level, with the teacher interacting only with his/her students most of the time. There is not much opportunity for 'adult' talk, time to share the frustrations, difficulties and challenges one is encountering. Clearly, some teachers are 'tired', and support in this regard is becoming an urgent necessity.

One other factor noted through the interviews is the way the personality of those who are promoted to SMTs (and particularly to College Principals) is perceived to change. This has often been highlighted by the comment:

“Mela in sew meta huma kienu fil-klassi?”

Have they have forgotten what it means to be in class?

This is also clear when those in administration address teachers, with most teachers feeling that now they are the ‘students’, being told (at times being told off), by their superiors. The teachers’ general perception is that most often than not those addressing them do not sympathize with their realities – that they are there to tell them what they have to do – to inform them rather than to consult them. There clearly needs to be a rethinking on how the ‘consultation’ process takes place. For example, standing up and being critical in a meeting in front of all the teachers of that College and with many of the educational leaders from the Directorates (including the Directors General) present may not be the most ideal of fora. Some of the comments drew attention to the fact that at the end:

“Ahna min għandhom irridu”.

When it is all said and done I am dependant on them.

Asked what they meant by this, they said that at the end of the day if you apply for a promotion you need the recommendation of the Head of School, and you will find yourself in front of the DGs. So some teachers feel that it is not wise to criticize “their [the Principals/DGs] baby”, particularly in front of others. One gets a great deal of double speak: in private one hears one story, but in public some tend to dance to the tune.

When one compares the comments of the College Principals on the one hand with those of the SMTs and the Teaching Grades on the other one gets the impression that both are living in different worlds. The SMTs are very close and sympathetic with the teachers, and most agree with the findings presented to them.

In general, as researchers, we noted two worrying trends. One of them is an element of fear: the fear to say what one feels like saying. Some teachers appear to be afraid of repercussions, particularly when it comes to interviews for promotions. The Maltese expression: “Biex iwahhluhuli!” [He/She will get back at me!] and its variants featured in the interviews. So rather than complaining, it seems that the strategy employed by some teachers is that of: “I am alone in class” and “I do as I deem fit.” This is worrying indeed, since there is a grave possibility of an undermining of the whole process. The biggest danger we see in this is in the teaching of mixed ability classes. Some of those skeptical of this style of teaching are already clear in their mind of the strategy they intend to use - they will address the average child in class:

“Imbagħad min jifhemm jifhemm, min le paċenzja. M’hemmx x’taġħmel!”

Those children who can understand good for them. Those who do not will have to make do!

The other worrying factor is the loss of faith in the process of consultation; it is as if a sort of learned helplessness has crept in: “Mhux li jridu jgħamlu!” [Isn’t the case they always do whatever they want!]. With such an attitude, teachers do not even bother to participate in such processes because they feel that everything is already decided and whatever they say is futile. One teacher gave the example of the consultation process currently taking place with regards to the NCF (which was launched after the questionnaire survey but before the interviews). Her comment was:

“Issa naraw x’tibdil ha jkun hemm wara din il-konsultazzjoni kollha! Ha naraw jgħorgux xi dokument different. Nagħmillek imħatra! B’istess dokumenti nibqgħu!”

It remains to be seen what the outcome will be after this process of consultation. We still have to see whether a revised document will be published. I bet that we will end up with the same documents!

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Like any other study the present one has its share of limitations. These limitations should be borne in mind to make it less likely that one may assign more meaning to the findings than is due to them. Cohen and Manion (2007), citing Belson (1986), make the point that the validity of a questionnaire survey (like the present one) largely depends on whether the respondents who completed the questionnaire could actually do so accurately, and whether those who did not participate in the survey would have given the same pattern of responses as did the respondents. Given that the present sample is constituted of professionals with a certain level of education and given that the questionnaire was surveying aspects and issues which are immediate and real to them there should be very little reason to question the accuracy of responding. An inspection of the intercorrelations between theoretically valid questions showed that the direction of the relationships is in the expected direction (e.g. the perceived lack of adequate consultation is expected to be negatively correlated with job satisfaction and positively correlated with work pressure). Moreover, the strength of the relationships is very acceptable, figuring around 0.3 . This lends support to the questionnaire's internal validity.

With regard to the non-respondents, as the present survey was entirely anonymous follow-up contacts with any of them was impossible. As pointed out above, however, some of the salient results obtained in the quantitative part of the research were confirmed by the interview comments of SMTs and personnel in the various teaching grades, thereby giving evidence of the questionnaire's external validity.

Many reasons may account for non-responding, including: the length of the questionnaire itself and the time it took to complete it; some respondents may have found the questionnaire taxing to complete (even though it was possible for a respondent to stop at any point of the questionnaire and then continue at a later stage); diffidence in the researchers' assurance that responses will be treated in strictest confidence; an element of defeatism or learned helplessness in that some may have felt that participation was futile (i.e. it will make no difference); those who

for some reason or other have an issue with the MUT; and some simply could not be bothered. In addition to these, in the case of KAs and LSAs, one may argue that many aspects covered by the questionnaire do not impact on them directly and therefore many of them may not have felt the need to express their views and concerns. All of these reasons are plausible but nevertheless speculative. Ultimately, a researcher can never really determine what motivates those who refused to participate unless these non-respondents are willing to divulge this.

While non-response is always problematic in such research one must not lose sight of the fact that the absolute size of the resultant sample was statistically large with 1474 respondents from an entire population of 5139 returning a useable questionnaire. Although this constitutes 29 per cent of the population, this survey tried to assess the entire population of education personnel in state schools. Studies which target entire populations (even similar to the present one) are uncommon. Indeed, most survey research is normally carried out on samples and not on populations. Researchers, after defining their target population, sample it and carry out the survey on the selected sample. In addition, Bryman states that “it is the *absolute* size of a sample that is important not its *relative* size” (ibid., 2004; p. 97) such that a statistically large sample increases the likely precision of the sample. This in itself goes a long way at making the present findings contextually valid and generalizable.

Not unlike other survey research (especially that carried out on a large scale) the chosen mode of delivery was an electronic one. While electronic facilities such as *SurveyGizmo* make it possible for the researchers to record IP addresses, the present researchers, in their wish to create a forum where participants could express their views and concerns in the safety of complete anonymity, did not avail themselves of such ‘tagging’. Consequently, checks to ensure that the same potential respondent did not mischievously complete the questionnaire more than once (what Bryman [2004] refers to as ‘multiple replies’) or that a respondent was indeed a member of the target population were not possible, the present researchers would argue that the

time it took to go through and complete the questionnaire was a deterrent in itself. Actually, unless a potential participant completes the anonymous questionnaire in the presence of the researcher there can be very little guarantee that he/she does not complete a questionnaire several times over, or that someone else (part of the target population or otherwise) has completed the questionnaire. Realistically, however, it must be said that a major problem with survey research is actually to convince potential participants to participate at all (Bryman, 2004), let alone having participants completing the questionnaire several times over. But the possibility of multiple replies and 'bogus' respondents remains nevertheless. However, as pointed out above, one needs to bear in mind the actual length of the questionnaire and the role that this may have had in deterring such 'respondents'. In addition, the size of the present sample is such that it would have rendered the impact of such responding quite inconsequential.

The interview schedule for the Directors General and the College Principals was passed on to them prior to the interviewing session. This was done on their request, the reason being that the Directors General as well as the College Principles wanted to know beforehand what they were going to be interviewed on, in order to be well prepared for the session. It could (and most probably was) the case that some of the interviewees discussed the questions among themselves prior to the interviewing session. This could be one of the explanations why some of the answers given are so similar.

Another limitation of the interviews has to do with the transcriptions. Because of the large number of interviewees, it was humanly impossible to transcribe the whole of the 90 interviews. This means that one had to be selective at two levels, initially at the stage of transcription, followed by the selection of the excerpts to include in this report.

Ultimately, one has always to keep in mind that such research is always subjective in nature, from the kind and type of question one sets, to the analysis and

interpretation of what is said. Objective qualitative (and even quantitative) research simply does not exist. The limitations of the one-to-one interview are the general limitation of qualitative research: its subjectivity and lack of transparency. With regard to the former we, as researchers, have always been careful not to:

“allow our personal values or theoretical inclinations manifestly to sway the conduct of research and findings deriving from it.” (Bryman, 2004; p. 276)

With regard to the latter we have published an extensive list of comments made by those involved (notably those derived from the interviews with the Directors General and the College Principals), clearly indicating that we are not simply picking out one statement that corroborates what the quantitative research indicated, but in being as ‘fair’ and ‘authentic’ as much as possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several aspects which need further investigation, including the following.

- On certain issues there appears to be two predominant realities, on the one hand as expressed by the Directors General and the College Principals and, on the other, as reported by the majority of the survey participants? Why should there be two, sometimes contrasting, views? What are those factors that may be leading to this bi-polar view?
- There is the need for periodic evaluations as to whether the on-going reforms remain on track and the impact that they are having on children and education personnel in schools. Ideally these should be independent and published.
- Studies of a longitudinal nature (prospective as well as retrospective) are also warranted. These, for instance, can investigate the extent of student mobility from one set to another (in a given subject) over the secondary school years. Moreover, one could also explore whether students initially placed in the lower set across the core subjects remain in that set throughout the secondary years.

- While the present study has focussed on the views, opinions and concerns of education personnel in schools as well as the views of the top education leaders, other studies should look into the opinion of students themselves (e.g. on how they are preparing for benchmarking; on their experiences of the transition from primary to secondary school; setting, and being a student in a large secondary school, etc), and those of parents (e.g. on the impact of benchmarking on their children; whether they are in favour of setting and how it is being operated, etc).
- One should look into whether the introduction of the College System and the various reforms is accompanied by some degree of movement or increased interest in Church and Independent schools, and the reasons why.
- It would be interesting to see how children from the State's College System compare on 'success' with their counterparts in Church and Independent schools. Of course, the yardstick as to what we mean by 'success' needs to be clearly defined.

IN CONCLUSION

The present study, unlike the vast majority of the studies that preceded it, did not focus on some or a few particular aspects of the College System or on some of the accompanying reforms. It sought to present as broad a picture of the situation as possible by engaging in the study as many personnel in the various grades ranging from SMTs to LSAs at a first stage. At a second stage, by way of completing the overall picture of how the College System and accompanying reforms are faring, the views and reactions of most of the top educational leaders has been given their due importance.

The researchers are of the opinion that present findings are for the most part very eloquent in getting across the opinions and concerns of the education personnel that are at the chalk face, the very same persons on whom the success of the reforms depends to a large extent. In many ways what needs to be done to address these

concerns and weaknesses is in most instances very clear. What is needed is the courage to acknowledge these concerns and the weaknesses that fuel them and the action to address them.

Improvement in the style and extent of communication and dialogue between the educational leaders and education personnel in schools would certainly be a step in the right direction. Better still, all the stakeholders not only need to have the resolve to dialogue more amongst each other but also to do so in the most effective manner possible. Structures to enhance communication and understanding should be created.

Finally, the journey of change and reform embarked upon must remain on track and ultimately deliver. Frankly, we do not think that our educational system has a choice. These reforms must succeed in their objectives and their success requires that all stakeholders must give their all to make it work. The alternative is imponderable.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Azzopardi, E. (2011) 'An Analysis of Distributed Leadership at Senior Management Team Level in Primary Schools'. Unpublished MSc Dissertation, Faculty of Education, University of Leicester.
- Attard Tonna, M. (2009) 'CPD Practice in Malta - The Role of School Leaders'. In Bezzina, C. (ed.) *Educational Leadership: nurturing meaning in a context of change*. Malta: Print It.
- Balzan, S. (2009) 'Teacher Leadership Through Learning Communities: Effects on Professional Growth through Collaborative Practice'. In Bezzina, C. (ed.) *Educational Leadership: nurturing meaning in a context of change*. Malta: Print It.
- Bezzina, C. and Collaborators (2003) *Educational Leaders in the Making: A Monograph*. Malta: Indigo.
- Bezzina, C. and Cassar, V. (2003) 'Maltese Secondary School Heads in the Making'. *Journal of Maltese Educational Research*, 1(1), pp. 119-141.
- Bezzina, C. (2009) 'A Case for Quality Assurance: an internal and external prerogative for development in Malta'. In Bezzina, C. (ed.) *Educational Leadership: nurturing meaning in a context of change*. Malta: Print It.
- Bonnici, C. and Grima, Y. (2007) 'Effectiveness of Communication between the Head and Teachers in Schools of population under 300 pupils'. Unpublished long essay for P.G. Diploma in Education - Administration and Management), University of Malta.
- Bryman, A. (2004) *Social Research Methods 2nd Edition*. Oxford: University Press.
- Busuttil, C. (2005) 'The pros and cons of school clustering.' Interview with Dr Carmel Borg, Dean of The Faculty of Education'. The Times, July 2005. Malta: Allied Newspapers.
- Cassar, J. (2008) 'Ongoing Professional Development of State Primary Heads of School'. Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, University of Malta
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2007) *Research Methods in Education 6th Edition*. London: Routledge Falmer
- Cutajar, M. (2009) 'An Analysis of inter-school working in State-maintained Colleges in the Maltese Islands'. Unpublished MPhil-PhD transfer seminar paper, Faculty of Education, University of Bath.

- Cutajar, M. (2012) 'An Analysis of inter-school working in State-maintained Colleges in the Maltese Islands'. Unpublished PhD Thesis to be submitted at the Faculty of Education, University of Bath.
- Datnow, A., Hubbard, L., and Melan, H. (2002) *Extending Educational Reform – From one school to many*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- De Marco, G. (2003) *Address by HE Prof Guido de Marco, President of Malta, on the occasion of the opening of the Tenth Parliament on the 24th May*. Malta: Department of Information.
- Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln Y.S. (2003) *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. Great Britain: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2003) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Great Britain: Sage Publications.
- Diener, E. (2009) *The Science of Well-Being: General Reviews and Theories of Subjective Well-being*. Netherlands: Springer.
- Education Act (1988) *The Education Act XXI*. Malta: Department of Information.
- Education Act (2006) *The Education (Amendment) Act 2006*. Malta: Department of Information.
- Eurydice (2010) *The Structure of the European Education Systems 2010/2011: Schematic Diagrams*. Brussels: European Commission.
- Farrugia, C.J. (1992) 'Autonomy and control in the Maltese Educational system.' *International Review of Education*, 38(2), pp. 155-171.
- Fellows, R. and Liu, A. (2008) *Research Methods for Construction*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Fenech, J. (1994) 'Education Policy and School Autonomy'. In Farrugia, C. (ed.) *A New Vision For Primary Schools*. Malta: MUT Peresso Press
- Fullan, M. (2004) *Leadership and Sustainability*. California: Corwin Press.
- Fullan, M. (2007) *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. New York: Routledge.
- Fullan, M. (2008) *Leading in a Culture of Change*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Galea, L. (2006) 'Educational System adapted to student's needs'. *The Malta Independent*, September. Malta: Standard Publications.
- Giordmaina, J. (ed.) (2000) *Proceedings: National Curriculum on its Way*. Malta:

Ministry of Education, Education Division, Faculty of Education, and the University of Malta.

Groat, L. and Wang, D. (2002) *Architectural Research Methods*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Hall, V. (1999) 'Partnerships, Alliances and Competition: Defining the Field'. In Lumby, J. and Foskett, N. (eds) *Managing External Relations in Schools and Colleges*. London: SAGE

Hopkins, D. (2000) 'Schooling for Tomorrow Innovation and Networks', OECD/CERI Seminar, Lisbon, 14th – 15th September.

Ireson, J. and Hallam, S. (2001) *Ability Grouping in Education*. London: Paul Chapman, Sage.

Mallia, M. (2009) 'Moving Towards Reciprocity to Ensure Community: A study of the Present Situation at St Benedict College and a Proposal for the way forward.' In Bezzina, C. (ed.) *Educational Leadership: nurturing meaning in a context of change*. Malta: Print It.

Malta Union of Teachers Council (2005) 'MUT's Preliminary Views and Comments on Ministerial Document'. *The Teacher* (89), pp. 6-8. Valletta: Malta Union of Teachers.

Marris, P. (1975). *Loss and Change*. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday.

Mifsud, I. and Grech A. (2008) 'The Changing Role of the Head Teacher – Impact of the College Principal on Head Teachers in Leading Secondary Schools in Malta'. Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, Faculty of Education, University of Malta

Ministry of Education (1998) *New National Curriculum: Draft Copy*. Malta: Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education (1999) *Creating the Future Together, National Minimum Curriculum*. Malta: Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education (2001) *Strategic Plan: National Minimum Curriculum on its Way*. Malta: Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (2005) *For all Children to Succeed: a New Network Organisation for Quality Education in Malta*. Malta: Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment.

- Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (2007) *Agreement Between the Government and the Malta Union of Teachers*. Malta: Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment.
- Montebello, M. (2008) 'A Feminist Perspective of Leadership in a Network Organisation for Quality Education in Malta'. Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, Faculty of Education, University of Malta.
- Pace, M. (2008) 'Becoming a College: Leadership Challenges from a Junior Lyceum Perspective'. Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, Faculty of Education, University of Malta.
- Ritchie, J., and Lewis, J. (2003) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide For Social Science Students And Researchers*. Great Britain: Sage Publications.
- Robson, C. (2006) *Real World Research 2nd Edition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Spiteri, A. (2007) 'The Impact of Learning Networks on Educational Leadership'. Unpublished MSc dissertation, Faculty of Education, University of Leicester.
- Spiteri, A. (2009) 'Been there, Seen it, Living it: A Five-Year Eye-Witness Account of the Genesis and Development of the New College-Based Maltese Compulsory Education Reform'. In Bezzina, C. (ed.) *Educational Leadership: nurturing meaning in a context of change*. Malta: Print It.
- Spiteri, C. (2006) 'Gozo College: a caring, learner-centred institution'. Interview with Chev. Frank Gatt, Gozo College Pilot Project co-ordinator. The Sunday Times, Malta: Allied Newspapers.
- Spiteri, S. (2009) 'Maltese Secondary School Managers' Perceptions and Practice of Parental Involvement in Curriculum Enrichment'. Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation, Faculty of Education, University of Malta.
- Stoll, L. and Fink, D., (2003) *Changing our Schools*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Sultana, R.G. and Contributors (1997) *Inside/Outside Schools: Towards a Critical Sociology of Education in Malta*. Malta: PEG.
- Tableman, B. et al. (2004) 'Best Practice Briefs (No 31: School Climate and Learning)'. University-Community Partnerships, Michigan State University. Michigan: MSU Outreach and Engagement.
- The Times (2006) 'Education Reforms – Opposition calls for change to focus on classrooms'. Parliamentary Repor 14. Malta: Allied Newspapers.
- Tuckman, B.W. (1972) *Conducting Educational Research*. USA: Harcourt Brace.

Wain, K. (1991) *The National Minimum Curriculum: A Critical Evaluation*. Malta: Mireva.

Wain, K. et al. (1995) *Tomorrow's schools: developing effective learning cultures*. Malta: Ministry of Education and Human Resources.

Wengraf, T. (2001) *Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Great Britain: Sage Publications

Wolcott H.F. (2001) *Writing Up Qualitative Research 2nd Edition*. Great Britain: Sage Publications.

Zammit Ciantar, J. (ed) (1993) *Education in Malta (a handbook)*. Malta: Salesian Press.

Zammit Ciantar, J. (ed) (1996) *Education in Malta (a handbook)*. Malta: Salesian Press.

Zammit Mangion, J. (1992) *Education in Malta*. Malta: MANSPRINT.

**THE COLLEGE SYSTEM IN THE STATE SCHOOL SECTOR:
A STUDY OF ITS IMPACT AS PERCEIVED BY COLLEGE PRINCIPALS,
MEMBERS OF SCHOOL SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS, AND
PERSONNEL IN THE VARIOUS TEACHING GRADES**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT COMMISSIONED BY THE
MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS**

FINAL REPORT

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX B: CHARTS IN NUMERICAL ORDER FOR EASY REFERENCE

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX A

THE QUESTIONNAIRE¹⁶

Introduction

THE COLLEGE SYSTEM IN THE STATE SCHOOL SECTOR: A STUDY OF ITS IMPACT AS PERCEIVED BY COLLEGE PRINCIPALS, MEMBERS OF SCHOOL SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS, AND PERSONNEL IN THE VARIOUS TEACHING GRADES

Dear Colleague

This questionnaire survey is part of a research project investigating the perceived impact of the College System and accompanying reforms in the state school sector commissioned by the Malta Union of Teachers. All members of the school management teams and personnel in all teaching grades (MUT members or otherwise) are being invited to participate. This survey follows a series of focus groups with representatives of all the grades in the primary and secondary sector. The results of the survey will in turn feed back into about 90 face-to-face interviews with representatives of the various grades.

This questionnaire is entirely voluntary and anonymous. You have no obligations whatsoever to participate. All responses will be treated in strictest confidence and no one other than us will be privy to participants' responses. No IP addresses, cookies or any other means of electronic identification will be collected. Once the questionnaire is completed your responses will be automatically delivered directly to the research team. Your rights as required by the Data Protection Act are protected in their entirety.

This is not a short questionnaire. In fact it will take you between 30 and 45 minutes to complete properly. The aspects that the questionnaire is evaluating are several and multi-facted and all of which are central to our educational system and to us as professionals. In many ways this survey represents a unique opportunity for all

¹⁶ This copy is for demonstrative purposes only; it does not reflect the actual format and presentation of the electronic version of the questionnaire.

colleagues to express their views and concerns in the safety of complete anonymity and in strictest confidence.

If you are unable to complete the questionnaire at one go you may save what have completed at any time by clicking the button at the top 'save and continue survey later'. You can then return to questionnaire when it is more convenient. You can do this 'stopping and saving' several times if you so wish.

The questionnaire is organised in six sections as follows:

Section A: Biographical Information - to be completed by ALL respondents

Section B: The College System - to be completed by ALL respondents

Section C: The Reforms - to be completed by ALL respondents

Section D: SMT - to be completed by members of the SMT

Section E: Teachers, Instructors, KAs & LSAs - to be completed by personnel in the various teaching grades

Section F: Overall Comments - to be completed by ALL respondents

Depending on your grade (which you will enter in Section A) the survey will automatically take you through the appropriate questions. If you have any difficulty accessing or completing the questionnaire do not hesitate to contact us on: mark.borg@um.edu.mt

We urge you to complete this as soon as possible and in any case within the period 6 to 17 June. We cannot emphasise enough how essential it is that we receive your responses. The validity of the research project (and thereby the impact of its findings) depends to a large extent on the participation of every single Head of School, Assistant Head, INCO, Head of Department, Teacher, Instructor, Kindergarten Assistant and Learning Support Assistant. Hence, not only do we strongly urge you to complete the questionnaire but we also encourage you to promote the questionnaire with your immediate colleagues at school (be they MUT members or not). Your views and concerns are essential to the research project; so are theirs.

