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The Educator

A journal of educational matters

The objective of this annual, peer-reviewed journal is to publish research on any aspect of education. It seeks to attract contributions which help to promote debate on educational matters and present new or updated research in the field of education. Such areas of study include human development, learning, formal and informal education, vocational and tertiary education, lifelong learning, the sociology of education, the philosophy of education, the history of education, curriculum studies, the psychology of education, and any other area which is related to the field of education including teacher trade unionism.

This journal accepts articles from teachers, academics, administrators, graduate students, policy-makers, education specialists and any other author or researcher whose work contributes to the different facets of education and related areas.

It is the aim of *The Educator* to publish articles which cover particular dimensions such as:

a. The integration of education with other academic disciplines including history, law, linguistics, anthropology, demography, philosophy, economics, psychology, political science, and sociology, among others.
b. The examination of educational issues from a cross-cultural perspective.
c. The inclusion of substantive findings that may be of help to policy-makers and practice.
d. The examination of information technology in the field of education.
e. The implementation of research methods and measurement processes which are clearly presented.
f. The presentation of theories, models or conceptual frameworks in the field of education.
g. The exposition of research findings derived from comparative and cross-national studies in education.
h. The presentation and discussion of material derived from primary sources including archival documents, primary data and resource persons.
i. Any other dimension which the editorial board deems compatible with the overall objectives of the journal.

Authors who are interested in having their work published in *The Educator* may contact the editor on **george.cassar@um.edu.mt**

To read or not to read:
Exploring the use of fonts and ease of read

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This article introduces some of the studies which address the effects of font types on improving reading for dyslexics and non-dyslexics. Different research findings are viewed, discussed and compared.

Font Types

Font types can be seen almost everywhere around us – on logos, street signs, packaging, and on the media. Typographers consider font type to be the most important factor to emphasize the message being conveyed (Subbaram, 2004). Nowadays, many different font types are found in both printed and electronic media. Even though in the past the terms typeface and fonts had a different meaning, today they are used interchangeably (Baines & Haslam, 2002), and therefore, these words will be used interchangeably throughout this article. Fonts can be classified into different categories such as weight, size and spacing.

Weight. Weighting can be defined as the visual thickness and thinness a stroke has or the adjustment of width in relation to the letter's height (Carter, Day & Meggs, 2007). Perrero and Ballabio (1998) note that letters with very thin weighting cause problems since there is not enough contrast between the letter structure and the background. The weight of a font can be regular, italic or bold. However, typefaces often consist of a variety of weights ranging from thin to heavy black (Cranford, 2010). Weight in a font has particular functions since it is linked to the word being conveyed. If a particular word or phrase has a heavier weight from the rest of the other words, it surely wants to convey a strong message. On the other hand a lighter weight text conveys that it is less important and is indirectly used to help the heavier weight to stand out (Samara, 2006).

Size. The size of any particular font has the ability to affect the legibility of text (Bernard, Liao & Mills, 2001). In a typeface, the x-height is the distance between the baseline and the mean line (fig. 1). The baseline is the base of where each letter of a font rests on, whilst the mean line is half the distance from the top of where the letter is visible right to the baseline. The x-height
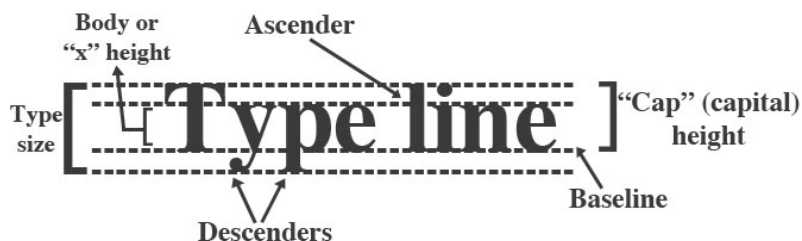

Fig. 1: Some of the typographic terminology mentioned in the article. (Dahl, 2006)

is particularly the body of lowercase letters of fonts which are not above or below the mean line or the baseline. Examples of these letters are 'e', 'v' and 'w'. Small letters such as 'b', 'h' and 'l' start from the ascender height while capital letters start from the cap height. Furthermore the descender height is that part of a lowercase letter that extends below the baseline such as the letters 'j' and 'p'. Each font has a different x-height which affects the size of the text being read. For instance the letter 'n' of OpenDyslexic font (n), and of Times New Roman (n) having the same font size, actually display a different x-height since the former is much higher. Evidence shows that an enlarged x-height of a font enhances faster reading speed (Bernard, Liao & Mills, 2001) and it also assists with discerning between letters that have the same look (Watts & Nisbet, 1974).

Spacing. Another important factor to consider is the spacing which helps make the text more readable. Hence, if the text has too much or too little of space it can result in words being too close or too spaced out making the words indecipherable. New York University researchers Pelli and Tillman (2008) conclude that character spacing is the crucial factor for legibility. This can be done by reading the text from a certain distance in order to allow the brain to read the words and text without effort.

Alignment. This is the way in which the text is spread across a page. Therefore, horizontal alignment is text which is presented as left-aligned, right-aligned or as justified. Justified text is when the words are spaced out to fit across the page. Ling and Schaik's (2007) research on web pages indicates that varying text presentation, such as wider line spacing, lead to better accuracy and faster response times. Left-aligned text led to better performance, although participants preferred justified text. Bringhurst (1992) suggests that left aligned text is better to read because of the uneven edge found on the right. This variability in line length helps the individuals to find the text better without losing their place. Sykes (2008) concluded that adjustments in printed text were needed to help make it more accessible for dyslexic students to read. Such adjustments are: "increasing the amount of white space on the page, reducing the amount of text per page, signalling important content using bold or numbered lists, using a larger size font and shorter line length" (Skyes, 2008, p. vi). Dyslexics find it easier to read when line spacing is used between paragraphs, text is left aligned and when space between the lines is 1.5 or double. Moreover, wider margins and bold words that highlight important phrases also help (British Dyslexia Association, 2017).

Serif and sans serif fonts. Font types are classified as serif and sans serif. A serif is a horizontal line at the end stroke of a letter (Lockhead & Crist, 1980) while a sans serif font does not have this feature. Serif typefaces can be found

where heavy amount of text are present such as in books, articles, magazines and newspapers. On the other hand the sans serif is not favoured when it is seen on books or magazines since sans serif fonts have "less fine detail" and "have more uniform stroke widths" (Josephson, 2008, p.68). Several studies verify that sans serif fonts, such as Verdana, are better used on screen (Josephson, 2008; Kole, 2013).

A vital distinction in fonts is whether or not they have serifs (Coronel-Beltrán & Alvarez-Borrego, 2010). According to Caplin (2008), the presence of serifs in texts helps readers not to get tired and helps the eyes to follow each line in a better way. One element of the sans serif fonts is that its strokes are of the same thickness in almost every structure whether it is written horizontally or vertically. Times New Roman is a well-known serif font while Arial is a sans serif font (fig. 2).
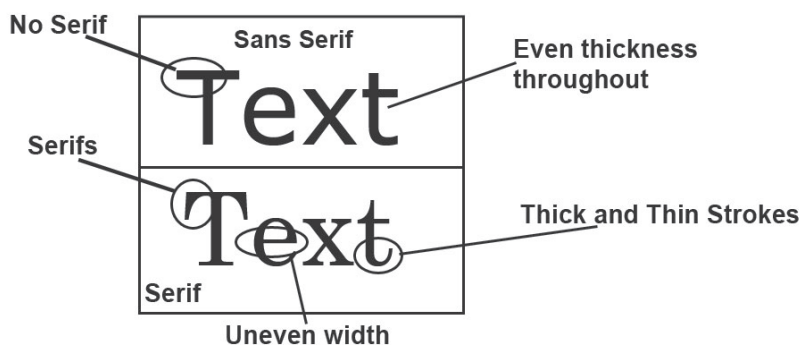

Fig. 2: Differences in serif (Century) and sans serif (Verdana) font.

A study by Moret-Tatay and Perea (2011) showed that sans serif fonts were favoured over serif fonts among 80 per cent of the participants and there was no reading benefit for words written in serif font. Furthermore, researchers found that serifs do not facilitate the process of visual-word identification and their presence may hinder lexical access.

Subbaram (2004) studied the effect of display and text on reading. His results show that a significant effect of font type is on legibility. Around 30 subjects were selected and the legibility testing was performed using 12-pt font on a computer display. Six different font types which were both serif (Georgia, Times New Roman and Plantin) and sans serif fonts (Verdana, Arial, and Franklin Gothic) were used in the study. Subjects chose Verdana and Arial as the most legible fonts while Times New Roman and Franklin Gothic were chosen as the least legible. Thus, font types play a significant role in legibility

of text. Subbaram concludes that font design features, other than font size, contribute to the relative legibility of a font type.