We commit ourselves to make available to all education personnel a personal copy of a summary of the major findings. More detailed reports will eventually be made public in the coming months.

We appreciate if you would complete this questionnaire by not later than Friday 17th June.

We thank you for finding the time to complete this questionnaire. Your support and cooperation is much appreciated.

Prof Mark G. Borg

Dr Joseph Giordmaina

Section A: Biographical Information

This section will request a number of basic background information. Except for the last question, all questions require an answer. Tick as appropriate.

1.) Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

2.) Age:

☐ Under 31 years ☐ 31 to 40 years ☐ 41 to 50 years ☐ 51 years and over

3.) Experience in education (i.e. teaching and/or administration):

☐ Less than 5 years ☐ 5 to 10 years ☐ 11 to 20 years ☐ 21 to 30 years

☐ Over 30 years

4.) Grade: ☐ Head of School (including Acting)

☐ Assistant Head (including Acting)

☐ INCO

☐ Head of Department

☐ Teacher (including Temporary, Resource, Supply and Retired)

☐ Instructor (including Part-time)

☐ Kindergarten Assistant (including Part-time and Supply)

☐ Learning Support Assistant (including Supply)

5.) Sector: ☐ Kindergarten ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Resource Centre

☐ Other (eg FES, Special Education Section, ICT Dept)

6.) College: ☐ Gozo

☐ Maria Regina

☐ St Benedict

☐ St Clare

☐ St Gorg Preca

☐ St Ignatius

☐ St Margaret

☐ St Nicholas

☐ St Theresa

☐ St Thomas More

☐ Shared between two or more Colleges

☐ None

Section B: The College System

This section consists of a series of statements on various aspects of the College System to which you are kindly requested to indicate your level of agreement/disagreement. Please supply a response to ALL statements.

7.) The colleges should have greater autonomy

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

8.) The College System has resulted in more logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of sharing of FACILITIES (e.g. sharing a hall, sports ground) among schools WITHIN a COLLEGE

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

9.) The College System has facilitated the sharing of good practices in teaching among teachers in a SCHOOL

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

10.) The College System has facilitated the sharing of good practices in teaching among teachers and other teaching personnel ACROSS COLLEGES

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

11.) The College System is serving to reinforce the implementation of the decentralization policy and practices

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

12.) The College System has brought about an increase in bureaucracy

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

13.) The setting up of the College System has deprived schools of their identity (as expressed in terms of e.g. the school uniform, school's name)

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

14.) The College System has been instrumental in increased curricular collaboration and cooperation among schools ACROSS COLLEGES

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

15.) The College System has brought about greater autonomy in terms of decreased central control at a SCHOOL level

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

16.) The College System has been instrumental in increased curricular collaboration and cooperation among teachers and other teaching personnel WITHIN the SCHOOL

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

17.) The College System has given rise to unhealthy competition among schools WITHIN a COLLEGE

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

18.) The College System has placed increased pressure on schools to perform and deliver

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

19.) The College System has been instrumental in fostering a greater readiness among education personnel to GENERATE reforms

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

20.) The College System has brought about greater autonomy in terms of decreased central control at a CLASSROOM level

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

21.) The College System has brought about a positive change in governance (i.e. the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented) at a COLLEGE level

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

22.) The College System has been instrumental in increased curricular collaboration and cooperation among schools WITHIN a COLLEGE

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

23.) The College System has given rise to unhealthy competition AMONG COLLEGES

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

24.) The College System has brought about greater interaction and collaboration with the external community (e.g. local councils and NGOs).

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

25.) The College System has resulted in more logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of the sharing of RESOURCES (e.g. sharing exam papers, books, clerical staff) among schools from DIFFERENT COLLEGES

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

26.) The College System has brought about a positive change in governance (i.e. the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented) at a DIRECTORATE / NATIONAL level

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

27.) The College System has brought about a greater commitment to rigour, quality and standards in learning and teaching.

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

28.) The College System has been instrumental in bringing about greater readiness among education personnel to ACCEPT reforms

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

29.) The College System has facilitated the sharing of good practices in teaching among teachers and other teaching personnel across schools WITHIN a college

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

30.) The College System has resulted in more logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of sharing RESOURCES (e.g. exam papers, books, clerical staff) among schools WITHIN a COLLEGE

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

31.) The College System has brought about a positive change in governance (i.e. the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented) at a SCHOOL level

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

32.) The College System has been instrumental in fostering a greater readiness among education personnel to IMPLEMENT reforms

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

33.) The College System and its networks will effectively enable "all children to succeed"

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

34.) The College System has still not delivered in terms of devolution and flexibility on central issues such as syllabi and text books

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

35.) The College System has brought an increase in the volume of work both to personnel in the teaching grades as well as the School Management Teams

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

36.) The College System has introduced a number of roles (some of which new) including Precincts Officer, Prefect of Discipline, Career Advisors, Counsellors, Social Workers and Youth Workers which brought increased support in colleges and respective schools

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

37.) The College System has rendered schools more inclusive in the general sense of the word

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

38.) The catchment area of a college should be determined on the basis of a social dimension (e.g. avoiding placing schools from a deprived area in the same college) rather than geographical convenience (e.g. the north of Malta)

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

39.) The School Leaving Certificate should be college based

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

40.) The school is being required to participate in several college activities which are leaving little room for the curriculum to be implemented

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

41.) The setting up of very large schools as a result of the College System reform is rendering schools ever more impersonal for students

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

42.) The College System has resulted in more logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of the sharing of FACILITIES (e.g. sharing a hall, sports ground) among schools from DIFFERENT COLLEGES

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

43.) The College System has brought about a quality leap in how schools are operating

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

Section C: The Reforms

This section focuses on the specific educational reforms which are taking place in the State school sector. You are kindly requested to express how you feel about these reforms and their implementation by indicating the extent of agreement/disagreement to EACH of the statements.

44.) I feel that generally speaking the several reforms that are being introduced will effectively cater for the specific needs of the individual student

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

45.) There are too many reforms taking place at once

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

46.) I feel that I have been adequately CONSULTED about the several reforms that are being introduced

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

47.) I feel that the various reforms are properly coordinated

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

48.) I feel that generally speaking the several reforms that are being introduced are much needed and long overdue

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

49.) I feel that whatever actual support (i.e. resources) is needed for the reforms to be successful should be available

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

50.) I feel that I have been adequately INFORMED about the several reforms that are being introduced

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

51.) I feel that in spite of the consultations that have been made the decisions had already been taken

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

52.) I feel that generally speaking I am being properly prepared and supported for the several reforms that are being introduced

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

53.) I feel that, in time, the several reforms that are being introduced will improve the general quality of education

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

54.) I feel the many reforms that are taking place are negatively affecting teachers' work in class

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

55.) I feel that parents are finding it difficult to understand the many changes that are taking place

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

56.) The pace with which the reforms are being implemented is reasonable

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

57.) I feel comfortable with how EXTERNAL REVIEWS are being conducted

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

58.) I feel that inadequate communication is creating unnecessary uncertainty (with the resulting anxiety) among most education personnel

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

59.) I feel that much more support from superiors is needed for one to be able to fulfill the demands of the various reforms.

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

60.) I feel that students are finding it difficult to cope with the pace of the reforms

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

61.) I get the feeling that for the most part I am being led rather than being actively involved in these reforms

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

62.) I feel that our voices are being heard

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

63.) I feel that if mixed ability classes are good then there should be no setting in the core subjects at the secondary level

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

64.) I feel that the reforms are actually filtering down to the students (i.e. students are actually benefitting from the reforms)

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

65.) I feel that students are finding it difficult to cope with the many changes that are taking place

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

66.) I feel that generally speaking parents are well aware of what the reforms are about

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

67.) I feel that the abolition of the Junior Lyceum entrance exam was a good decision

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

68.) I feel that parents are finding it difficult to cope with the pace of the reform

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

69.) I feel that irrespective of what we choose to call them, the end of the primary cycle (11 Plus) exams have not gone away

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

70.) The proper introduction and implementation of more student-friendly forms of assessment will diminish the central role that half-yearly and annual exams have assumed so far in our educational system

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

71.) Generally speaking I would say that most teachers and other teaching personnel are prepared for these educational reforms

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

72.) As far as I know these reforms were piloted first before their implementation

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

73.) I feel that the abolition of streaming was a good decision

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

74.) I feel comfortable with how SCHOOL-BASED SELF-EVALUATION is being conducted

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

75.) I feel that one of the reasons underlying the reforms is the reduction of teachers employed in the state school sector

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

76.) I feel that the size of the class will influence the quality of student learning

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

77.) I feel that the reforms are resulting in better quality education for all students

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

78.) I feel that the size of the school (student population) influences the quality of student learning

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

79.) I feel that the various reforms are being properly implemented

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

80.) Which of the following reforms do you feel uncertain about? (Tick as many as appropriate.)

- ☐ Benchmarking
- ☐ New assessment practices (e.g. the portfolio)
- ☐ Setting in the core subjects
- ☐ Mixed ability classes
- ☐ The transition from primary to secondary
- ☐ School-based self-evaluation
- ☐ External reviews
- ☐ The new School Leaving Certificate
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other/s (please specify)

81.) If you ticked 'Other/s' in the previous question please specify

Section D: School Management Team

This section is meant to be completed by members of the SMT. It consists of a number of statements to which you are kindly requested to indicate your level of agreement/disagreement. Kindly supply a response to ALL statements.

82.) The setting up of the College System and the two Directorates has effectively made the chain of command more complex

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

83.) The College Principal is instrumental in fostering networking and collaboration

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

84.) Paper work still dominates much of the SMT work

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

85.) The College Principal has been able to create a paradigm shift in the way of thinking, the way of believing, the way of operating, the way of doing, and the way of leading the school

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

86.) The SMT is frequently finding itself having to provide the same information to various 'superiors' in the hierarchy

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

87.) The SMT is lumbered with ever-increasing paper / administrative work

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

88.) The DES is generally very supportive

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

89.) The SMT has very little time to do curricular work or to mentor

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

90.) The Head of School should have the right to select teachers and other teaching

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

91.) The College System has ushered in improved collegiality and support among the SMT in the SCHOOL

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

92.) The SMT does not have enough clerical support for the increase in paper work

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

93.) The DES is providing the necessary physical structures and their modernisation

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

94.) The College System has ushered in improved collegiality and support among SMT ACROSS SCHOOLS in a COLLEGE

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

95.) The Head of School should have the right to select the members on his/her SMT

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

96.) The DQSE is generally very supportive

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

97.) The DES is providing regular maintenance of its schools

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

98.) The College System has ushered in greater shared leadership among the SMT

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

99.) The College Principal is generally very supportive

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

100.) Of its very nature and purpose the College System has brought with it innumerable official meetings to the Heads of School

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

Section E: Teachers, Instructors, KAs and LSAs

This section is meant to be completed by Teachers (including Temporary, Supply, Resource, and Retired), Instructors (including Part-time), KAs (including Part-time and Supply) and LSAs (including Supply). It consists of a number of statements to which you are kindly requested to indicate your level of agreement/disagreement. Kindly supply a response to ALL statements.

101.) Since the beginning of the reforms staff development opportunities have become more available

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

102.) The school has created greater collaboration with the external community (i.e. village/s or town/s)

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

103.) The training needs of the teaching staff are being adequately ADDRESSED ACROSS COLLEGES

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

104.) The training needs of the teaching staff are being IDENTIFIED

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

105.) The abolition of the Junior Lyceum Entrance Exam effectively does away with the unnecessary stress and anxiety that Year 6 students used to experience

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

106.) The DQSE is ensuring that all the necessary professional training and development for the implementation of the curriculum is taking place

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

107.) There is not enough time allocated for collaboration and cooperation (networking) WITHIN a SCHOOL

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

108.) The DES is providing effective professional support (e.g. psychologists, counsellors, social workers) in addressing students' needs
☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

109.) Members of the SMT and personnel in the various teaching grades should be aware of what is being discussed in the Council of Heads meetings

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

110.) The Head of School encourages collaboration WITHIN the SCHOOL
☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

111.) The training needs of the teaching staff are being adequately ADDRESSED WITHIN the COLLEGE

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

112.) The Head of school encourages collaboration WITH OTHER SCHOOLS

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

113.) Following the reform, the transition from the primary to the secondary will now prove less difficult and problematic to students

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

114.) The phasing out of a number of schools (e.g. area secondary schools) is creating uncertainty among teaching personnel since they do not know what is going to happen next year

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

115.) There is not enough time allocated for collaboration and cooperation (networking) ACROSS COLLEGES

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

116.) The DES is providing an adequate supply of professionals (e.g. psychologists, counsellors, social workers) to address students' needs

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

117.) The training needs of the teaching staff are being adequately ADDRESSED at a NATIONAL LEVEL

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

118.) The Head of School encourages different forms of distributed leadership (e.g. allows individual initiatives) within the school

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

119.) The DQSE is providing sufficient guidelines that will ensure a better implementation of education policy and services

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

120.) There is not enough time allocated for collaboration and cooperation (networking) WITHIN the COLLEGE

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

121.) I have been properly prepared to teach a mixed ability class

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

122.) I have been properly prepared to teach low achieving pupils

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

123.) I have been properly prepared to teach unmotivated pupils

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

124.) I have been properly to teach high achieving pupils

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

125.) A mixed ability class should have NOT MORE than:

☐ 10 students ☐ 15 students ☐ 20 students ☐ 25 students ☐ 30 students

Section F: Concluding Questions

This section presents the concluding set of questions, including an open-ended one. Kindly supply a response to ALL questions.

126.) To what extent are you in favour of the College System?

- ☐ Not in Favour
☐ Mildly in Favour ☐ In Favour ☐ Very Much in Favour ☐ Extremely in Favour

127.) To what extent are you in favour of School-based Self-evaluation?

- ☐ Not in Favour
☐ Mildly in Favour ☐ In Favour ☐ Very Much in Favour ☐ Extremely in Favour

128.) To what extent are you in favour of mixed ability teaching?

- ☐ Not in Favour
☐ Mildly in Favour ☐ In Favour ☐ Very Much in Favour ☐ Extremely in Favour

129.) To what extent are you in favour of setting?

- ☐ Not in Favour
☐ Mildly in Favour ☐ In Favour ☐ Very Much in Favour ☐ Extremely in Favour

130.) To what extent are you in favour of streaming

- ☐ Not in Favour
☐ Mildly in Favour ☐ In Favour ☐ Very Much in Favour ☐ Extremely in Favour

131.) To what extent are you in favour of benchmarking?

- ☐ Not in Favour
☐ Mildly in Favour ☐ In Favour ☐ Very Much in Favour ☐ Extremely in Favour

132.) To what extent are you in favour of new forms of assessment (e.g. portfolios)?

- ☐ Not in Favour
☐ Mildly in Favour ☐ In Favour ☐ Very Much in Favour ☐ Extremely in Favour

133.) To what extent are you in favour of External Reviews?

- ☐ Not in Favour
☐ Mildly in Favour ☐ In Favour ☐ Very Much in Favour ☐ Extremely in Favour

134.) Compared to about five years ago I feel that I am now deriving more satisfaction from my work

- ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

135.) Compared to about five years ago I feel happier now in my work

- ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

136.) Compared to about five years ago I now feel that pressure in my work has increased

- ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐ Neutral

137.) Chose ONE of the following positive statements which would best encapsulate how you might feel and/or perceive the College System and its accompanying reforms

- ☐ It is painful but necessary
☐ A way of giving education in this country a second chance
☐ A means by which ingrained and outdated notions of education are replaced by more contemporary ones
☐ A way of bringing education in this country in line with that of other EU member countries
☐ It is instigating a radical change in my educational philosophy
☐ It represents all that I would have liked to see realised in education in our country
☐ There is nothing positive
☐ Other

138.) You ticked 'Other' in the previous question. Please specify:

139.) Chose ONE of the following negative statements which would best encapsulate how you may feel and/or perceive the College System and its accompanying reforms

- ☐ It will send our educational system back to the 70s
☐ It is merely a vehicle for some to shine
☐ It is an ego-massaging exercise
☐ It is a mere political exercise just to be seen to be doing something
☐ Rather than simplifying things it has confounded them

- ☐ As a result of the reforms teaching as a profession is being denuded of its professional discretion
☐ There is nothing negative
☐ Other

140.) You ticked 'Other' in the previous question. Please specify:

141.) Any final comments or points you wish to make?

Thank You!

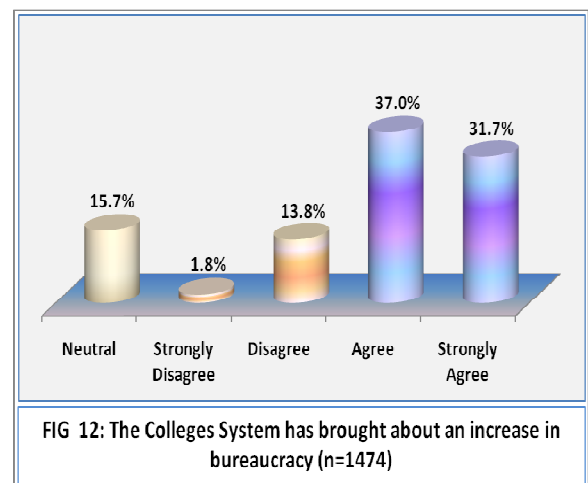
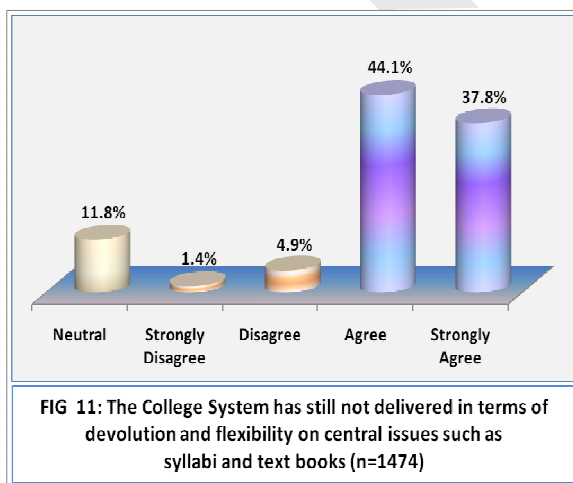
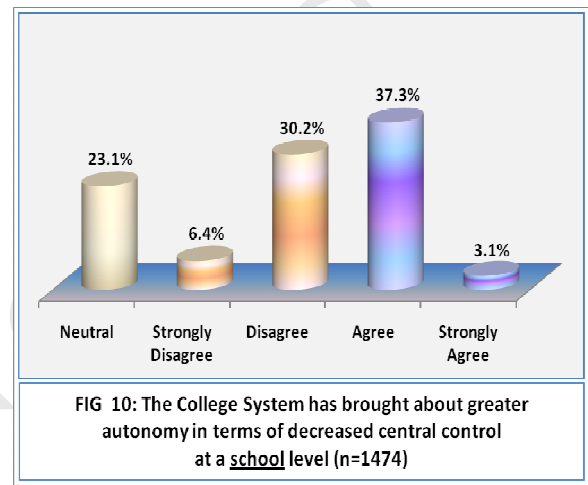
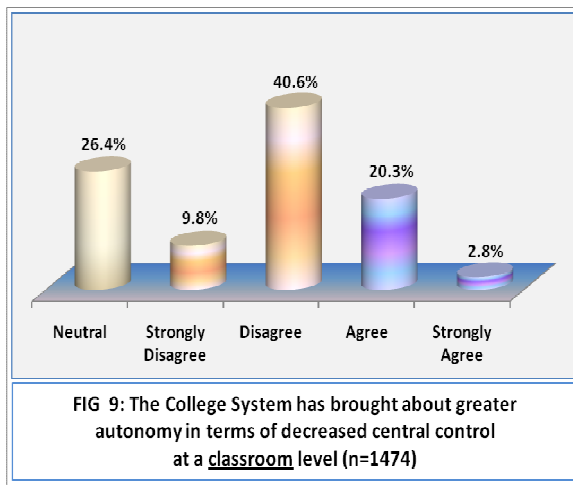
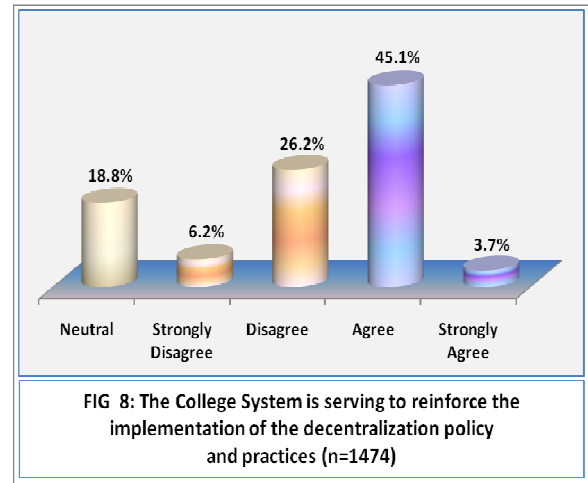
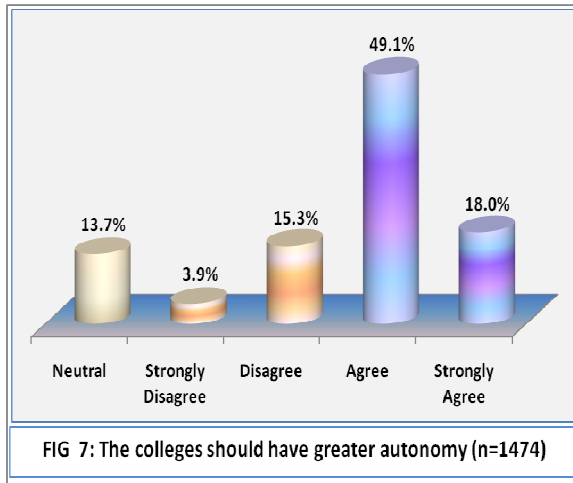
Thank you for taking this questionnaire survey.

Not only are your responses very important to our research project but we feel it can actually contribute in helping to evaluate the recent major changes in education; an evaluation that should result in an improvement of the educational system in general.

APPENDIX B

CHARTS IN NUMERICAL ORDER FOR EASY REFERENCE

MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS



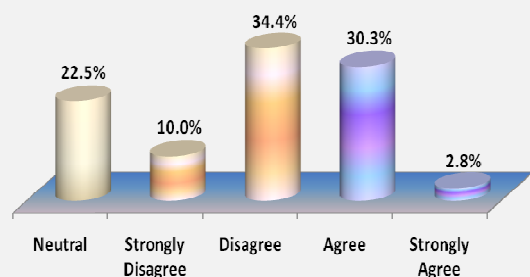


FIG 13: The College System has brought about a positive change in governance at a school level (n=1474)

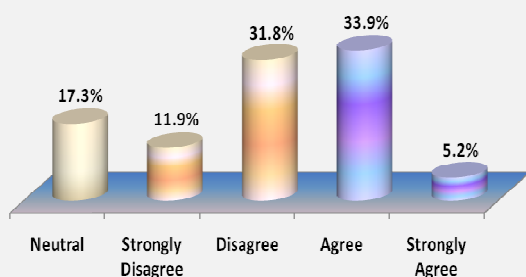


FIG 14: The College System has brought about a positive change in governance at a college level (n=1474)

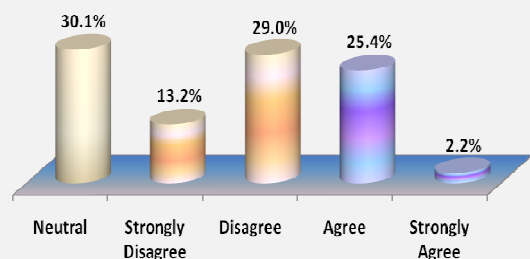


FIG 15: The College System has brought about a positive change in governance at a directorate / national level (n=1474)

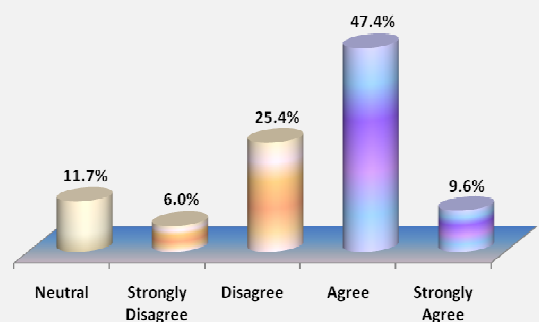


FIG 16: The College System has resulted in more logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of sharing of facilities among schools within a college (n=1474)

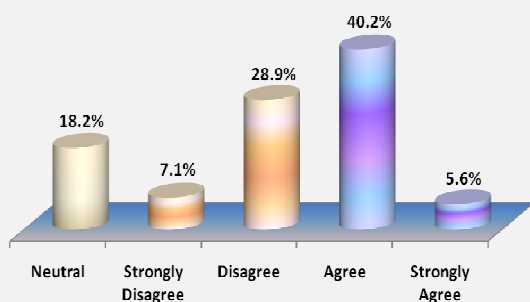


FIG 17: The College System has resulted in more logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of sharing of resources among schools within a college (n=1474)

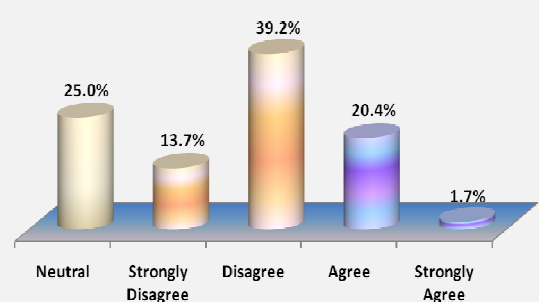
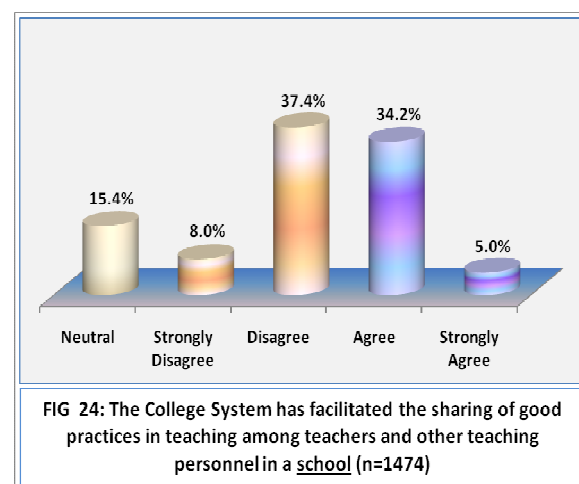
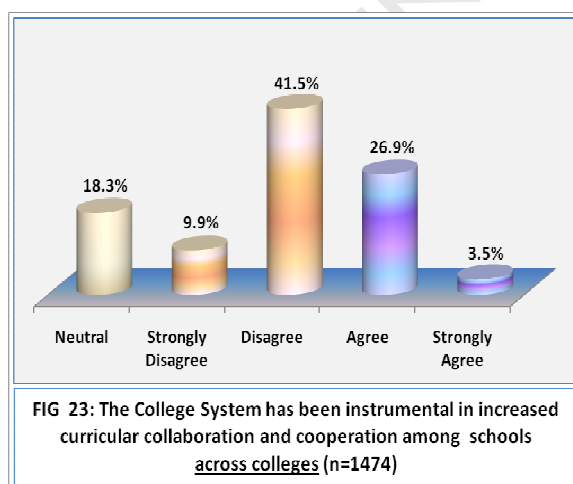
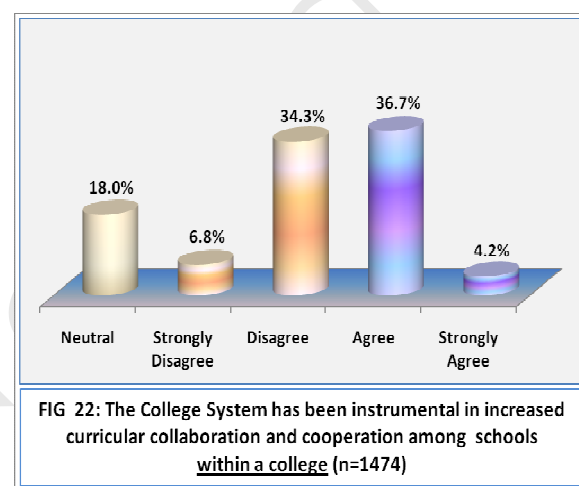
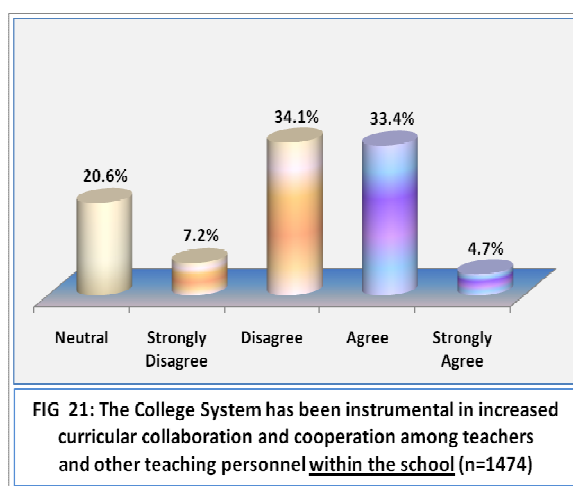
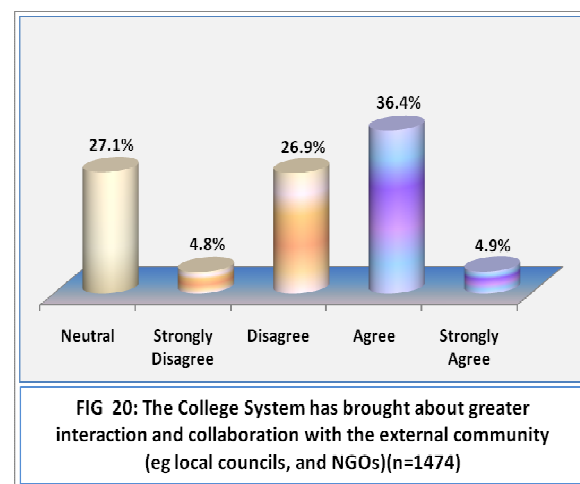
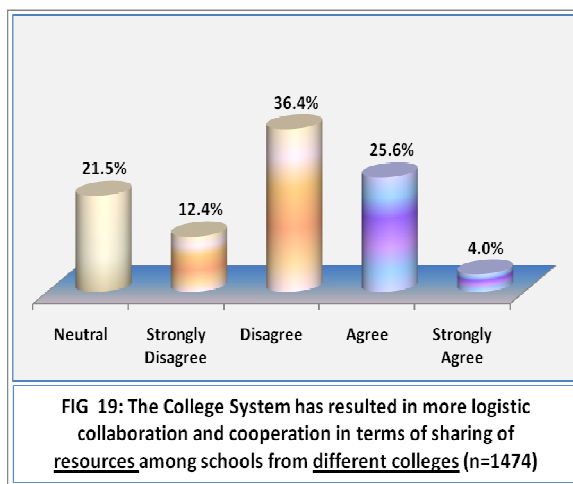
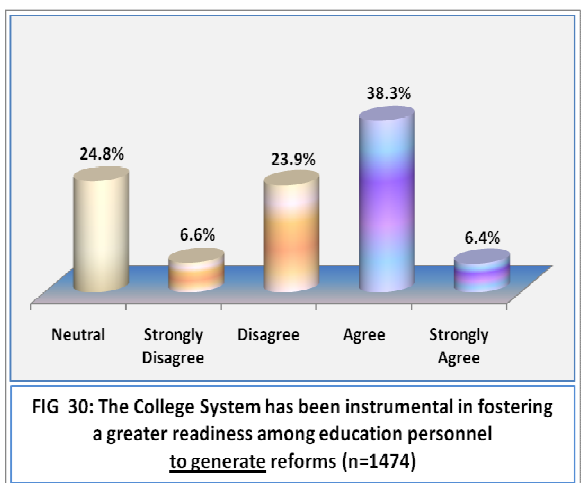
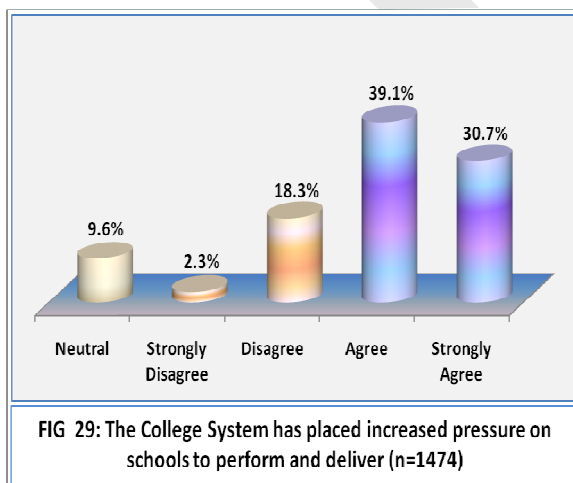
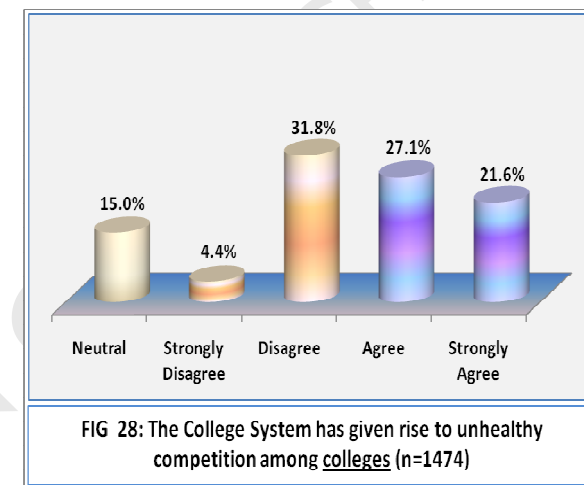
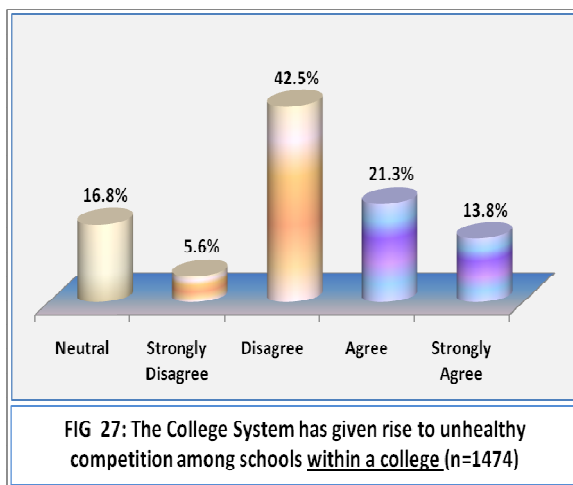
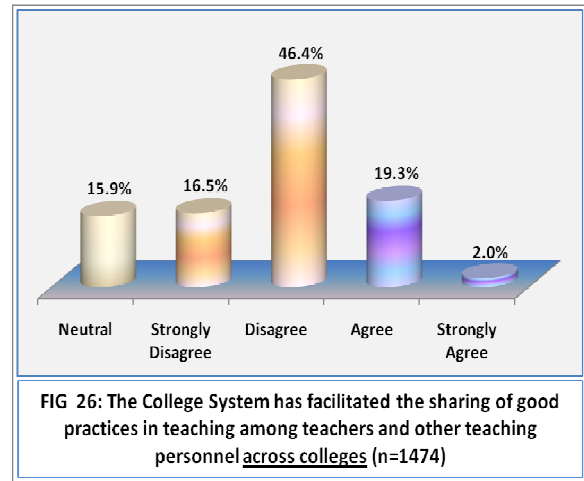
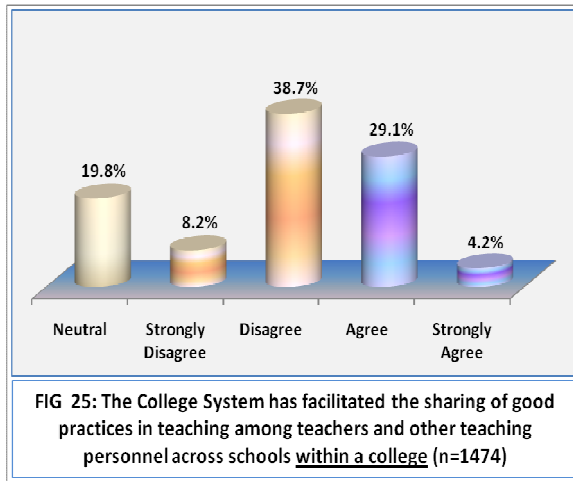
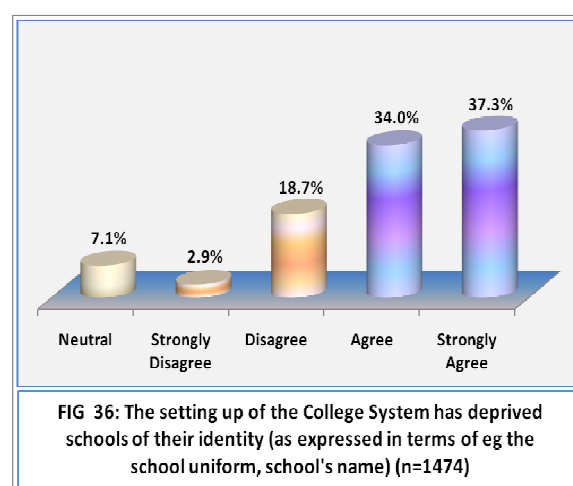
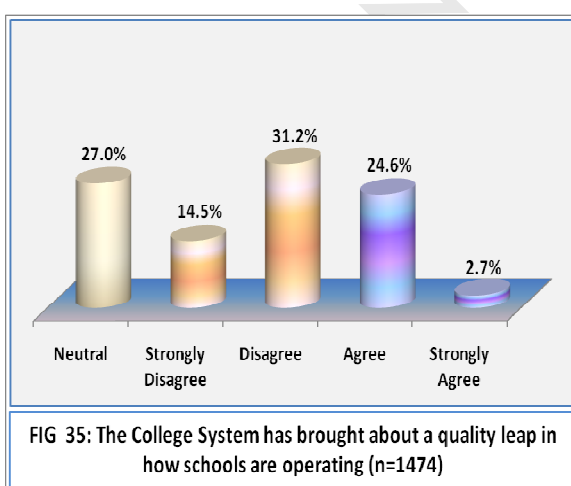
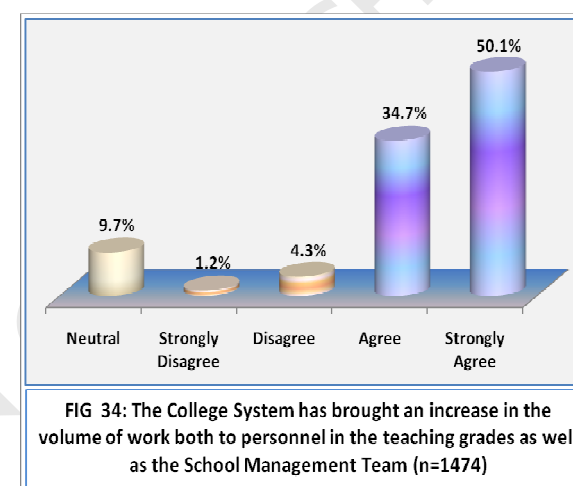
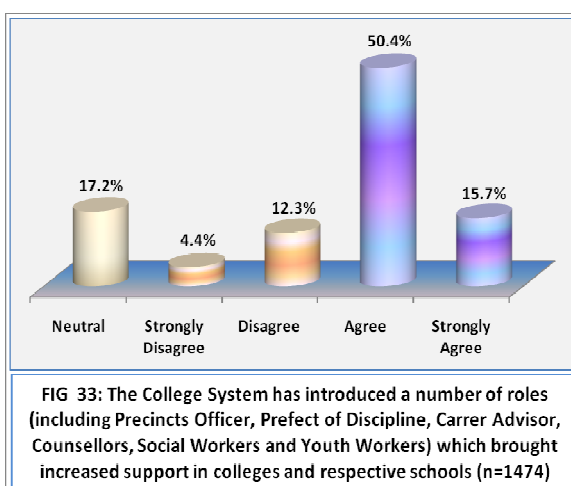
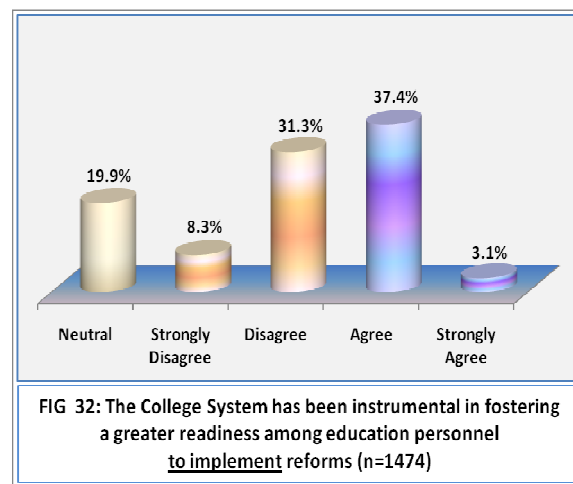
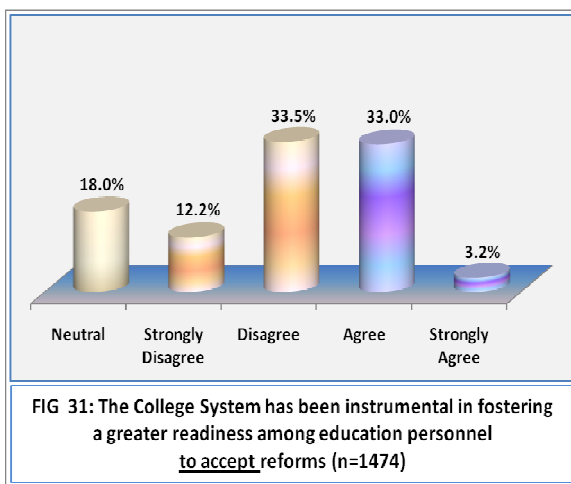
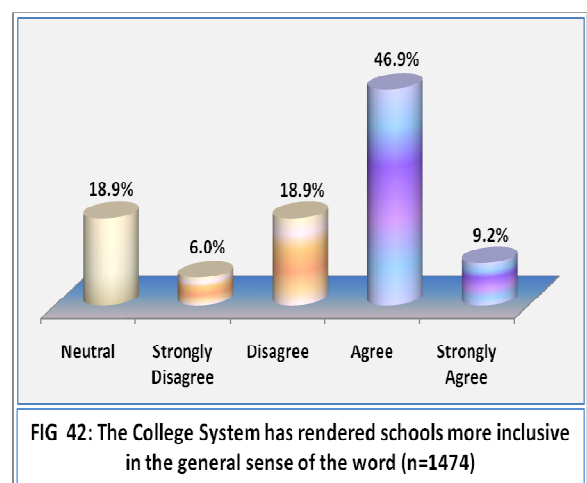
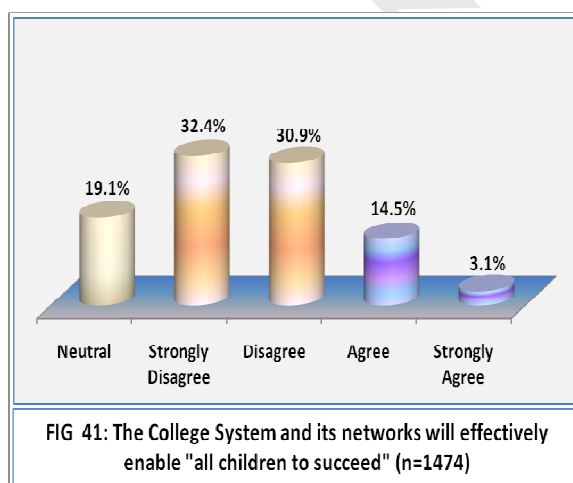
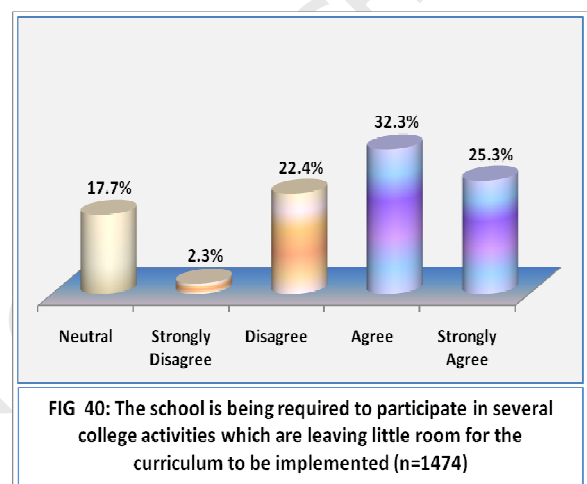
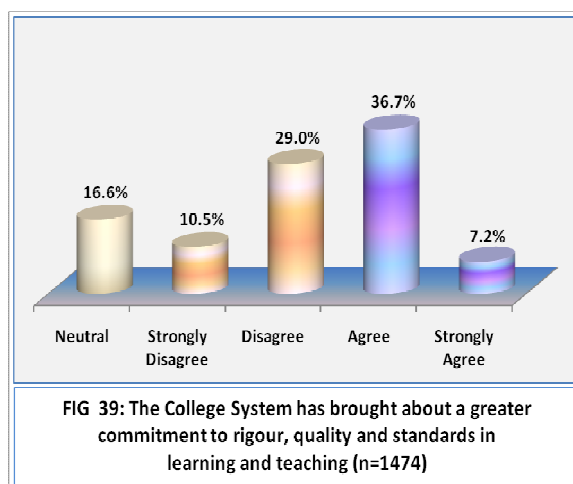
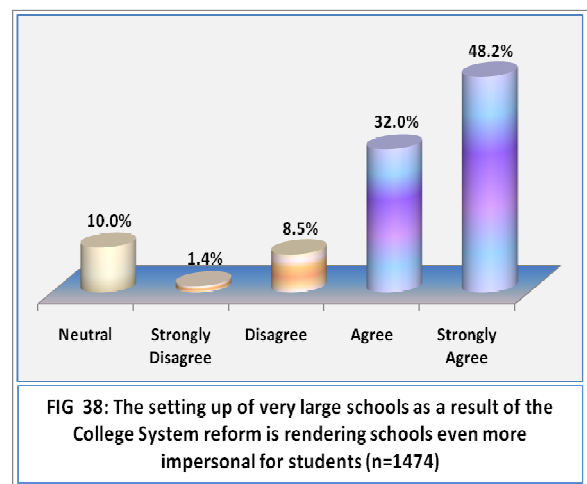
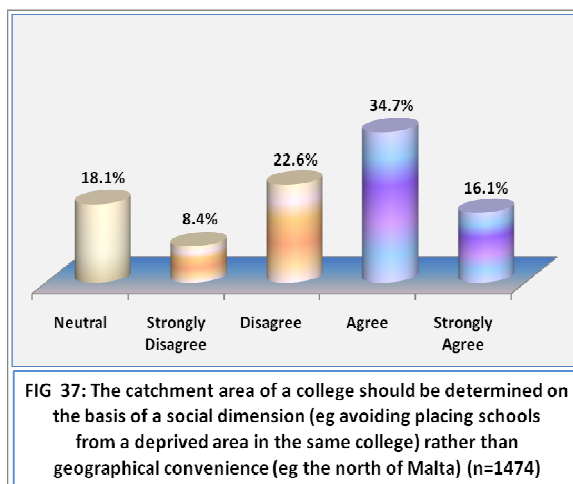