Although OpenDyslexic Font (fig. 3) was created specifically for persons with dyslexia there have not been many published scientific research or studies to support whether or not it really helps dyslexics to read.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj

Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss

Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Fig. 3: OpenDyslexic Font

According to Abelardo Gonzalez, the creator of OpenDyslexic font, the letters found in this font are heavy weighted at the bottom to indicate direction which adds a kind of 'gravity' to each letter, helping readers to read and recognise the correct letter. Thus, the shape of each letter helps prevent readers from flipping or swapping letters such as the letters 'b', 'd' and 'p', 'q' (b, d, p, q). OpenDyslexic has features such as wider letter spacing and the typeface includes regular, bold and italic styles.

After several correspondence between the present author and Gonzalez, starting from 12 September, 2014, he answered in writing that he was still waiting for the results and hoped that feedback regarding a specific study relating to OpenDyslexic would be published in the summer of 2015. Gonzalez was not in a position to provide data up to the time that the present study was originally submitted (May 2015).

Arran Smith, the British Dyslexia Association group's project officer, states that: "As a dyslexic, I find this font very easy to read [as it] reduces the effects of visual stress that I experience" (Kelion, 2012, n.p.). Gonzalez also states that the response that people gave him through e-mails and messages has been great. One message which was sent to Gonzalez said that, "it was the first time that one could read text without it looking wiggly" (Kelion, 2012, n.p.). Anecdotal conversations with Maltese students with dyslexia and their parents indicate that not all dyslexic students found this the easiest font to read.

Rello and Baeza-Yates (2013) carried out a Spanish study using several fonts (Arial, Arial It, Computer Modern, Courier, Garamond, Helvetica, Myriad, OpenDyslexic, OpenDyslexic It, Times New Roman, Times New Roman It and Verdana). The use of the OpenDyslexic font in this study did not enhance text readability or reading speed. The study participants strongly preferred Verdana or Helvetica over the OpenDyslexic alternative. Based on their findings, the researchers recommended Helvetica, Courier, Arial, Verdana and Computer Modern for dyslexics, based both on reading performance and subjective preference; and cautioned against the use of italic texts.

Other fonts created specifically for persons with dyslexia are Dyslexie, Lexia Readable and Andika.

Dyslexie (fig. 4) was created by Christian Boer who has a profile of dyslexia himself. Boer (2011) states that his aim was to move away from traditional fonts which tend to be designed only for aesthetics. He tried to make this font less confusing for people by making the words look clearer and distinguishable. Dyslexie has unique characteristics such as letters having heavy base lines, larger openings and semi-cursive lean and irregular stick and tail lengths. Some studies from the University of Twente show that the dyslexic readers made less errors than the other readers while reading the text in the Dyslexie font (De Leeuw, 2010; Pijpker, 2013).
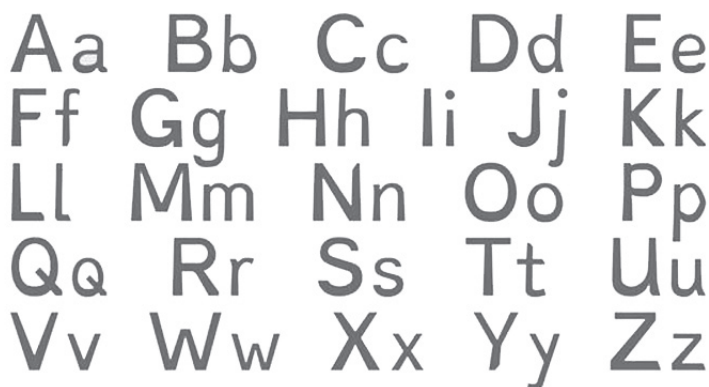

Fig. 4: Dyslexie Font

Lexia Readable (fig. 5) is designed to have the clarity and ease of access such as that of Comic Sans. This font has good size of descenders and ascenders and has good spacing and is quite clear (Ryan, 2015).

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Fig. 5: LexiaReadable Font

The font Andika (fig. 6) was created by Victor Gaultney, Annie Olsen, Julie Remington, Don Collingsworth and Eric Hays. This sans serif font is clear, simple and its letters are easy to recognise. This helps dyslexics and beginners not to get confused. The Andika font has several characteristics which help the readers to further see the letters better. The lower case 'r' when it is being followed by 'n' does not look like 'm', the capital 'I', lower case 'l' and number '1' do not look alike, while the lower case 'a' and 'g' look more like handwriting (Frank, 2013).

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

Fig. 6: Andika Font

A study by Harley, Kline, Price, Jones, Mosley, Farmer and Fain (2013) investigated three different font types: Helvetica, Lexia Readable, and OpenDyslexic among dyslexic and non-dyslexic subjects. Dyslexics reported that Helvetica was better than OpenDyslexic with regard to "letter sharpness, letter legibility, and overall ease of reading" (p.28). The results indicate that for both dyslexics and non-dyslexics, Helvetica with improved line spacing would be easier to read than OpenDyslexic or Lexia Readable.

Readability and legibility

Readability and legibility are two significant factors used in type but are regularly being misrepresented and this limits their usability. Readability refers to appearance and legibility to function. Readability addresses how different texts are displayed and how attracted and eager the reader becomes. The text must be "unconventional, unpredictable, original and dynamic" (White, 2005, p.131). Legibility, on the other hand, has to be functional and simple while it looks at the whole make-up of the type. It looks at the essential qualities of type such as font size, weighting, line and letter spacing and the main issue is how to achieve the maximum level of legibility (Lee, 2003; White, 2005). Books from publisher Barrington Stoke (2017) have their own dyslexic friendly font. This font helps to reduce some of the barriers children find when reading. The text is short and presented on a cream paper.

Several researchers (such as, Bloodsworth, 1993; Fiske, 1994; Hughes & Wilkins, 2000) find that typographical factors and print size are beneficial in the development of reading skills. Once children master the skills to decode letters into words, reading becomes automatic (Payne & Turner, 1999). Printed words also affect reading because without legibility, reading becomes a difficult and complex process. Chandler (2001) notes that legibility refers to the "relative ease with which individual letterforms, words and paragraphs may be read" (p.17).

Bloodsworth (1993) concludes that the most legible combination for reading is black print on a white background and that the cross lines of serif fonts reduce eye fatigue. He further notes that older children who struggle with reading, benefit from larger font sizes such as size 14 since it would be an easier reading process. Larger font sizes facilitate the eye movement allowing children to track their reading with ease.

Children with IRLEN syndrome (also referred to as Meares-Irlen Syndrome, Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome or Visual Stress) are mostly labelled as being dyslexic but these conditions are two separate things (Irlen, 2015 a & b). The IRLEN syndrome causes difficulty in the brain's ability to process visual information and affected people tend to be sensitive to light. IRLEN syndrome is genetic, varies from one person to another and can affect many different areas of a child's life such as behaviour, attention, concentration and work performance. Several factors can help people with the IRLEN syndrome to read better such as having specific colour or coloured plastic overlays on printed white paper (Croyle, 1998; Northway, 2003). Writing on coloured paper reduces visual stress, eye strain, and helps improve one's handwriting and reading (Harris & MacRow-Hill, 1999; Evans, Patel & Wilkins, 2002). Using coloured lenses and dimming laptop screens help diminish headaches (Irlen, 2015a & b).

Fonts affecting reading

Bernard, Lida, Riley, Hackler, and Janzen's study (2002) shows how font type affects the readability of text. They compared eight different fonts. These were Arial, Century Schoolbook, Comic Sans, Courier New, Georgia, Tahoma, Times New Roman and Verdana and each font were in 10, 12 and 14 point sizes. At font size 10, Verdana was the most preferred font while Arial was preferred for font size 12 and Comic Sans was preferred at font size 14. The participants read Times New Roman and Arial in the fastest time when compared to the other fonts. Out of all fonts, Arial and Courier were shown to be most legible.

Beymer, Russell and Orton (2008) investigated how the typographical issues of font size and font type impact online reading. The subjects in their study took a longer time to read a passage with small font size. Regarding font types, Georgia was read faster than Helvetica although the difference was not significant. Darroch, Goodman, Brewster and Gray (2005) investigated different font sizes on a handheld device for young and old subjects. Their results indicate that there was no effect of font size on reading time. However, Hughes and Wilkins (2000) carried out consecutive experiments, varying the types of fonts, sizes and reading tasks. Their results show that children profit from a larger font when reading.