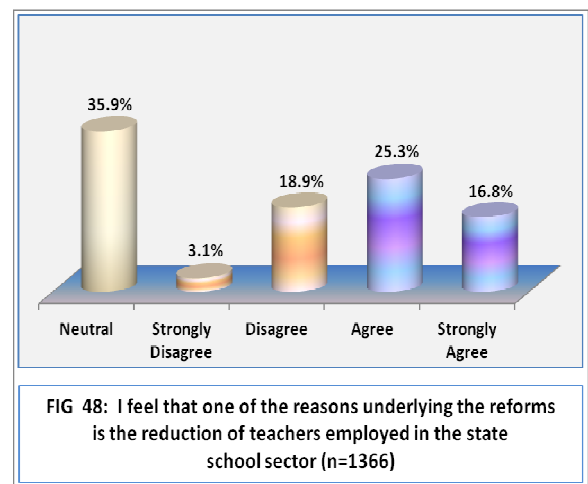
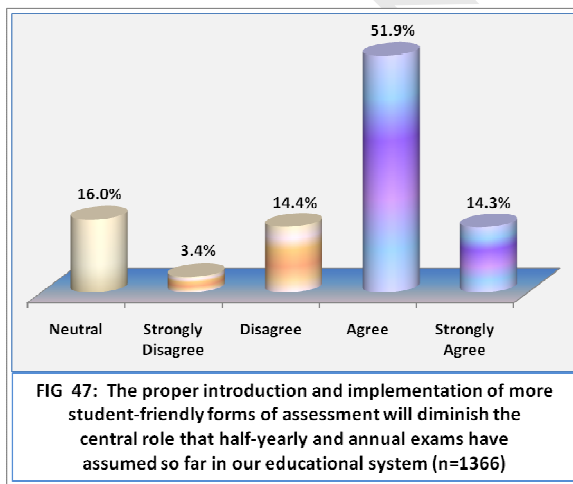
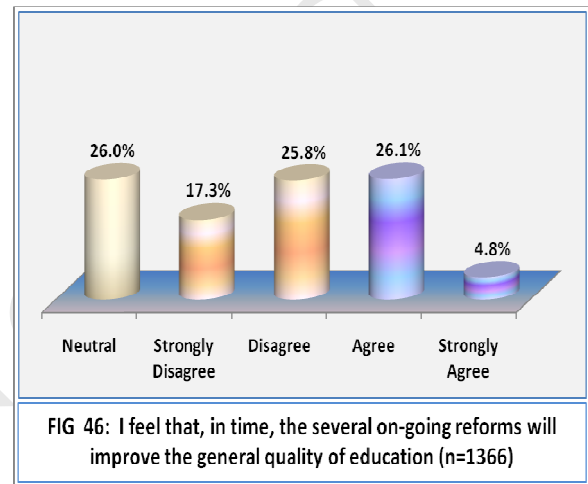
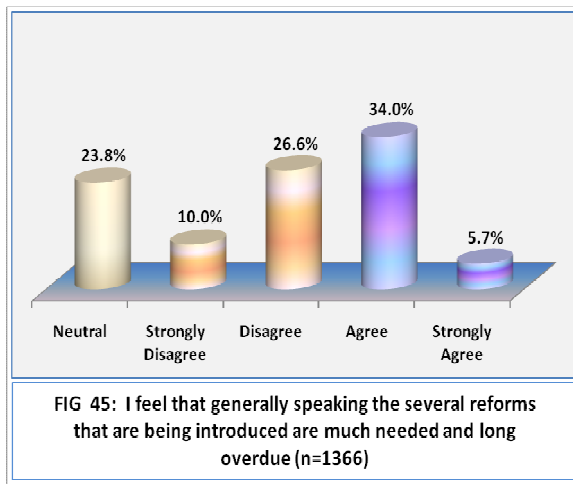
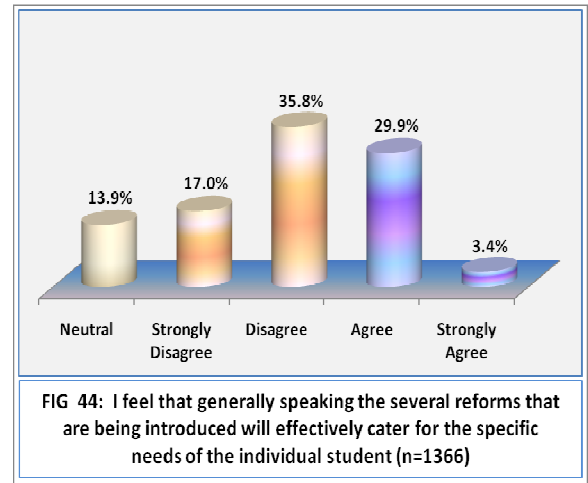
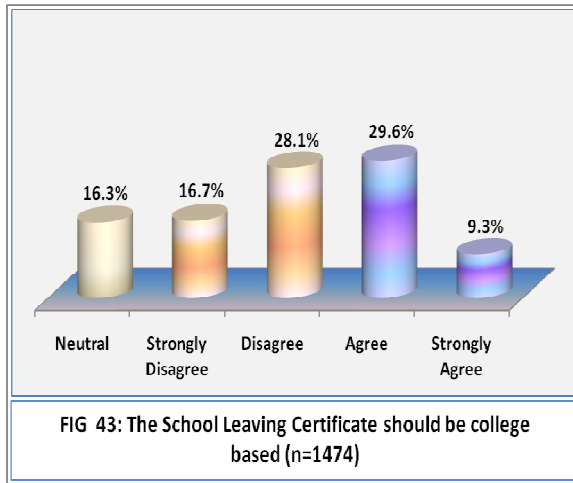
FIG 18: The College System has resulted in more logistic collaboration and cooperation in terms of sharing of facilities among schools from different colleges (n=1474)

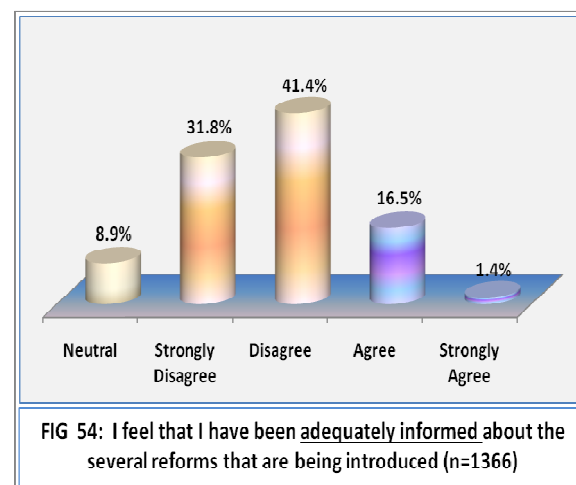
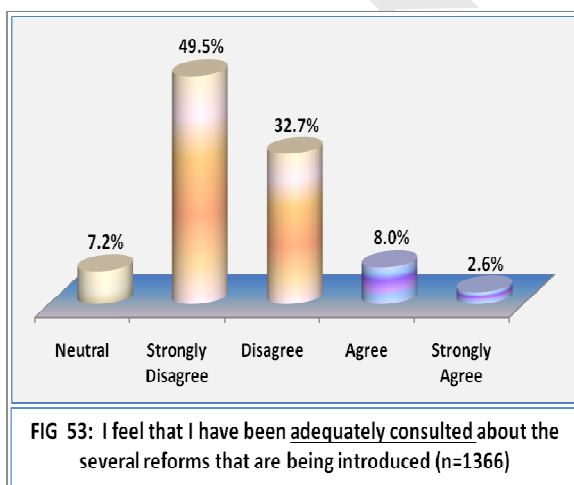
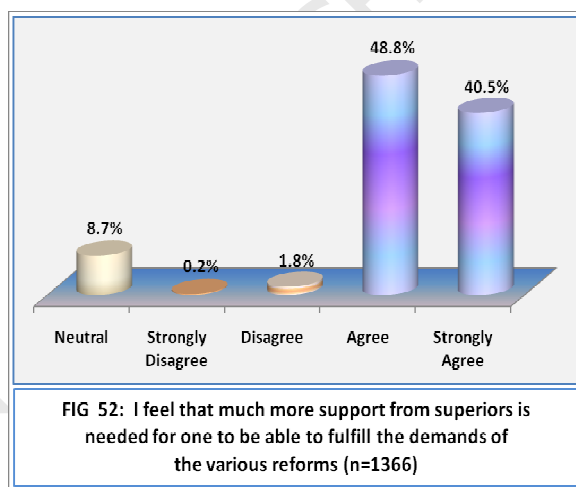
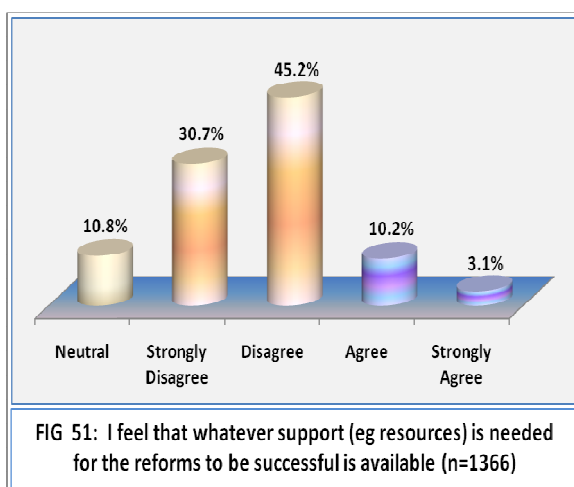
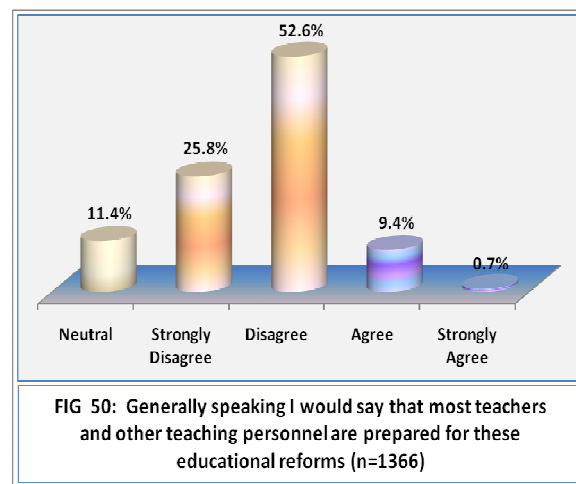
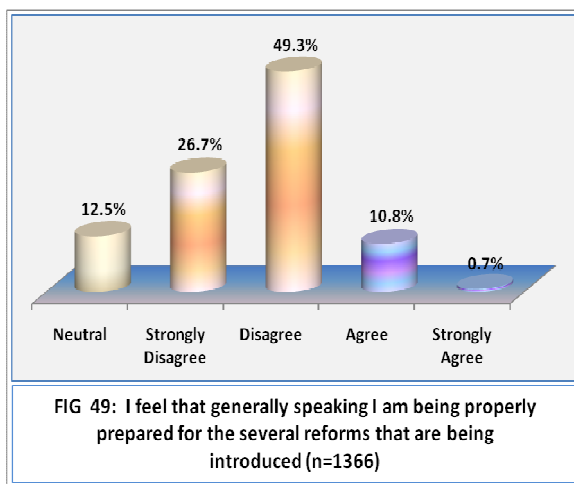


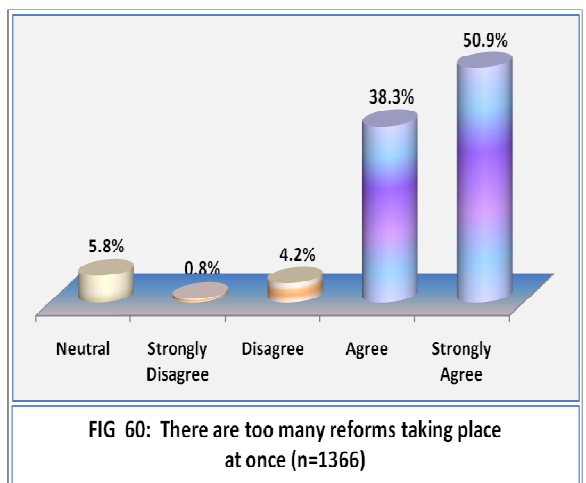
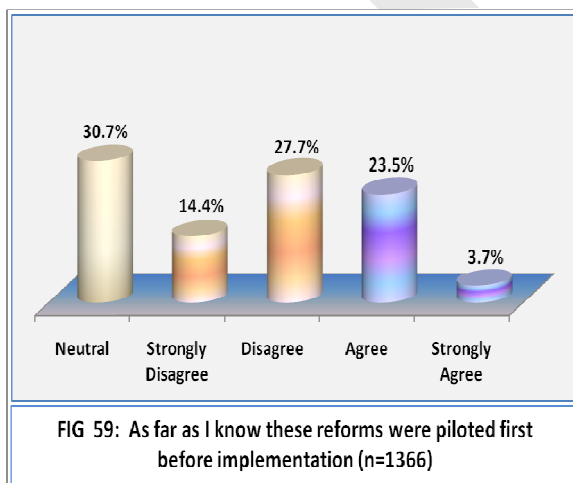
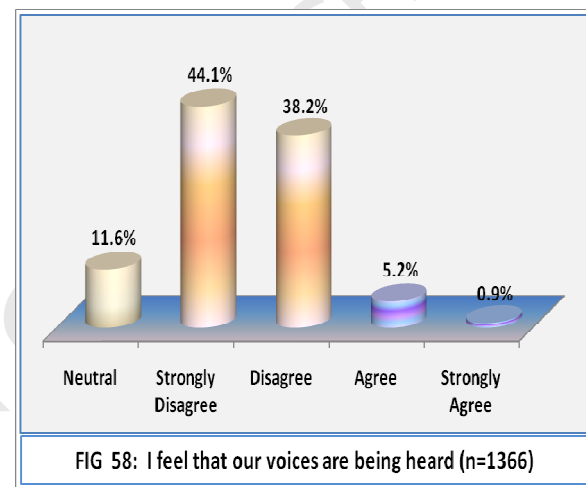
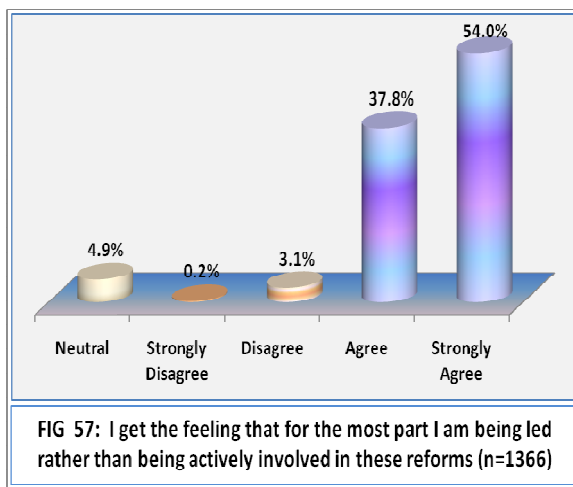
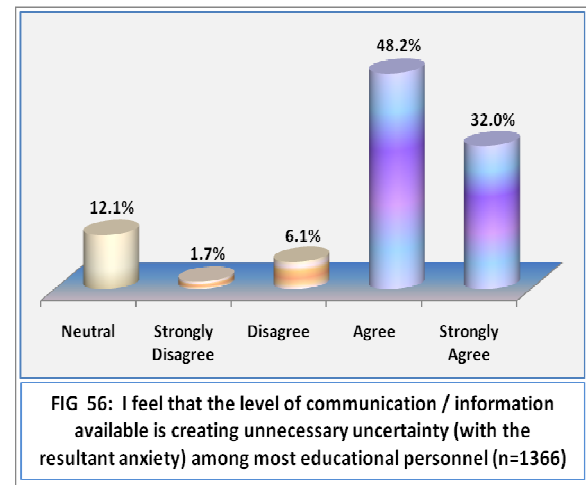
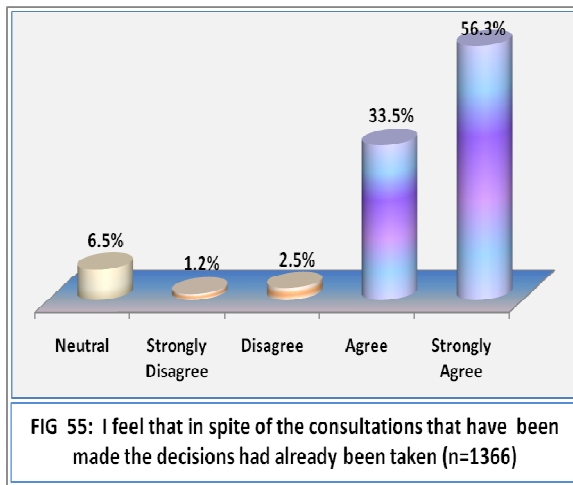


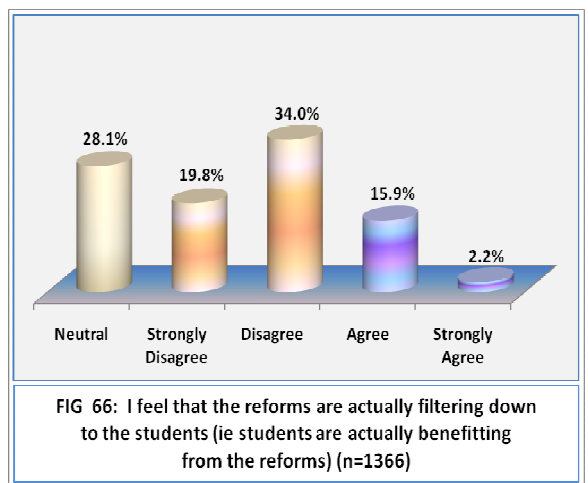
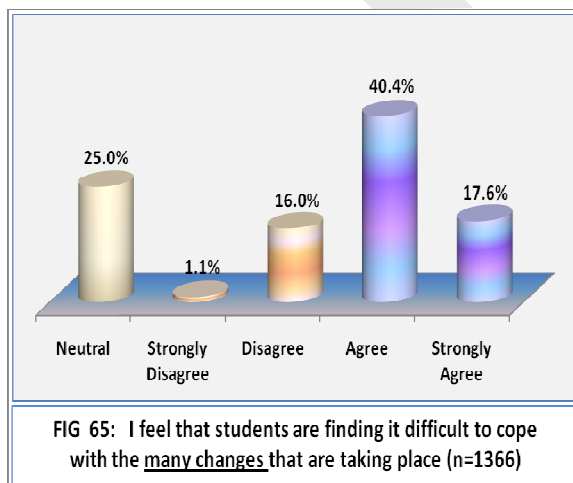
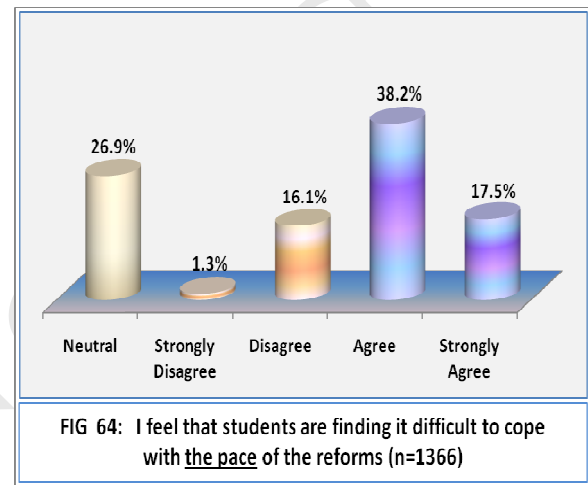
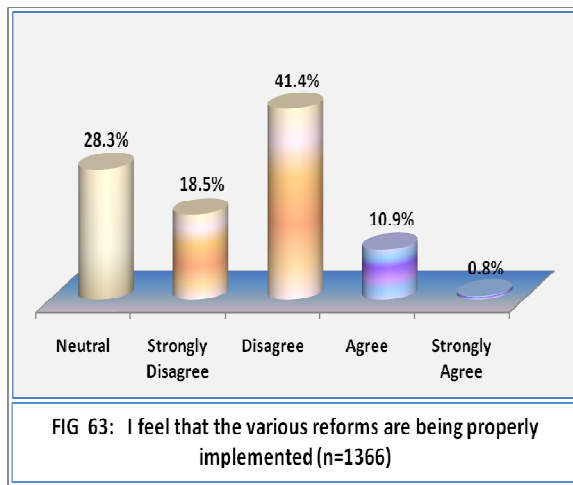
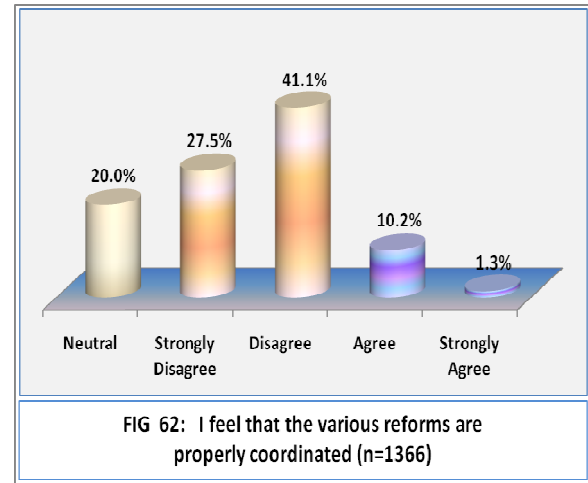
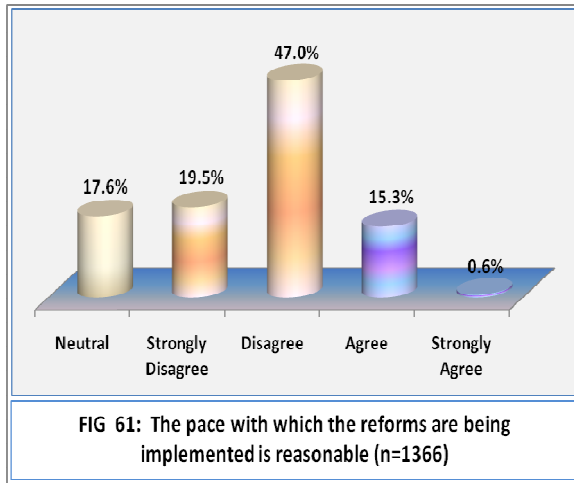


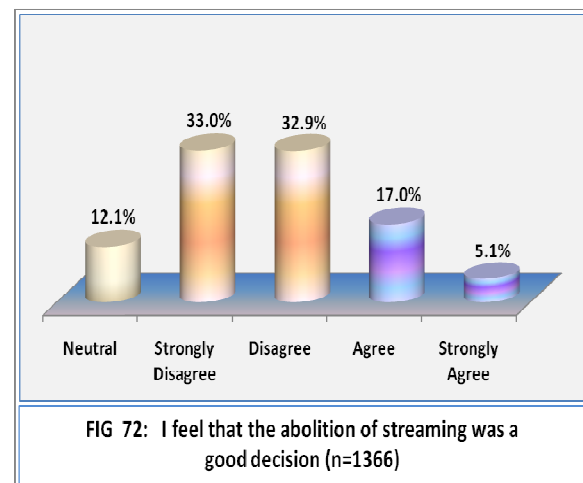
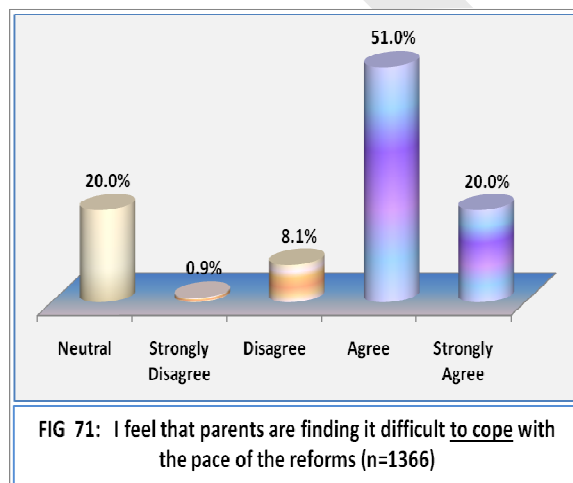
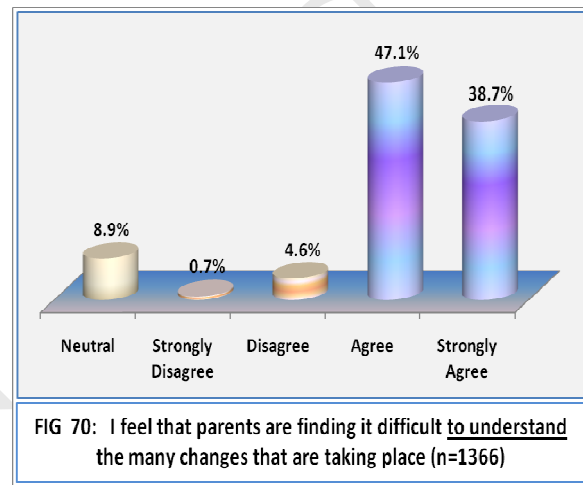
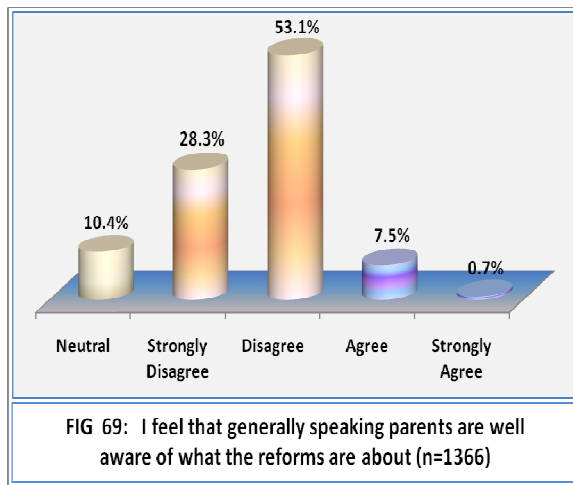
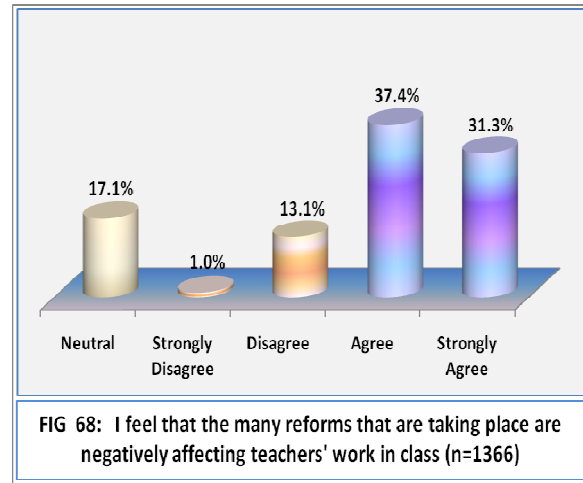
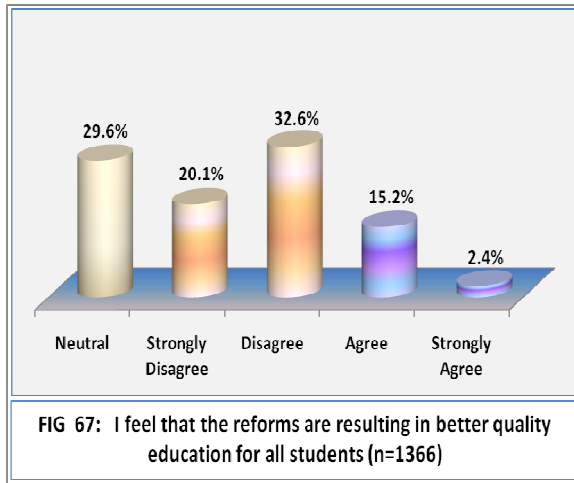


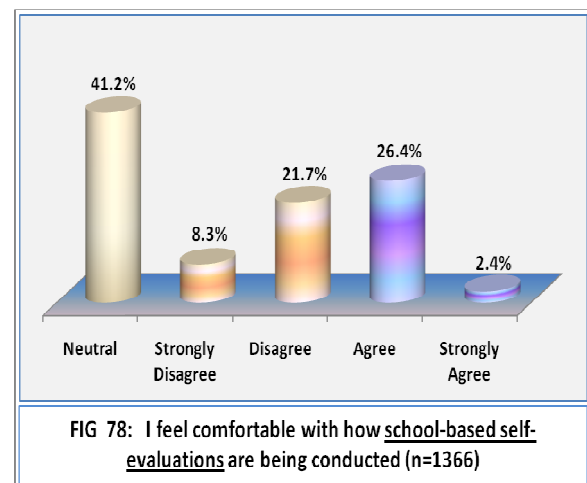
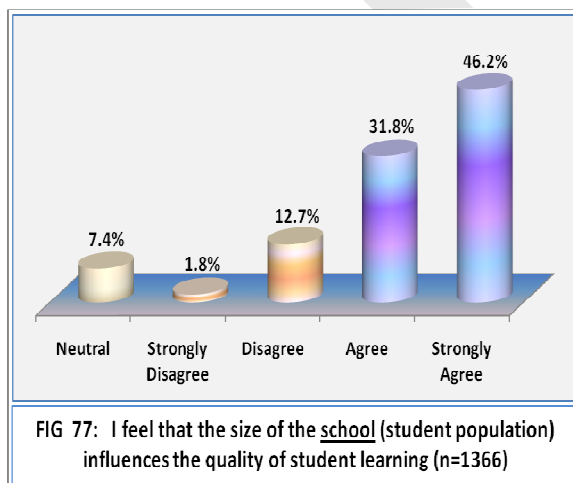
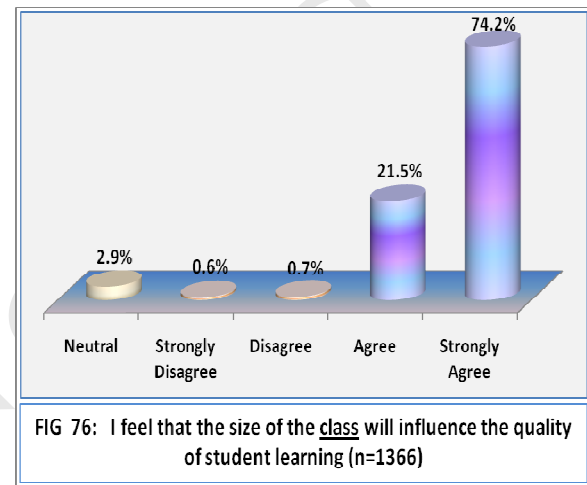
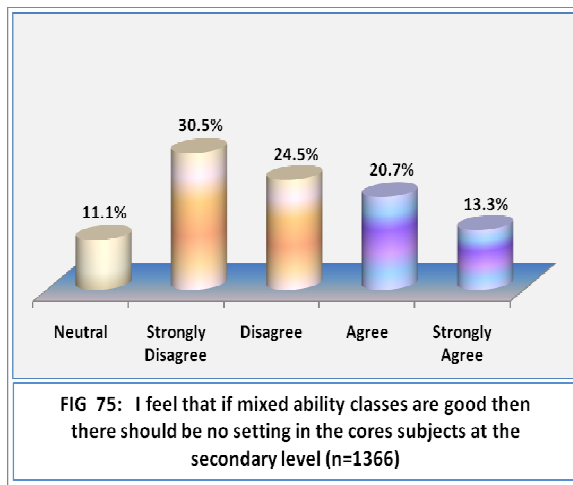
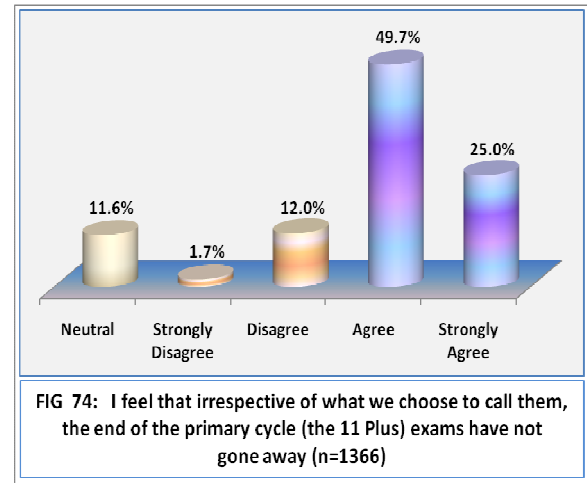
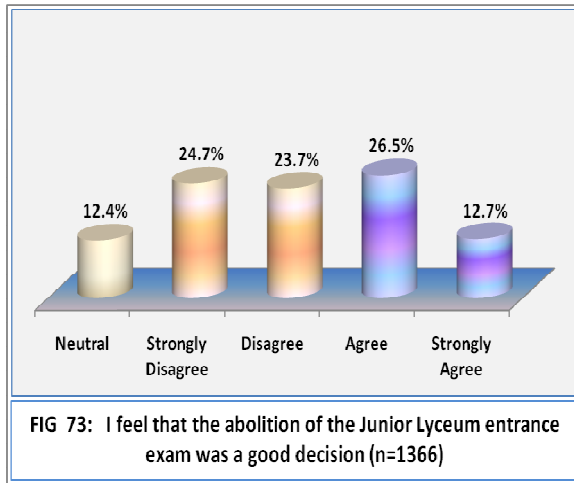


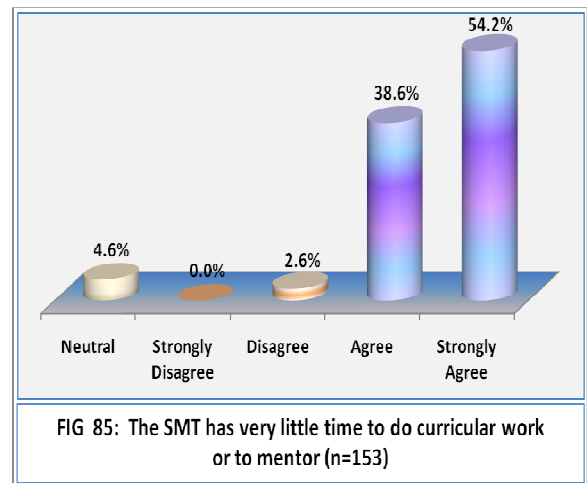
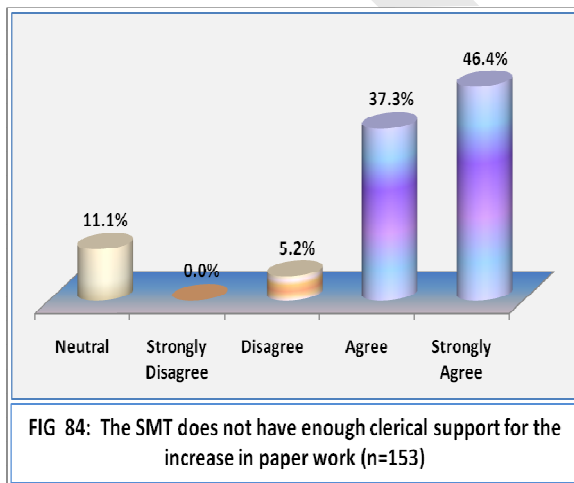
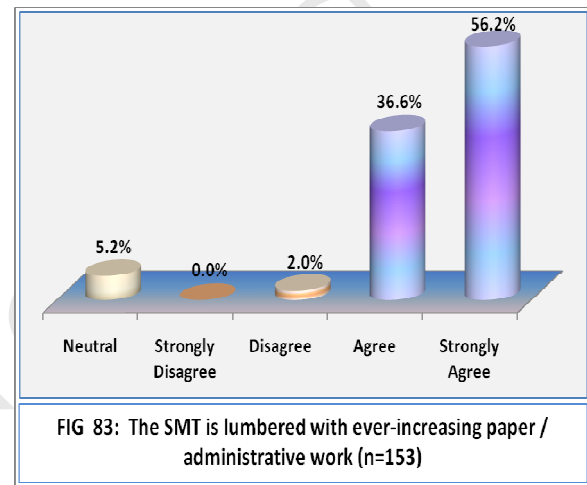
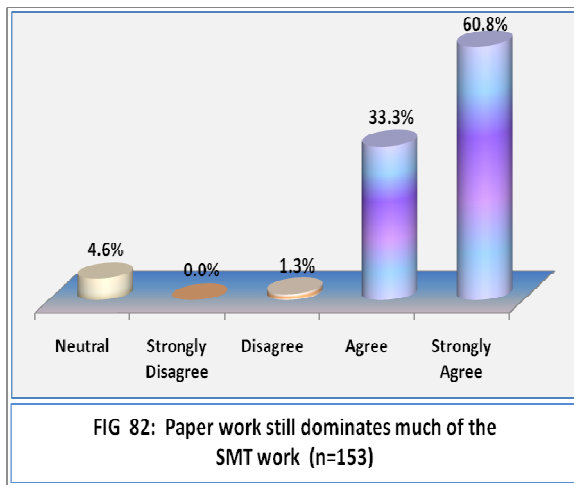
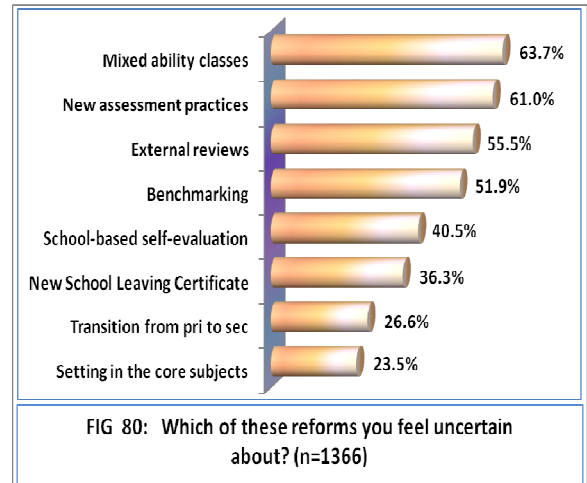
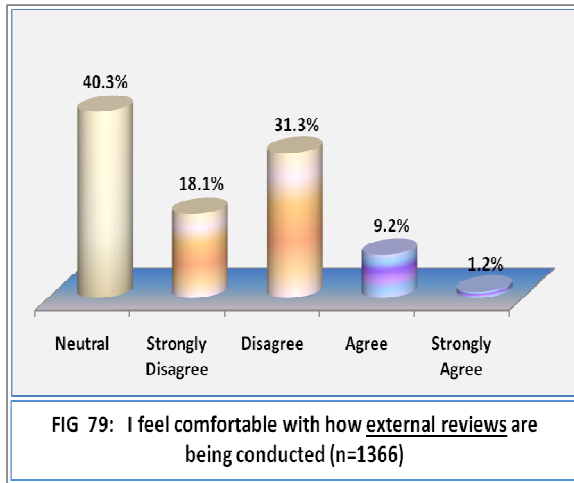


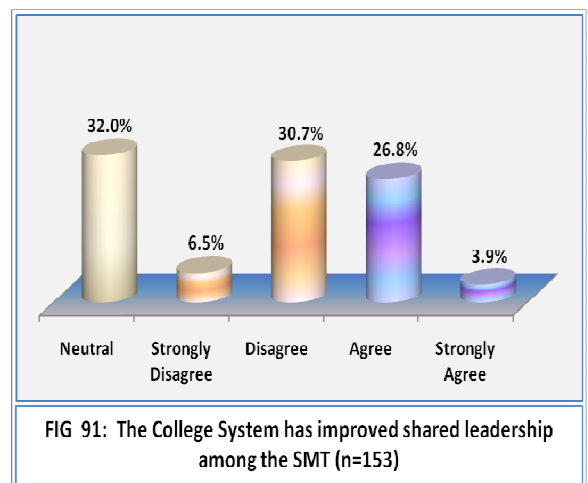
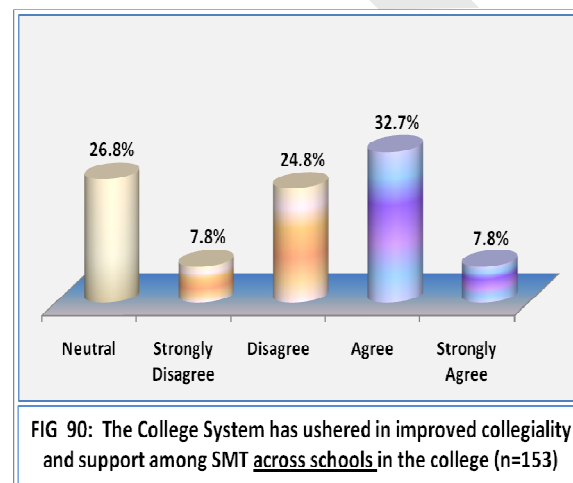
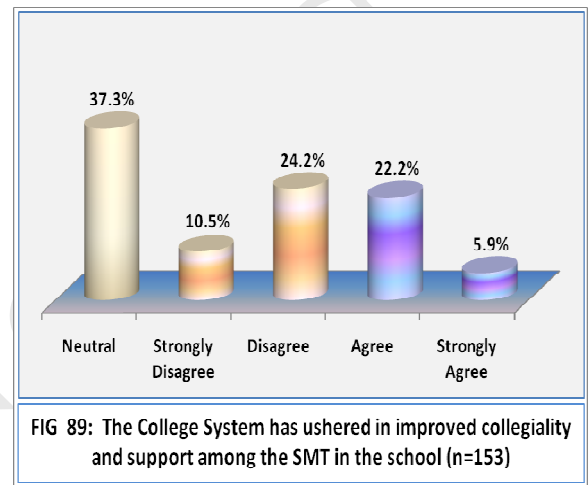
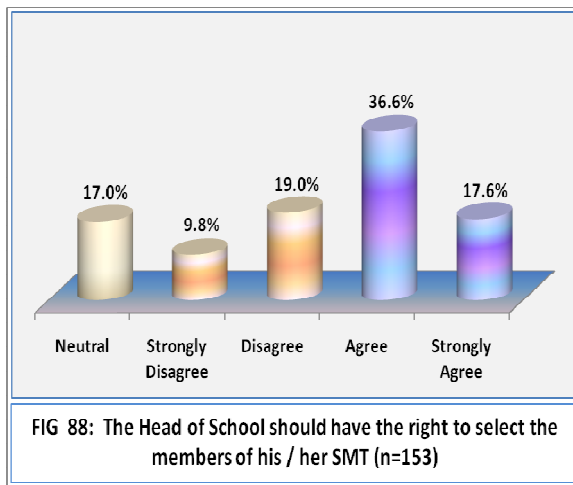
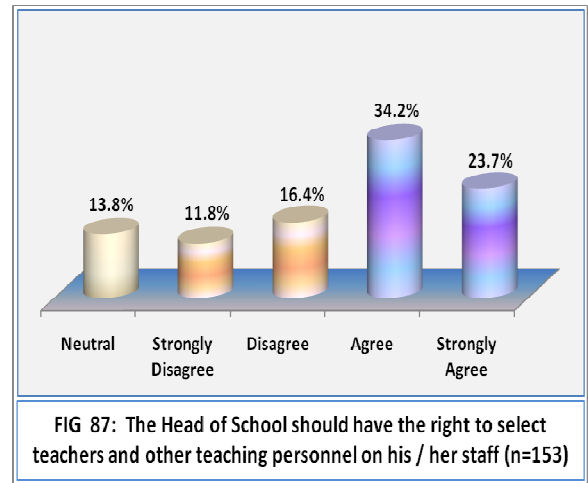
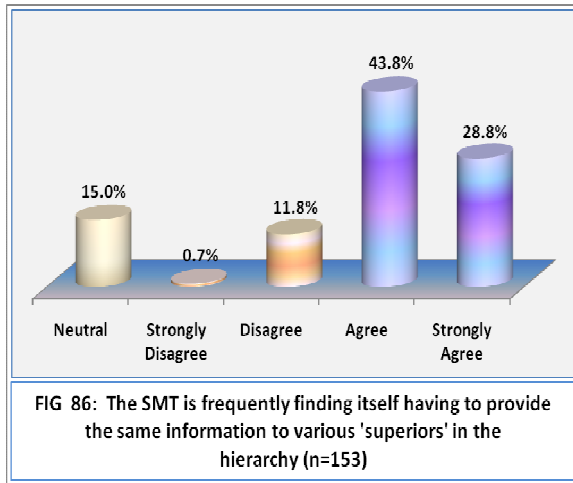