Reading on paper versus on screen

Reading from the screen has become popular due to diverse advances in technology. Modern computer screens are better than the older ones since all types of fonts can be displayed in a clearer way and are similar to printed material (Bryan, 1996; Rabinowitz, 2006). Gugerty, Tyrrell, Aten and Edmonds (2004) found that readability of text is increased by screen resolution. Ferrari and Short (2002) and Erdogan (2008) all point out that technology is changing the way we read and comprehend text, as reading text on a computer screen is different from reading from a paper.

Besides the study of reading from print there is also research on keyboarding and reading on screen and paper. These show that keyboarding can help dyslexics since writing can be tiring. It generally concludes that reading on paper is better due to many factors such as experiencing less eye strain, while reading from paper is a tangible experience.

Conclusion

From the studies mentioned above, it emerges that dyslexics prefer to read Helvetica, Courier, Arial, Verdana and Computer Modern for both reading performance as well as for subjective preference (Rello & Baeza-Yates 2013). Dyslexics feel that Helvetica was better than OpenDyslexic due to several characteristics such as letter sharpness and legibility (Harley et al., 2013). Also, dyslexic readers made less errors than the non-dyslexic readers while reading the text in the Dyslexie font (Leeuw, 2010; Pijpker, 2013). Subjects with low vision read faster with the font Courier compared to Times New Roman even when the former had a smaller font size (Mansfield, Legge, & Bane, 1996).

Bernard, Lida, Riley, Hackler, and Janzen (2002) highlight that the participants preferred Verdana, Arial and Comic Sans in font sizes 10, 12 and 14 respectively. Times New Roman and Arial were read by the participants in the fastest time compared with the other fonts, while Arial and Courier were shown to be the most legible. Subbaram's study (2004) about the effect of display and text on reading concluded that Verdana and Arial were the most legible fonts while Times New Roman and Franklin Gothic were chosen as the least legible.

Several studies found that some prefer reading printed text while others prefer reading on screen. The Finnish preferred the latter and will be introducing keyboarding in schools. This introduction will help dyslexic and non-dyslexic children to express themselves differently from just writing. Research indicates that Verdana and Georgia are a good choice of fonts when they are displayed as long text on websites. On the other hand Times New Roman and Arial fonts provide good readability on printed text (Ali, Wahid, Samsudin, & Idri, 2013). Mangen, Walgermo and Brønnick (2013) found that students who read the texts from the paper performed much better than those who read from the computers. This result was also seen in an experiment done at Karlstad University in Sweden where participants scored lower but had higher levels of tension and fatigue when reading a comprehension test on a computer (Jabr, 2013).

From the above review and discussion one may elicit that several different fonts, whether these are serif or sans serif, can have an impact on one's reading performance due to their weight, size and space. Moreover the way the font is presented can positively or negatively affect how dyslexic, IRLEN and visually impaired individuals read. Several fonts like OpenDyslexic, Dyslexie, Lexia Reabable and Andika were created to help dyslexics to read better. Therefore, different characteristics of font type determine whether a text is readable or legible.

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A Deleuzian / Guattarian reading of Art 'A' Level teaching in Malta

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An overview on Deleuze and his relation with Francis Bacon

"We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They've made us suffer too much." Deleuze and Guattari (1980, p.15)

This quote personifies Deleuze's philosophy. In the book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (2004), Deleuze and Felix Guattari developed the idea of the *rhizome* and the *nomad.* The irregular growth of the rhizome and the free spirit of the nomad are also reflected in the art of Francis Bacon (1909-1992). In fact Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) himself dedicated a whole book to Bacon, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (2005), and expounded his own idea of the rhizome in relation to Bacon's works.

The Rhizome

> "... A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes. Plants with roots or radicles may be rhyzomorphic in other respects altogether: the question is whether plant life in its specificity is not entirely rhyzomatric. Even some animals are, in their pack form. Rats are rhizomes. Burrows are too, in all of their functions of shelter, supply, movement, evasion and breakout. The rhizome itself assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers. When rats swarm over each other. The rhizome includes the best and the worst: potato and couchgrass or the weed." (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p.6)

> "The tree is already the image of the world, or the root the image of the world-tree. ... The book imitates the world, as art imitates nature: by procedures specific to it that accomplish what nature cannot or can no longer do........... in nature, roots are taproots with a more multiple, later, and circular system of ramification, rather than a dichotomous one." (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p.5)

Why does Deleuze dedicate so much emphasis to the rhizome? This is because he is searching for the pioneer, the person or group of people who are willing to go against the grain to start off something new within art or science. The rhizome and the tree are the symbolic symbiotic relationship of canon and revolutionary.