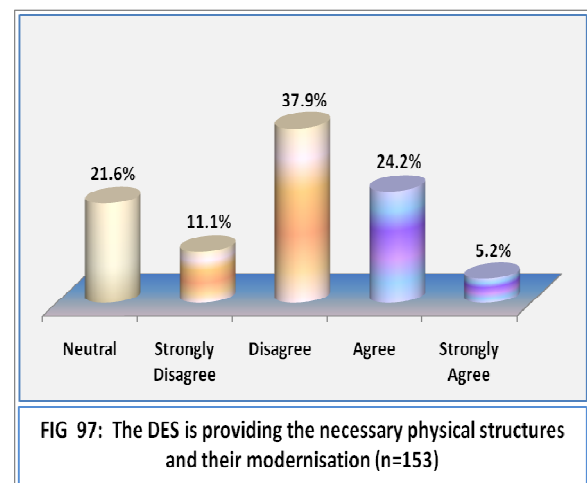
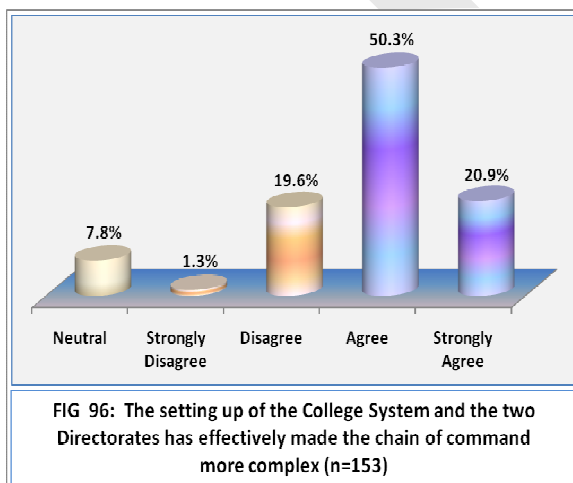
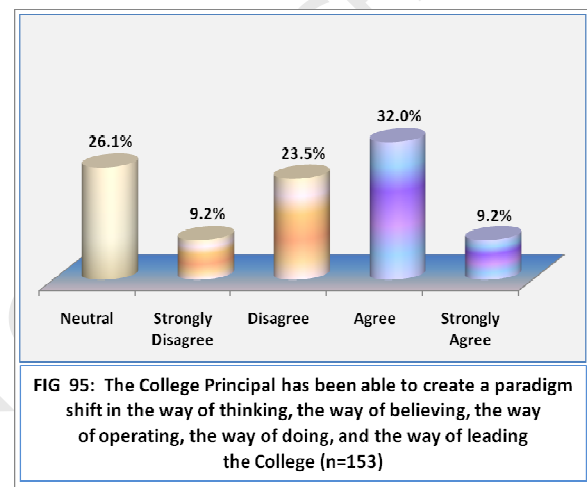
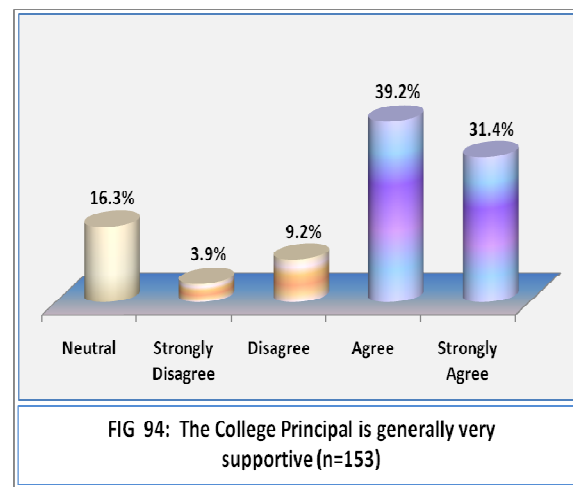
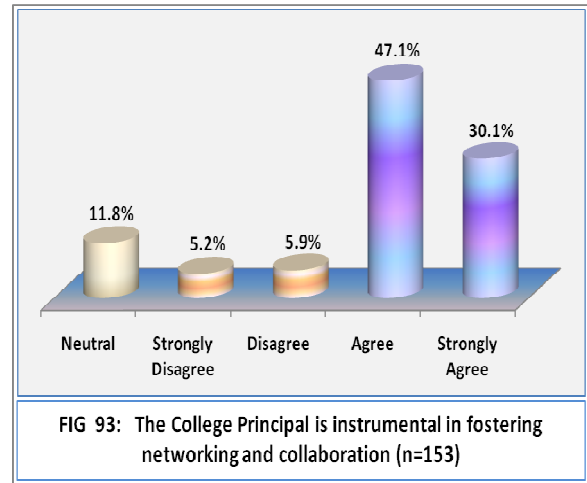
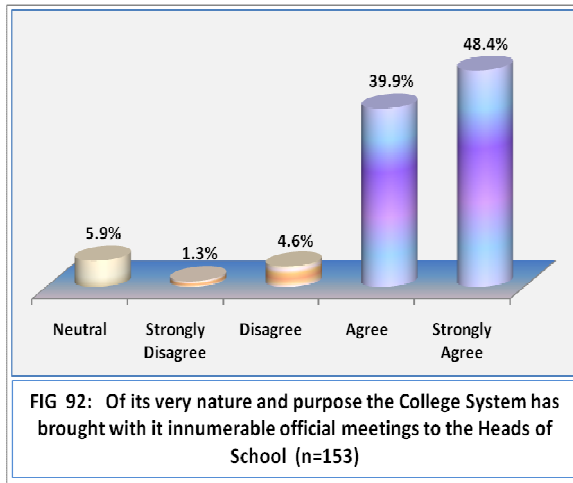


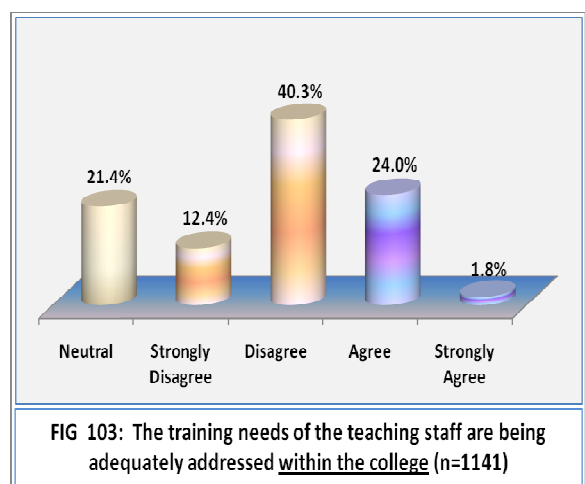
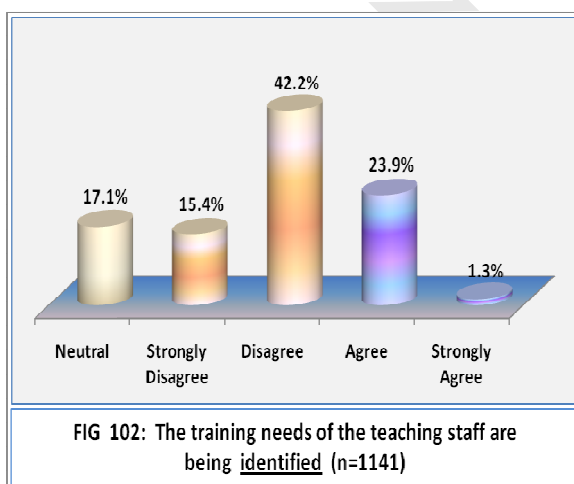
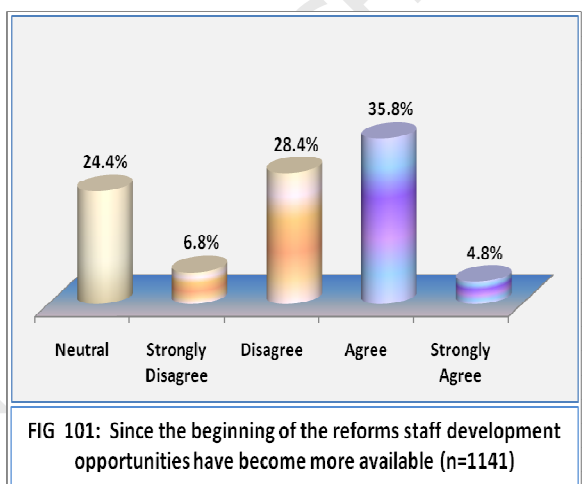
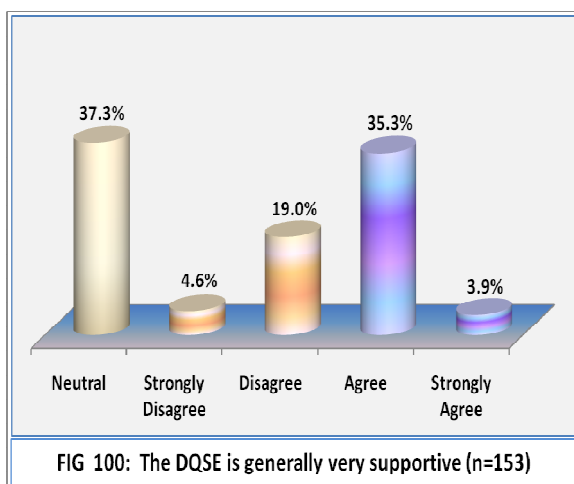
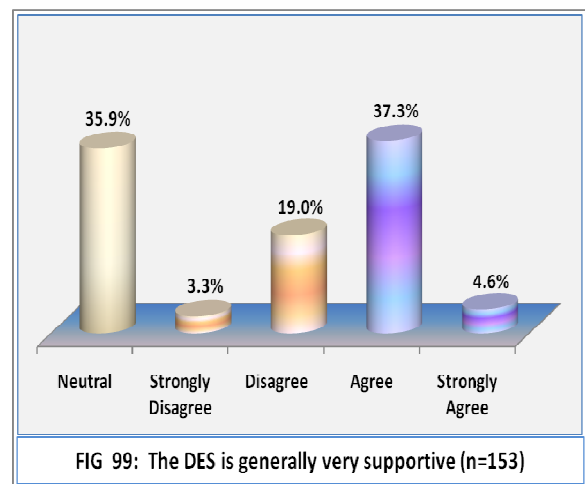
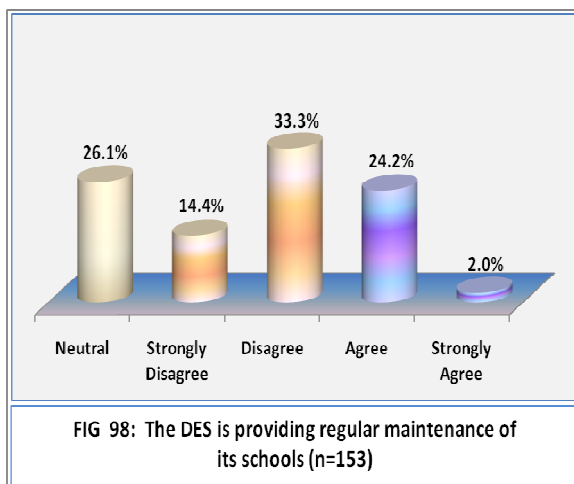


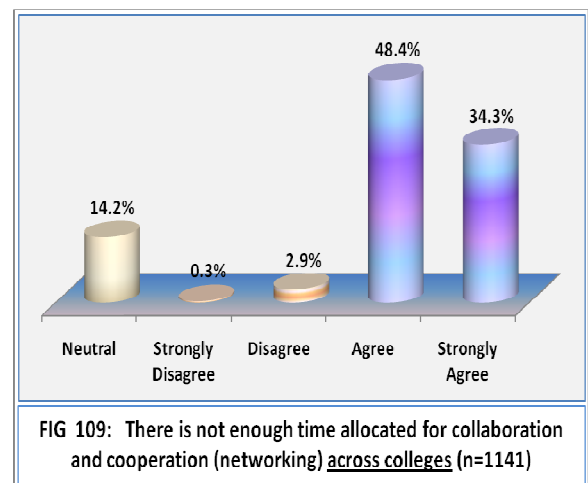
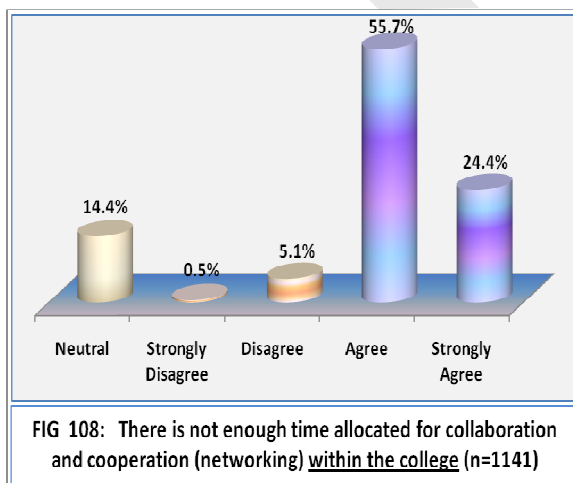
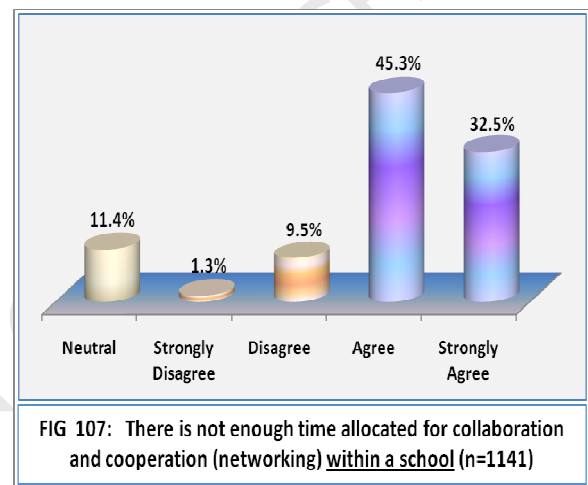
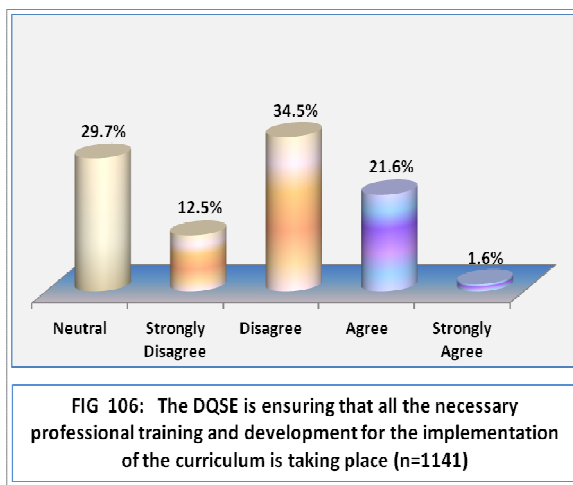
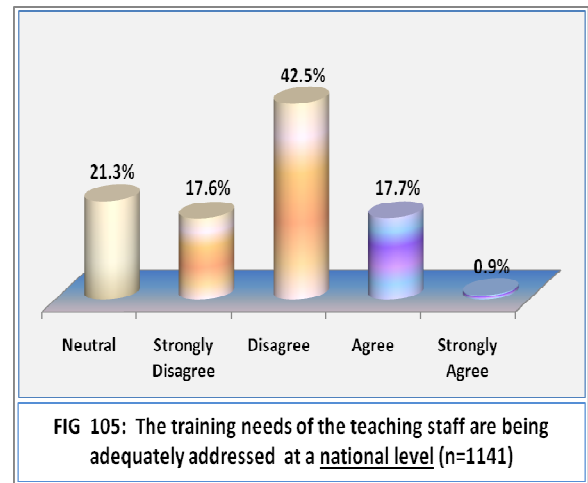
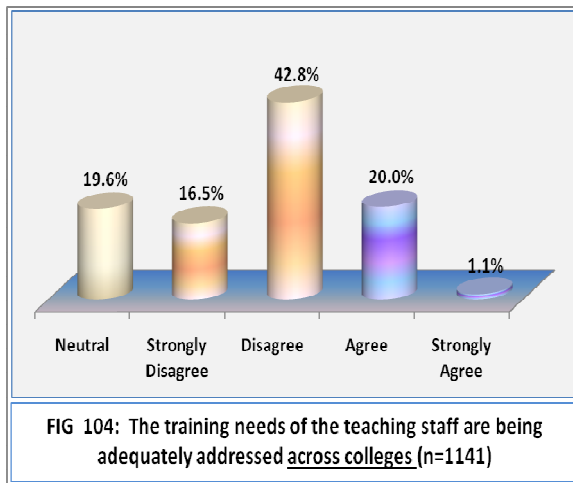


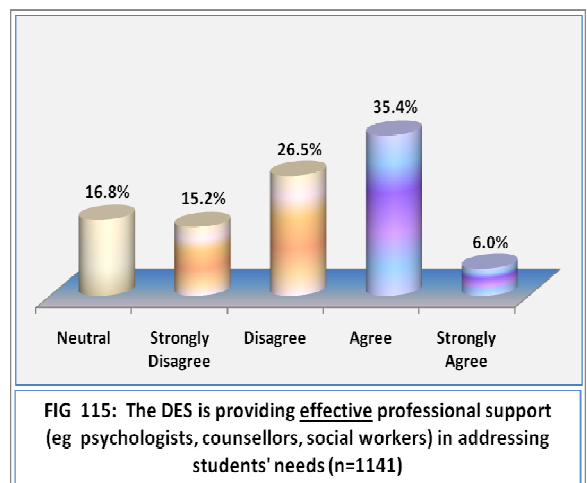
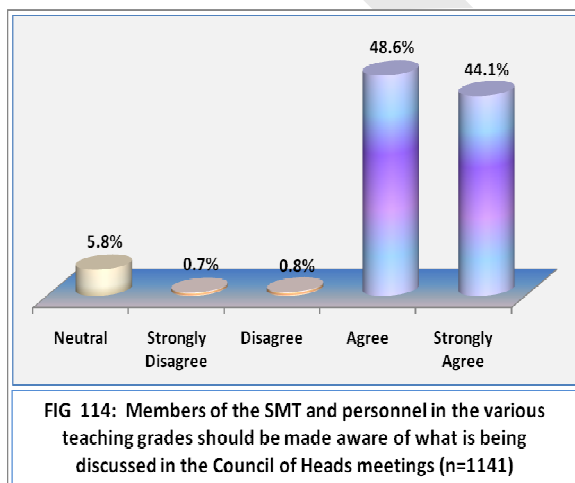
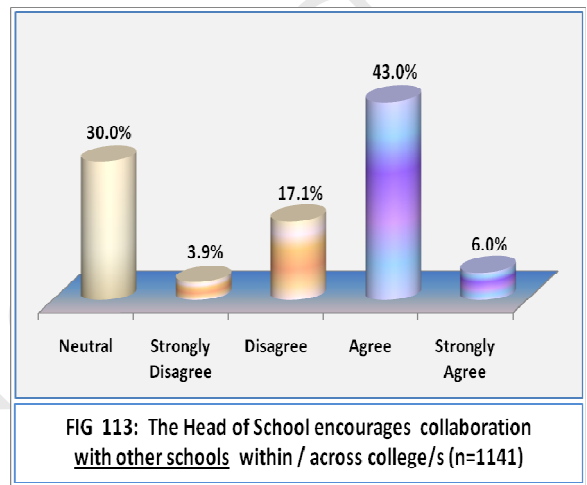
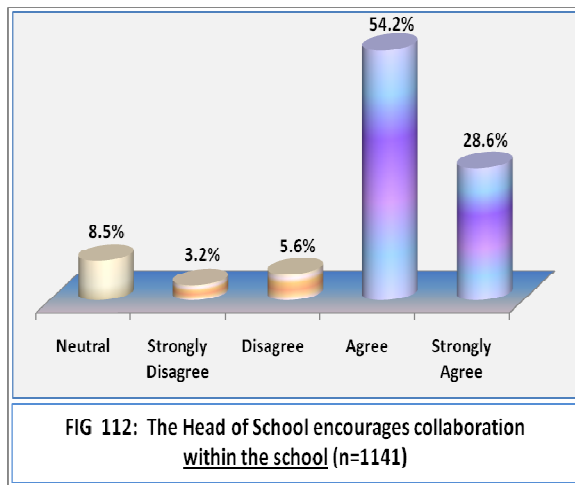
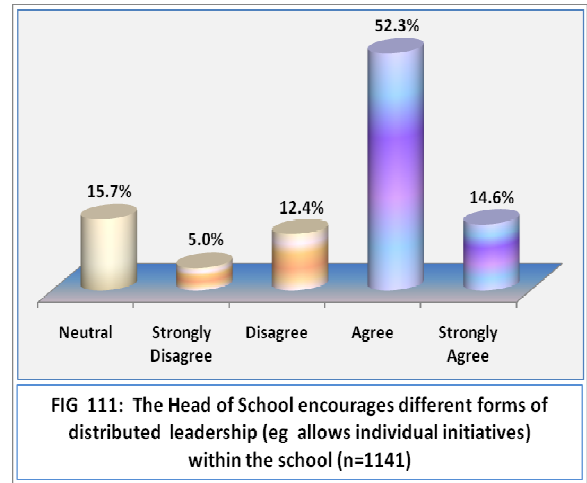
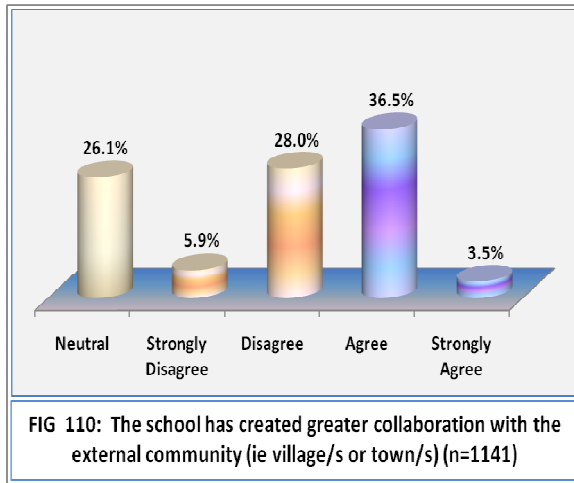


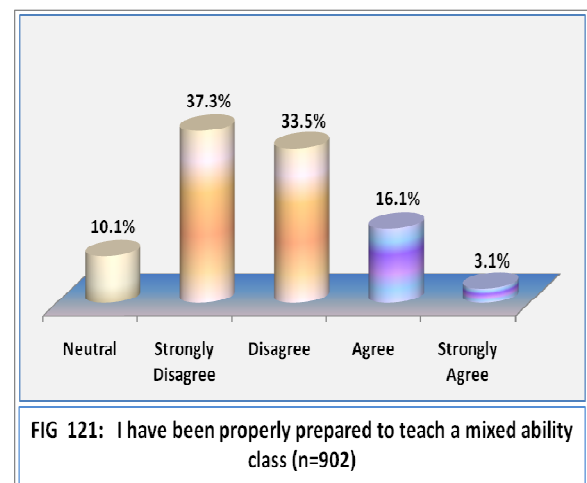
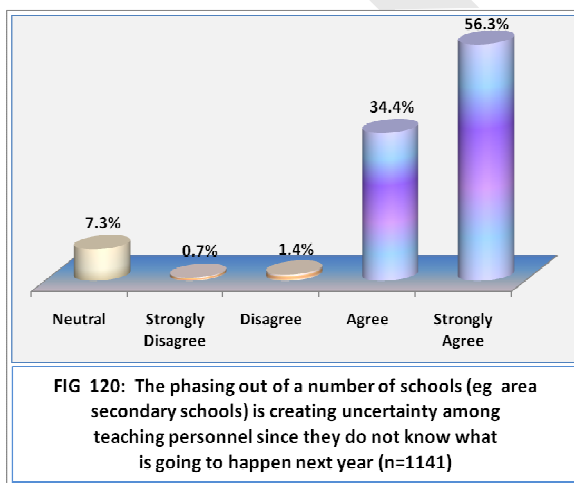
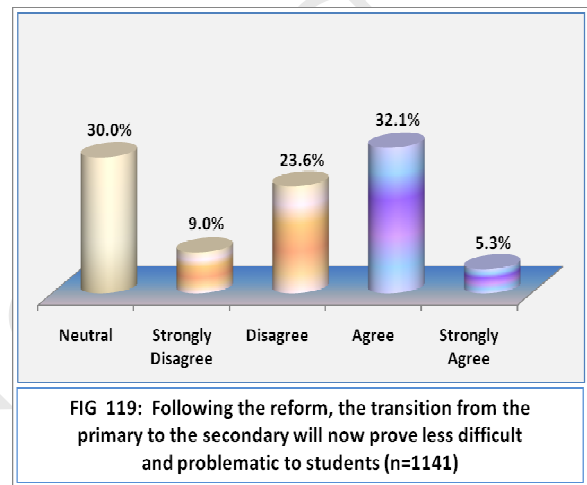
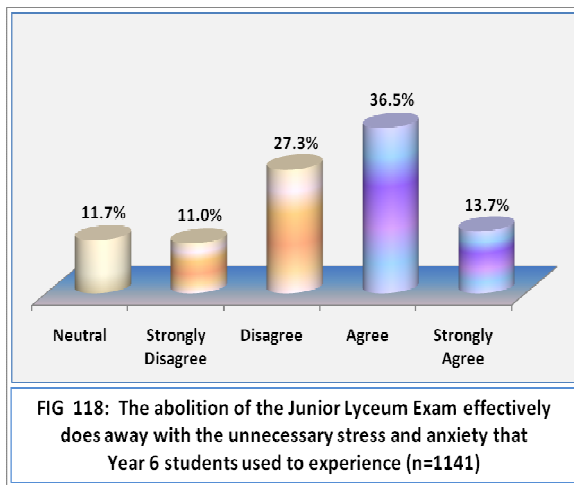
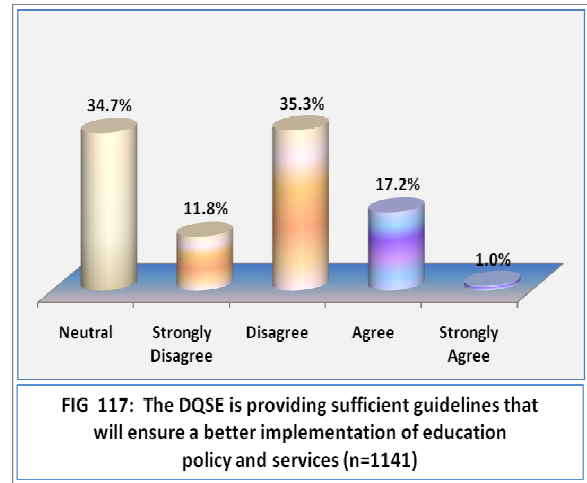
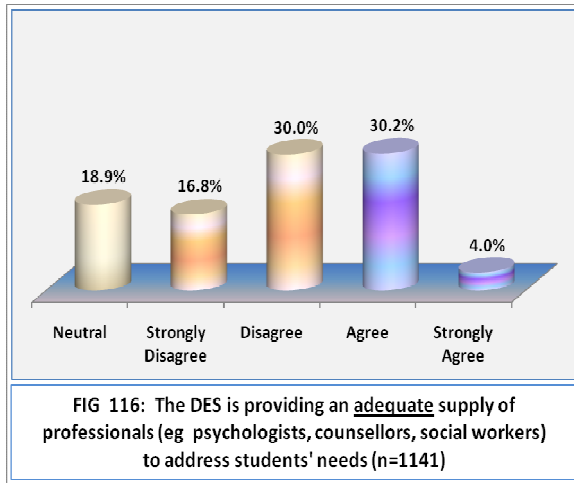


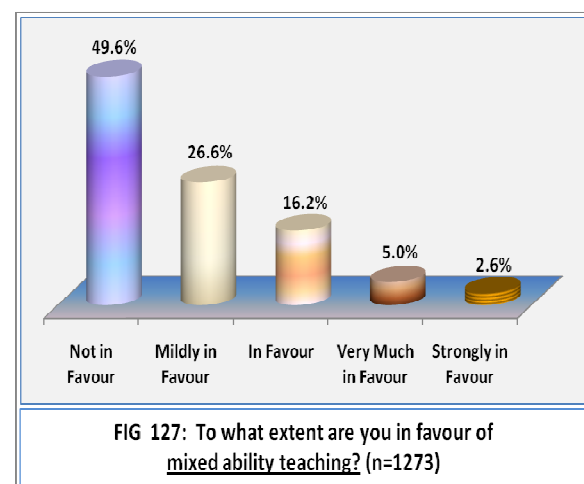
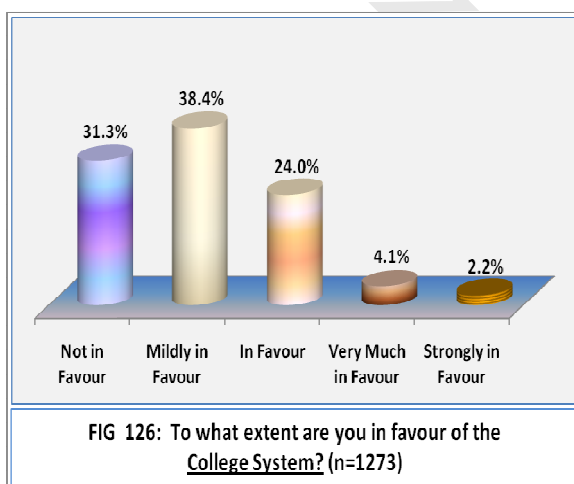
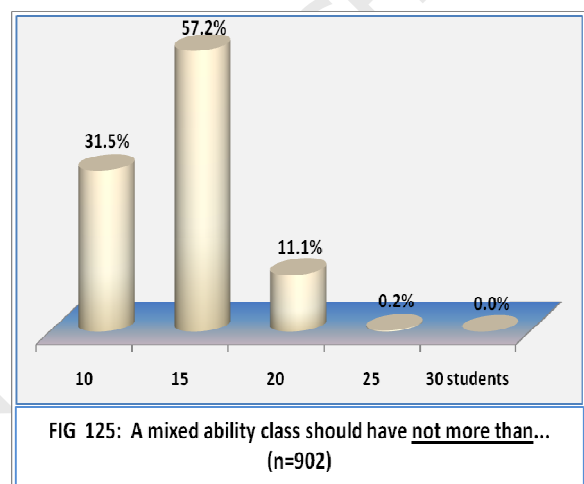
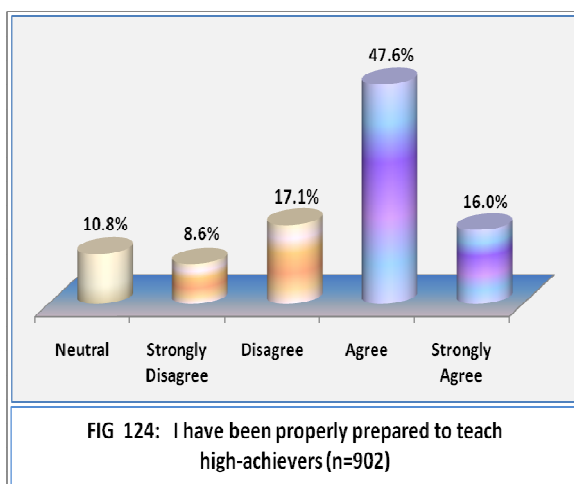
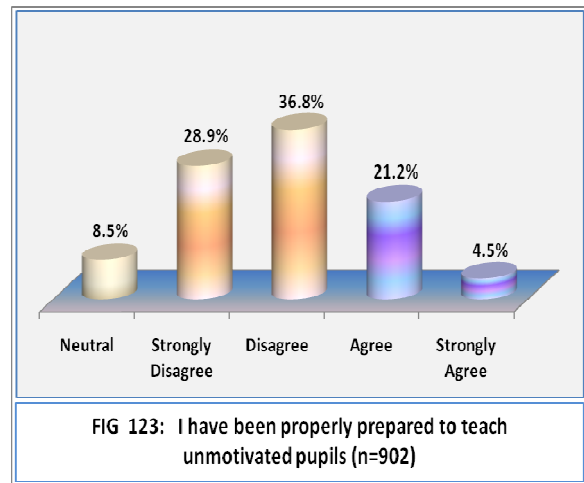
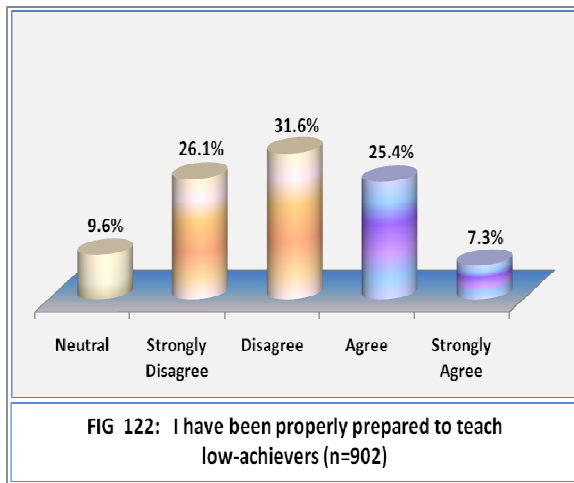


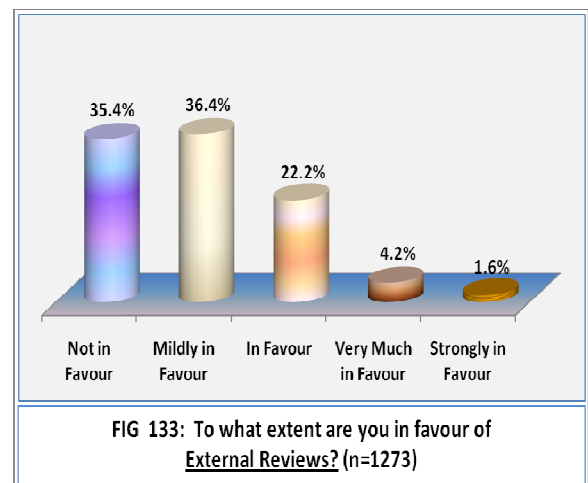
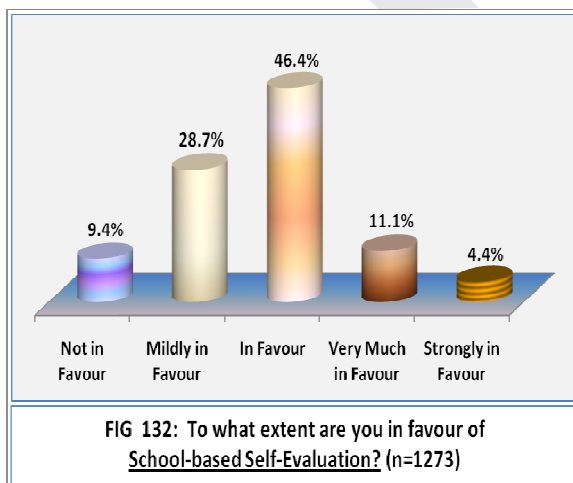
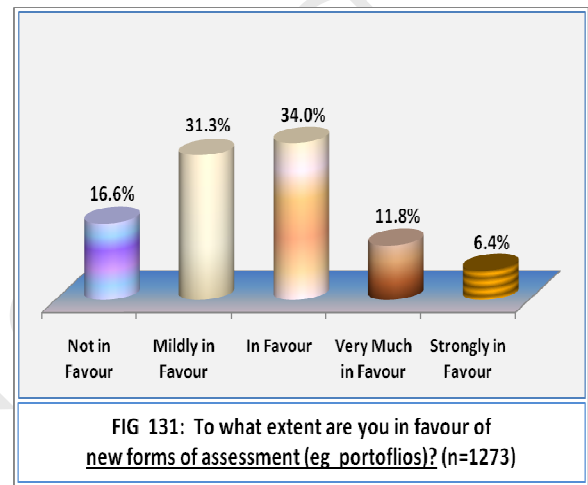
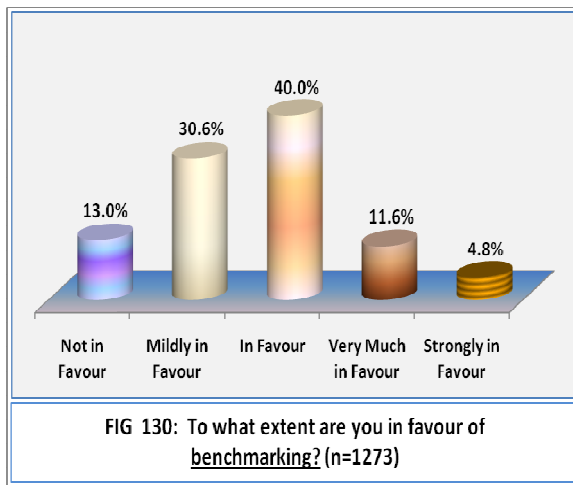
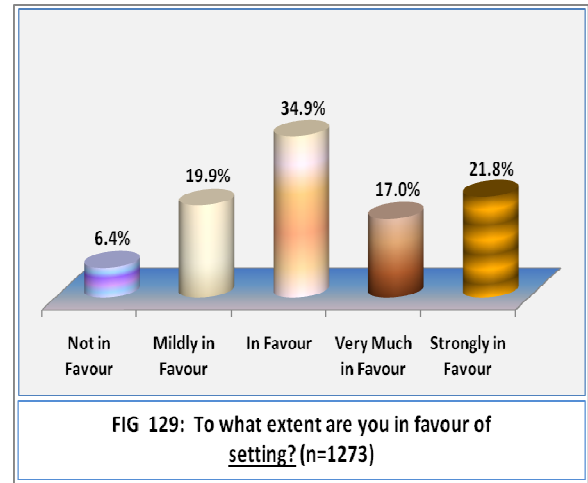
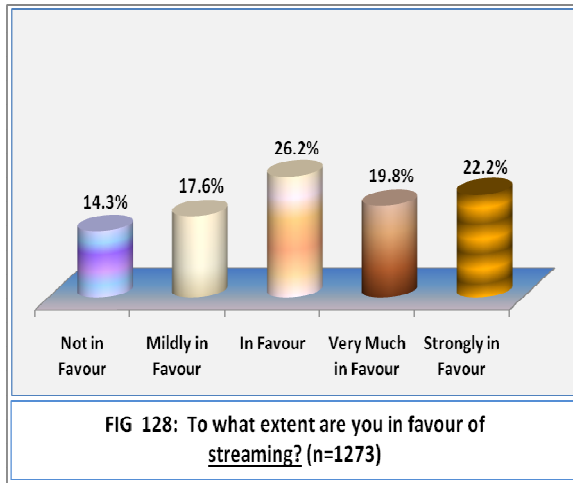


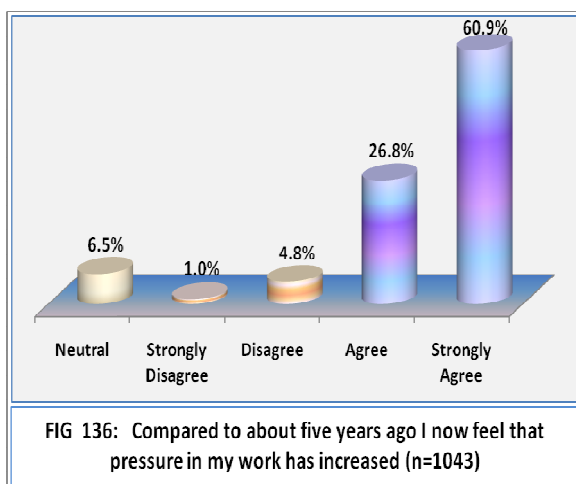
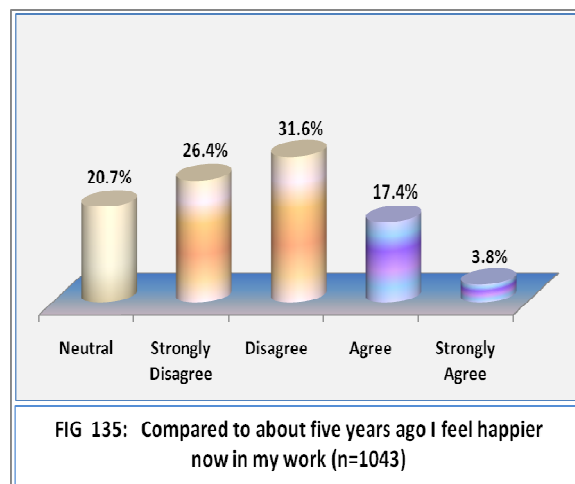
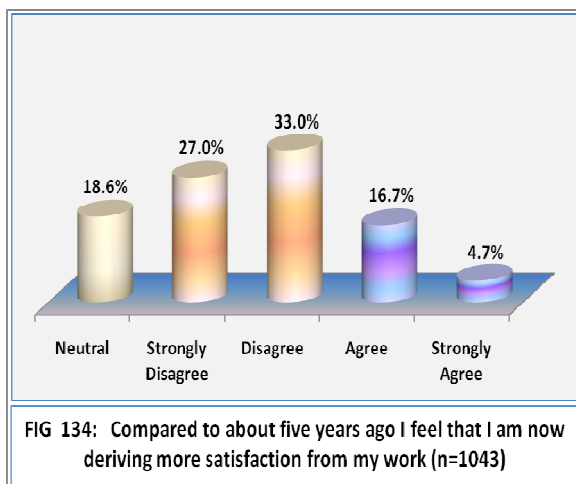












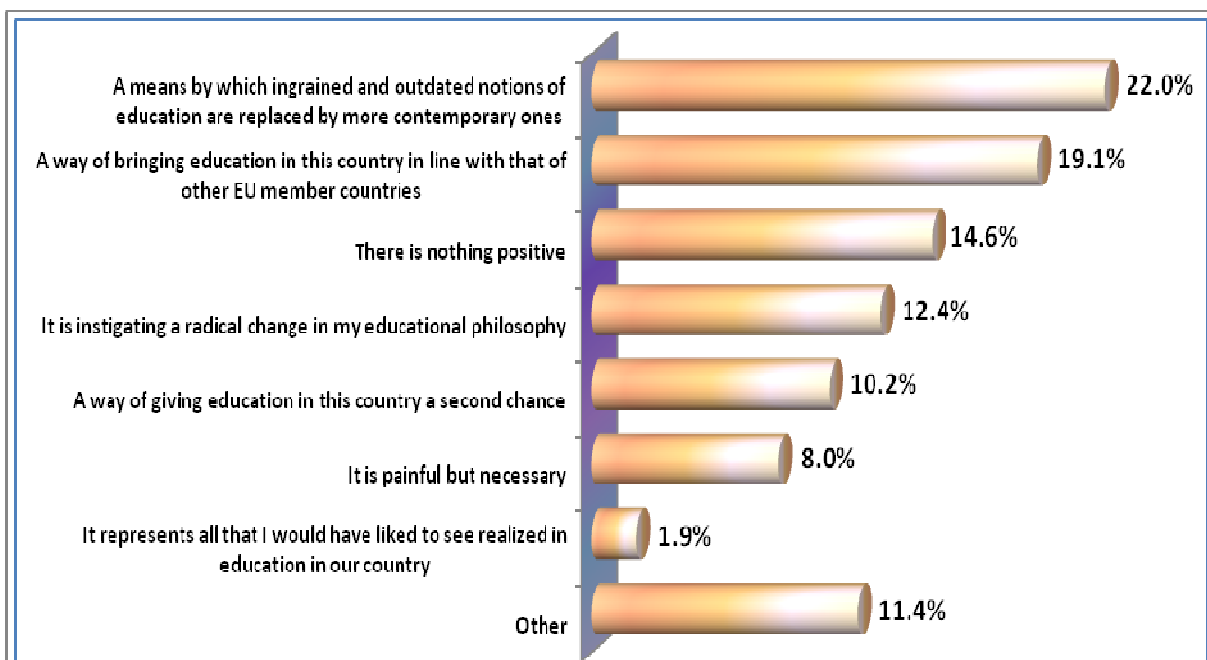


FIG 137: Which ONE of these positive statements would best encapsulate how you might feel and / or perceive the College System and its accompanying reforms? (n=1271)