Without the tree, the rhizome cannot come to be. In art for example, the tree is the art we know and follow – in other words, the basic rules such as perspective, proportion and use of colour through paint – those skills which

are needed to become a student of art. However, the rhizome, which co-exists with the tree, can be symbolized as the new teaching of these skills or what comes beyond those skills such as new media, and different ways of teaching the history of art.

The traditional way of drawing for example is always a benefit for the artist, as even Picasso drew and painted realistically at one point before moving towards the abstract. The rhizome in the history of art could be Duchamp, Picasso, Goya, or even Jeff Koons. These artists and such like them were rhizomes who adapted, even though they were trained within a rigid system of what is accepted as art and what is not. Yet, some individuals as could be seen in the example of Picasso, broke such chains and revolutionized art as we know it. While Picasso is widely accepted now, one can only imagine how difficult it might have been for a 'tree follower' to accept this new art. That is, until it became part of the tree itself; but then, Picasso himself becomes a tree and people now study and copy him.

Fig. 1: Francis Bacon
'Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucificion', (1944)

Bacon's 'Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion' of 1944 (fig.1) is an example of rhizomatic significance. The triptych at first glance is not easy on the eyes, particularly the screaming orange which contrasts greatly with the grey. The distorted figures look like creatures from a horror movie, with hellish expressions and resemble anything but human. One would like to think that Deleuze would approve of the direction Bacon is taking. This is because they portray the rhizome in Bacon; he is a pioneer in art, the reason being that no artist during the 1940s had ever dreamt of portraying human beings as such monstrosities, especially at a time so sensitive when death, agony and pain had engulfed the world. The three paintings represent the chaos within human civilization through chaotic expressions of despair

and horror; also creating an uneasy atmosphere through the bright orange. The figures are illogical, also representing the illogical circumstances of when life clashes with human affairs – something natural on a head-on collision with something manmade, resulting in chaos and disorder, like the figures themselves. What Bacon did was "renounce natural logic and upset it in the act of painting in order to reveal and transform into comprehensible terms something originating in the unconscious..." (Ficacci, 2010, p.17). This means that what Bacon had to do was break down all that was known of art to start all over again with a new concept, revealing the true experience of human agony through art. This time art portrayed something ugly, it is mirroring life itself, instead of ignoring it and shutting it away. Bacon wants to disgust, to rebuff people, to make them feel repulsed by life itself as life is not only or always beautiful.

The point of Bacon creating chaos in the midst of artistic serenity is the whole reason of Bacon's existence. He is the rhizome within the system which was needed most during his time; the complete shock the artistic world required so as to create a new breed of thinking and art. Take 'Painting' done in 1946 (fig. 2), for example – this painting symbolizes the aftermath of the Second World War, the horror and carnage, represented by what seems to be sawn off corpses dangling from the ceiling as well as carcasses surrounding what seems to be a monstrous figure with a sinister mouth. The carcasses and corpses represent the dead, wasted and sent like cattle to be butchered on the battlefield. In fact, the 'meat' dangling from the ceiling reminds one of slaughtered beef or pork, left there to drip blood.

Fig. 2: Francis Bacon 'Painting', (1946)

According to Ficacci (2010, p.23), this painting might not even have any meaning or content at all – "Through its monumental display of incongruous juxtapositions, Painting 1946 imposes the condition of absurdity as a coherent expressive reality."

"....A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004, p.7).

How can Bacon be considered essential in today's artistic world, specifically, in relation to the Art 'A' level syllabus? The fact that there is not a Bacon painting among the 80 works reveals a limited spectrum and lack of rhizomatic elements. That is to say, today's art 'A' level syllabus may still be a structured tree. Deleuze never stated that we should be all tree or all rhizome.

Following the concept of the rhizome, one method of getting students to see art differently, could be achieved by changing the concept of art. There is more to art than paint and pencil. Comic art, for example, is not recognized enough but I believe it to be important in terms of rhizomatic qualities. It has all the ingredients to break barriers and give art a different feel to the student who is not drawing something that exists, such as a still life, but is drawing a new character which might even be a representation of his own self. Therefore it is a topic where the student is putting a part of himself in his or her art.