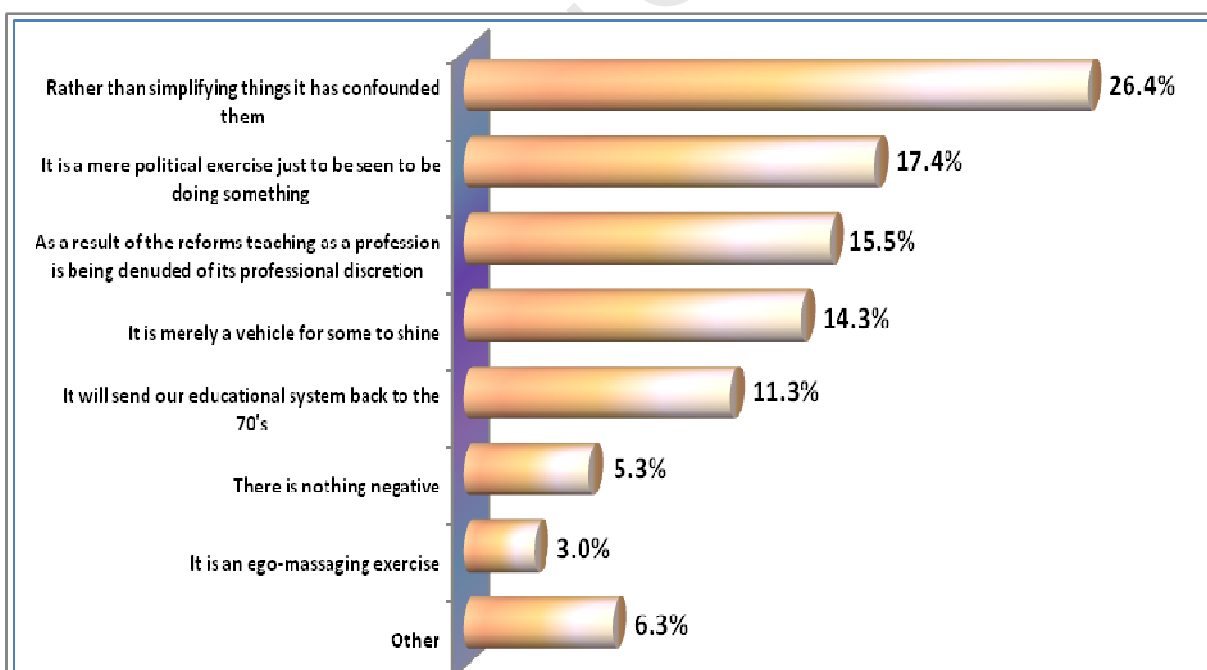


FIG 138: Which ONE of these negative statements would best encapsulate how you might feel and / or perceive the College System and its accompanying reforms? (n=1264)

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS

**THE COLLEGE SYSTEM IN THE STATE SCHOOL SECTOR:
A STUDY OF ITS IMPACT AS PERCEIVED BY COLLEGE PRINCIPALS,
MEMBERS OF SCHOOL SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS, AND
PERSONNEL IN THE VARIOUS TEACHING GRADES**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT COMMISSIONED BY THE
MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS**

**ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
DIRECTORS GENERAL**

1. Autonomy

More than 2 in 3 of the 1474 respondents indicated that colleges should have greater autonomy [Fig 7]. In addition, more than 4 in 5 feel that the College

System has still not delivered in terms of devolution and flexibility on central issues as syllabi and textbooks [Fig 11].

How would you react to these findings?

2. Competition

49% (n=1474) agreed that the College System has given rise to unhealthy competition among colleges [Fig 28].

Why do you feel that this is the case? Who do you think is responsible for promoting this unhealthy competition?

3. Volume of work

Almost 85% of respondents (n=1474) were in agreement that the College System has brought an increase in the volume of work both to personnel in the various teaching grades as well as SMTs [Fig 34].

Would you say that this is worrying especially in view of the negative impact that this may have on input?

4. Chain of command

71% of SMT respondents (n=153) indicated that the College System and the two directorates has effectively made the chain of command more complex [Fig 96].

What do you have to say about this? Are there plans for the situation to be made less complex?

5. Implementation of the curriculum

57% of respondents (n=1474) felt that their school is being required to participate in several college activities which are leaving very little room for the curriculum to be implemented [Fig 40].

What do you have to say to this?

6. Preparation for reforms

75% of 1366 respondents did not feel that they were generally being properly prepared for the several reforms that are being introduced [Fig 49]. Moreover,

78% (n=1366) felt that personnel in the various teaching grades are not prepared for these reforms [Fig 50].

Why do feel so many should feel so unprepared? What are your views on the impact that this widespread lack of preparedness can have on the success of the reforms?

7. Resources

More than 3 in 4 [n=1366] did not agree that whatever support (e.g. resources) is needed for the reforms to be successful is available [Fig 51].

What do have to say about this?

8. Consultation

82% (n=1366) felt that they have not been adequately consulted about the several reforms [Fig 53]; 73% felt that they have not even been adequately informed [Fig 54].

Would you agree that this is a very serious indictment to the inept manner in which those at the chalk face have been treated? Do you feel that this augurs well to the successful implementation of the reforms?

9. No one can deny that some degree of consultation did take place. However, almost 9 in 10 (n=1366) felt that in spite of this the decisions had already been taken [Fig 55]. Moreover, 92% (n=1366) felt that for the most part they are being led rather than being actively involved in the reforms [Fig 57]. Why should 82% feel that their voices are not being heard [Fig 58]?

Why should the vast majority of respondents feel the way they do? What went wrong? Again, shouldn't this give you reason for grave concern for the success of the reforms?

10. Pace of reforms

89% (n=1366) felt that there are too many reforms taking place at the same time [Fig 60].

What can you tell me about this?

Who determined the tight time-frame for the implementation of the reforms?

56% (n=1366) felt that students are finding it difficult to cope with the pace of the reforms [Fig 62], and 58% felt that students are finding it difficult to cope with the many changes that are taking place [Fig 63].

Do you have evidence that contradict this?

11. Teacher's work in class

69% (n=1366) felt that the many reforms that are taking place are negatively affecting teachers' work in class (Fig 68).

Should this be a cause for concern?

12. Streaming

Just about 2 in 3 respondents (n=1366) do not agree that the abolition of streaming was a good decision [Fig 72].

Where SMT and personnel in the various teaching grades consulted before this decision was taken? If they were, what was the outcome?

13. Mixed ability teaching

Of the several reforms, the one which is creating the greatest uncertainty among respondents (n=1366) is mixed ability classes (64%) [Fig 80]. In fact 71% of the 902 teachers/instructors do not agree that they have been properly prepared to teach a mixed ability class [Fig 121].

Doesn't this worry you? How can we expect these teachers to do their work properly without the necessary preparation?

14. Council of Heads

Almost 93% of teaching personnel (n=1141) feel they, as well as members of the SMT, should be made aware of what is being discussed in the Council of Heads meetings [Fig 114].

Why is it that what is discussed at these meetings is kept under tabs? Are there particular reasons for this lack of information?

DQSE

15. Professional training for curricula implementation

47% of the 1141 respondents in the various teaching grades do not agree that the DQSE is ensuring that the necessary professional training and development for the implementation of the curriculum is taking place [Fig 106], nor is the DQSE providing sufficient guidelines that will ensure a better implementation of education policy and services [Fig 117].

How would you react to this? What is being done to address this need?

DES

16. Supply of professional personnel

While about 42% teaching personnel (n=1141) feel that the DES is providing effective professional support (e.g. counsellors, psychologists, social workers) in addressing students' needs [Fig 115], 47% feel that the supply of these professional is inadequate [Fig 116].

How would you react to this? What is being done to address this need?

17. Any final comment you wish to make?

THE COLLEGE SYSTEM IN THE STATE SCHOOL SECTOR:

**A STUDY OF ITS IMPACT AS PERCEIVED BY COLLEGE PRINCIPALS,
MEMBERS OF SCHOOL SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS, AND
PERSONNEL IN THE VARIOUS TEACHING GRADES**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT COMMISSIONED BY THE
MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS**

**ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
COLLEGE PRINCIPALS**

1. Competition

49% (n=1474) agreed that the College System has given rise to unhealthy competition among colleges [Fig 28].

Why do you feel that this is the case? Who do you think is responsible for promoting this unhealthy competition?

2. Volume of Work

Almost 85% of respondents (n=1474) were in agreement that the College System has brought an increase in the volume of work both to personnel in the various teaching grades as well as SMTs [Fig 34].

Would you say that this is worrying especially in view of the negative impact that this may have on input?

3. Curriculum implementation

57% of respondents (n=1474) felt that their school is being required to participate in several college activities which are leaving very little room for the curriculum to be implemented [Fig 40].

What do you have to say to this?

4. Support

89% of the 1374 respondents are in agreement that much more support from superiors is required for one to be able to fulfill the demands of the various reforms [Fig 52].

What are your views on this? What more do feel you can do to address this?

5. Consultation

82% (n=1366) felt that they have not been adequately consulted about the several reforms [Fig 53]; 73% felt that they have not even been adequately informed [Fig 54].

Would you agree that this is a very serious indictment to the inept manner in which those at the chalk face have been treated? Do you feel that this augurs well to the successful implementation of the reforms?

6. No one can deny that some degree of consultation did take place. However, almost 9 in 10 (n=1366) felt that in spite of this the decisions had already been taken [Fig 55]. Moreover, 92% (n=1366) felt that for the most part they are being led rather than being actively involved in the reforms [Fig 57]. Why should 82% feel that their voices are not being heard [Fig 58]?

Why should the vast majority of respondents feel the way they do? What went wrong? Again, shouldn't this give you reason for grave concern for the success of the reforms?

7. Rate of reforms

89% (n=1366) felt that there are too many reforms taking place at the same time [Fig 60].

What can you tell me about this? Who determined the tight time-frame for the implementation of the reforms?

8. Coordination and implementation

69% (n=1366) do not feel that the various reforms are properly coordinated [Fig 62]; nor do 60% feel that they are being properly implemented [Fig 63].

What do you have to say to these?

9. Pace of reforms

56% (n=1366) felt that students are finding it difficult to cope with the pace of the reforms [Fig 64], and 58% felt that students are finding it difficult to cope with the many changes that are taking place [Fig 65].

Do you have evidence that contradict this?

10. Teacher's work in class

69% (n=1366) felt that the many reforms that are taking place are negatively affecting teachers' work in class (Fig 68).

Should this be a cause for concern?

11. Supportive Principals

77% of SMT respondents (n=153) reported that the College Principal is instrumental in fostering networking and collaboration [Fig 93]; 71% indicated that the Principal is generally very supportive [Fig 94].

Can you elaborate on what you are doing for SMTs to be so positive about your leadership qualities?

12. Training needs

Almost 53% of 1141 respondents in the various teaching grades did not agree that their training needs are being adequately addressed within their college [Fig 103].

What do you have to say about this? What are you doing to address this?

13. Collaboration and cooperation

80% of teaching personnel (n=1141) feel that there is not enough time allocated for collaboration and cooperation within the college [Fig 108].

This is very disconcerting.

How can networking take place if there is no sufficient time? What do you have to say about this?

14. Council of Heads meetings

Almost 93% of teaching personnel (n=1141) feel they, as well as members of the SMT, should be made aware of what is being discussed in the Council of Heads meetings [Fig 114].

Why is it that what is discussed at these meetings is kept under tabs? Are there particular reasons for this lack of information?

15. Mixed ability teaching

Of the several reforms, the one which is creating the greatest uncertainty among respondents (n=1366) is mixed ability classes (64%) [Fig 80]. In fact 71% of the 902 teachers/instructors do not agree that they have been properly prepared to teach a mixed ability class [Fig 121].

Doesn't this worry you? How can we expect these teachers to do their work properly without the necessary preparation?

16. *Any final comment you wish to make?*

THE COLLEGE SYSTEM IN THE STATE SCHOOL SECTOR:

**A STUDY OF ITS IMPACT AS PERCEIVED BY COLLEGE PRINCIPALS,
MEMBERS OF SCHOOL SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS, AND
PERSONNEL IN THE VARIOUS TEACHING GRADES**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT COMMISSIONED BY THE
MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS**

**ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
SCHOOL SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS**

1. Competition

49% (n=1474) agreed that the College System has given rise to unhealthy competition among colleges [Fig 28].

Why do you feel that this is the case? Who do you think is responsible for promoting this unhealthy competition?

2. Consultation

82% (n=1366) felt that they have not been adequately consulted about the several reforms [Fig 53]; 73% felt that they have not even been adequately informed [Fig 54].

Would you agree that this is a very serious indictment to the inept manner in which those at the chalk face have been treated? Do you feel that this augurs well to the successful implementation of the reforms?

3. No one can deny that some degree of consultation did take place. However, almost 9 in 10 (n=1366) felt that in spite of this the decisions had already been taken [Fig 55]. Moreover, 92% (n=1366) felt that for the most part they are being led rather than being actively involved in the reforms [Fig 57]. Why should 82% feel that their voices are not being heard [Fig 58]?

Why should the vast majority of respondents feel the way they do? What went wrong? Again, shouldn't this give you reason for grave concern for the success of the reforms?

4. Amount of Reforms

69% (n=1366) felt that the many reforms that are taking place are negatively affecting teachers' work in class (Fig 68).

Can elaborate why this should be so?

5. Rate of Change

89% (n=1366) felt that there are too many reforms taking place at the same time [Fig 60].

What can you tell me about this? Who determined the tight time-frame for the implementation of the reforms?

6. Volume of Work

Almost 85% of respondents (n=1474) were in agreement that the College System has brought an increase in the volume of work both to personnel in the various teaching grades as well as SMTs [Fig 34].

Can you elaborate on this?

7. Administration

94% of SMT respondents (n=153) reported that paper work still dominates much of the SMT work [Fig 82].

Is this reality familiar to you? Can you kindly elaborate?

8. Curricular Work

Almost 93% (n=153) indicated that they have very little time to do curricular work or to mentor [Fig 85].

What are your views? Why is this so?

9. Selection of Staff

Almost 58% (n=153) feel that the Head of school should have the right to select teachers and other teaching personnel on his/her staff [Fig 87]; 54% feel the same about members of the SMT [Fig 88].

What do you think about this?

10. Support: DES

42% felt that the DES is generally very supportive [Fig 99].

Do you share this view and why?

11. Support: DQSE

39% indicated that the DQSE is generally very supportive [Fig 100].

Do you share this view and why?

12. Mixed ability teaching

Of the several reforms, the one which is creating the greatest uncertainty among respondents (n=1366) is mixed ability classes (64%) [Fig 80]. In fact 71% of the 902 teachers/instructors do not agree that they have been properly prepared to teach a mixed ability class [Fig 121].

What are your views on this? What could have been done to address this?

13. Any final comment you wish to make?

MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS

THE COLLEGE SYSTEM IN THE STATE SCHOOL SECTOR:

**A STUDY OF ITS IMPACT AS PERCEIVED BY COLLEGE PRINCIPALS,
MEMBERS OF SCHOOL SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS, AND
PERSONNEL IN THE VARIOUS TEACHING GRADES**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT COMMISSIONED BY THE
MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS**

**ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
PERSONNEL IN THE VARIOUS TEACHING GRADES**

1. Competition

49% (n=1474) agreed that the College System has given rise to unhealthy competition among colleges [Fig 28].

Why do you feel that this is the case? Who do you think is responsible for promoting this unhealthy competition?

2. Volume of work

Almost 85% of respondents (n=1474) were in agreement that the College System has brought an increase in the volume of work both to personnel in the various teaching grades as well as SMTs [Fig 34].

Can you elaborate on this?

3. Preparation for the reforms

75% of 1366 respondents did not feel that they were generally being properly prepared for the several reforms that are being introduced [Fig 49]. Moreover, 78% (n=1366) felt that personnel in the various teaching grades are not prepared for these reforms.

Do you share this view? What should have been done to address this need?

4. Consultation

82% (n=1366) felt that they have not been adequately consulted about the several reforms [Fig 53]; 73% felt that they have not even been adequately informed [Fig 54].

Would you agree that this is a very serious indictment to the inept manner in which those at the chalk face have been treated? Do you feel that this augurs well to the successful implementation of the reforms?

5. Consultation and decision taking

No one can deny that some degree of consultation did take place. However, almost 9 in 10 (n=1366) felt that in spite of this the decisions had already been taken [Fig 55]. Moreover, 92% (n=1366) felt that for the most part they are being led rather than being actively involved in the reforms [Fig 57]. Why should 82% feel that their voices are not being heard [Fig 58]?

Why should the vast majority of respondents feel the way they do? What went wrong? Again, shouldn't this give you reason for grave concern for the success of the reforms?

6. Rate of reforms

89% (n=1366) felt that there are too many reforms taking place at the same time [Fig 60].

What can you tell me about this? Who determined the tight time-frame for the implementation of the reforms?

7. Teacher's work in class

69% (n=1366) felt that the many reforms that are taking place are negatively affecting teachers' work in class (Fig 68).

Can elaborate why this should be so?

8. Council of Heads

Almost 93% of teaching personnel (n=1141) feel they, as well as members of the SMT, should be made aware of what is being discussed in the Council of Heads meetings [Fig 114].

Why do feel that you should know what is being discussed at these meetings?

9. Mixed ability teaching

Of the several reforms, the one which is creating the greatest uncertainty among respondents (n=1366) is mixed ability classes (64%) [Fig 80]. In fact 71% of the 902 teachers/instructors do not agree that they have been properly prepared to teach a mixed ability class [Fig 121].

What are your views on this? What could have been done to address this?

10. *Any final comment you wish to make?*

APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS

RECRUITMENT LETTER/ INFORMATION SHEET

THE COLLEGE SYSTEM IN THE STATE SCHOOL SECTOR: A STUDY OF ITS IMPACT AS PERCEIVED BY COLLEGE PRINCIPALS, MEMBERS OF SCHOOL SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS, AND PERSONNEL IN THE VARIOUS TEACHING GRADES

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this research project, the major aim of which is to provide an empirically-based investigation of the impact that the College System and related reforms are having as perceived by school personnel, senior management teams, and college principals. The research will seek to determine the impact of the College System on the autonomy of individual schools, the role and responsibilities of Heads and Assistant Heads of schools as well as the its impact on students' entitlement. It will also investigate the views, opinions and concerns, of primary and secondary school personnel in all teaching grades on, and about, the College System and the related reforms.

The research is commissioned and funded by the Malta Union of Teachers, with the approval of the two Directorates. The results of the research will be made public by the Malta Union of Teachers.

During this interview I _____ as a researcher / research assistant will abide by the following conditions:

- a) Your name will not be used in the study.
- b) Data not yet anonymised will only be seen by the researchers identified at the end of this consent form. Only data from which identifying elements have been removed will be included in all reports and final publication.
- c) You are free to stop your participation in the interview at any point in time, and for whatever reason. In the case that you withdraw, all records and information collected will be destroyed.
- d) No form of deception in the data collection process will be used
- e) Conclusion of the research will be published.
- f) Recording of the session will only take place if you agree to the use of a voice recorder. The recordings will only be used as an aide-mémoire

I as participant

- Confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet attached to this consent form.
- Have had the opportunity to consider the information given, ask questions and have had these satisfactorily answered.
- Understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason whatsoever.

The Research Team

- Will treat the recording with absolute confidentiality.
- Will report those parts of the interview that are transcribed once the interviewee gives his or her approval.

I agree to take part in the above research study.

Name of Participant: _____ e-mail: _____

Signature _____

Date: _____

I agree to the guarantees and conditions set above:

Name of Researcher: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Dr. Joseph Giordmaina

Tel/sms +356 9945 0128

on behalf of the research team

The researchers

Prof Mark Borg. (markgborg@gmail.com)

Dr. Joseph Giordmaina (giordi9945@gmail.com)

Dr. Anthony Vella (anthonyjohnvella@gmail.com)

CONSENT FORM

**THE COLLEGE SYSTEM IN THE STATE SCHOOL SECTOR:
A STUDY OF ITS IMPACT AS PERCEIVED BY COLLEGE PRINCIPALS, MEMBERS
OF SCHOOL SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS, AND PERSONNEL IN THE
VARIOUS TEACHING GRADES**

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this research project, the major aim of which is to provide an empirically-based investigation of the impact that the College System and related reforms are having as perceived by school personnel, senior management teams, and college principals. The research will seek to determine the impact of the College System on the autonomy of individual schools, the role and responsibilities of Heads and Assistant Heads of schools as well as the its impact on students' entitlement. It will also investigate the views, opinions and concerns, of primary and secondary school personnel in all teaching grades on, and about, the College System and the related reforms.

The research is commissioned and funded by the Malta Union of Teachers, with the approval of the two Directorates. The results of the research will be made public by the Malta Union of Teachers.

During this interview I _____ as a researcher / research assistant will abide by the following conditions:

- g) Your name will not be used in the study.
- h) Data not yet anonymised will only be seen by the researchers identified at the end of this consent form. Only data from which identifying elements have been removed will be included in all reports and final publication.
- i) You are free to stop your participation in the interview at any point in time, and for whatever reason. In the case that you withdraw, all records and information collected will be destroyed.
- j) No form of deception in the data collection process will be used
- k) Conclusion of the research will be published.
- l) Recording of the session will only take place if you agree to the use of a voice recorder. The recordings will only be used as an aide-mémoire

I as participant

- Confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet attached to this consent form.
- Have had the opportunity to consider the information given, ask questions and have had these satisfactorily answered.
- Understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason whatsoever.

The Research Team

- Will treat the recording with absolute confidentiality.
- Will report those parts of the interview that are transcribed once the interviewee gives his or her approval.

I agree to take part in the above research study.

Name of Participant: _____ e-mail: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I agree to the guarantees and conditions set above:

Name of Researcher: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Dr. Joseph Giordmaina

Tel/sms +356 9945 0128

on behalf of the research team

The researchers

Prof Mark Borg. (markgborg@gmail.com)

Dr. Joseph Giordmaina (giordi9945@gmail.com)

Dr. Anthony Vella (anthonyjohnvella@gmail.com)