Tavin (2005) discusses the 'ghosts' that impede us from using new and different methods concerning today's changing world. Culture is an imposing presence in today's world and artists cannot simply ignore it as though it is not affecting society, and the art world itself. Tavin states that comic art was viewed by conservatives (Starker, 1989) as a servant of mass production serving as an "evil force". This was due to the fear of conservatives like John Ruskin, influenced by Matthew Arnold, that comic art was the child of a mass produced society where art had become a mere cheap product for the masses. Tavin also believes that art historians such as Franz Cizek, exert a ghastly influence which intimidates the art teacher concerning culture influence. Cizek believes that the child should be left in isolation to prevent it from "serious injurious influences, including mass produced images" (Tavin, 2005, pp.106-7). In today's world this is hardly possible as we are all surrounded by visual culture. Therefore, would visual culture be rhizomatic in its own respect? I believe it could be, thus leading to a different educational experience, mostly at advanced level.

The Nomad

"nomad – n **1** a member of a people or tribe who move from place to place to find pasture and food **2** a person who continually moves from place to place; wanderer" (Collins English Dictionary, 2009, p.1124).

One may consider Gilles Deleuze as a non-conformist's dream because he embodies greatly the 'anarchistic' and rebellious side of philosophy. He feels that to criticize a system, one has to be truly cut off, as well as to be aware of the faults within. This is what Deleuze meant by his concept of nomadology. The nomad is a wanderer, a man who is used to moving around within an empty and unconfined space. This makes him the anti-settler and, unlike townsfolk, he does not conform to that particular society. In fact he is truly independent, without a social identity but with an identity of his own as an individual. The nomad's identity is always changing in fact, being influenced by society but not conforming to it. Nomads can become influenced by certain societies once they come in contact with it, but will probably adapt those influenced to their own use, or else they do not copy completely the substance of that society.

In other words, this is what Deleuze aims to do within the world of philosophy, which can be easily related to the world of art in today's terms. Deleuze did not approve much of the history of philosophy (Tally, 2010) due to the fact that he believed that the history of philosophy was a way how to enslaved new philosophers under the influence of past ghosts, and the haunting of the great minds that came before. It is easy to be influenced by the history of philosophy, but in a historic sense rather than in the spiritual sense. Deleuze felt that the true essence and soul of philosophy, something always on the move like a nomad, is being slowed down and chained by phantoms who do not allow the fresh philosopher to produce something of his own, free from influence. Deleuze was aiming for the independent nomadic thinker which he referred to as *Nomadic Thought* – thus giving birth to the philosopher who is not limited by space within the boundaries of his society or group. The real philosopher, according to Deleuze, is the philosopher who is able to look at society or an issue with a birds-eye view. Deleuze refers to this in his letter to Michel Cressole; "These nomads are themselves distributed throughout the history of philosophy while also standing somewhat outside of it. 'I liked writers who seemed to be part of the history of philosophy, but who escaped from it in one respect, or altogether: Lucretius, Spinoza, Hume, Nietzsche, Bergson'" (Tally, 2010, p.17).

This extract describes succinctly what Deleuze means within his *Nomadic Thought* framework. Every thinker should be an individual, a nomad on his own living room couch. Thinkers like the liberal philosophers mentioned in Tally's article, are seen by Deleuze as the free thinkers who did not fear being cut off from the influences of history of philosophy and uses the word 'escaped' to emphasize that they had the will and strength to detach themselves. It is also worth noting that it is much harder for an individual thinker, such as those mentioned above, to escape from certain views that were probably stuffed

down their throats for years, only to diverge from such opinions and start their own – just like rhizomes which move randomly on their own without any linear order or following. To put it in a simpler perspective, imagine how hard it would be for an upper-middle class man called Jack, brought up in his own secular culture, if he were to travel around the world with nothing but his own limited culture. The more Jack travels, the vaguer the word 'culture' becomes, but in reality he is learning that there is a world beyond his and his perspective perforce widens and changes.

Deleuze's question was: is it possible to be a philosopher without learning about the history of philosophy itself; without ever hearing of the likes of Plato or Kant?

Francis Bacon

Deleuze uses the above ideas in relation to art in his work on Francis Bacon. The fact that in the present article Bacon was chosen as a primary example to show the need for a new approach in 'A' level Art is related to his transgressive nature and unnatural artwork, which exposes the 'ugly' side of life through paintings. In their book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari give the reader a perfect example that can be related to Bacon as an artist and as an individual in the artistic society.

While turning the pages of *Bacon* (Ficacci, 2010), the present author stumbled across a quote by Bacon himself: "My whole life goes into my work". This quote is inspiring, because Francis Bacon's works do indeed represent life, in a distorted way, but yet still remind us mostly of the hardships of life. It is interesting that Bacon states that all of his life goes into his work, as we can clearly see how there is a link between the two. Life, similar to a coin, has two sides – while on one hand it can seem to offer some of the best moments in every individual's life, on the other, it can reveal the harsh realities of mortality as well as the disappointments that come along an individual's way. When Bacon says "whole life" he is referring exactly to that, with all the good and the bad, and which is reflected in his work. We can therefore argue that life itself is bound to expose us to its uglier aspects.

Deleuze (2005, p.8) observes that, "… Bacon invokes two developments which seem to indicate that modern painting has a different relation to figuration or illustration than the figure of the past has." Deleuze intends to bring out the rhizomatic qualities of Bacon's figures. The above-mentioned triptych 'Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion', is an example of how Bacon breaks away from tradition in relation to figure drawing.
Let us compare the history of art to Bacon's works keeping Deleuze in mind.

The long line of history of art can be compared to life itself. Is not life, as discussed earlier, full of both beauty and ugliness? Therefore, the life of art, that is, the history of art, must contain the beautiful as well as the harsh and displeasing. What is the point of life without the ugliness? Would we learn from our mistakes if we did not get to remember them or if we tried to hide them away as if they had never occurred? The same goes to art and with some works – we hide away the profane or the 'ugliness' from students – which thus exposes them only to the beautiful. How are they to learn, to compare and contrast, as well as criticize, if they are being denied exposure to certain works? This is as significant as learning from life's mistakes. Once the person learns, he or she will know how to tackle it. From an artistic point of view, this means that if students are not exposed enough to certain works, they may not gain that required ability which enables them to criticize or understand the more complicated works by mature artists. It is important that students are encouraged to think outside the box.

Fieldwork and results

In this section of the article three major aspects will be examined which are related to interviews carried out by the present author (this exercise was done in 2012). These aspects are: the overall opinion on the syllabus; lecturers' and, students' reactions and opinions on the eighty works of art included in the 'A' level Art syllabus; and suggestions on change and improvement. The feedback will help towards addressing the present author's hypothesis that students are not benefitting enough out of the structure of the Art 'A' level syllabus in both academic and artistic terms.

These interviews were tackled from a Deleuzian approach by discussing the importance of the idea of the rhizome through the answers of both the lecturers and the students.

The approach is qualitative and the small sample comprised a group of students and individual students from different sixth forms. Two different sets of questions were formulated aimed at the art lecturers and some art students. The interviews focussed on exploring whether the respondents thought that the syllabus should be changed and to pinpoint what they may have considered to be major flaws. The option for two different sets of questions was based on the fact that the present researcher wished to gain different perspectives from students and lecturers. The interviews were held with two lecturers, who preferred to remain anonymous, as well as with a group of students. A considerable number of questions dealt with that compulsory part of the syllabus where students must memorize 80 specific works of art.

First theme: the overall opinion on the syllabus

The interviewed Lecturer 1 believes that some changes should be made to the syllabus. However although in some countries history of art is separate from practical art, he does not agree with such a separation stressing that this might not help the link between history of art and art practice. In terms of practice he also believes that it should be based more on the creative aspect rather than on just working from observation. According to Lecturer 1, working from observation is still an important aspect in art, however it is only a small factor next to creative and imaginative art. If anything, as Lecturer 1 stated, art history and practice should be intertwined so that it may be taught simultaneously. The point of this statement is that the 80 works used should be relevant to the practice, thus showing that there is more than just historical theory. However he does not think that the 80 works would be boring if they were to be taught in a way where it would benefit the students through a link with practice rather than teaching the paintings and artists as separate works. This should be used to introduce in-depth study of the styles by sampling the techniques and then applying them in practice.

On the other hand, Lecturer 2 believes that although the syllabus is not perfect, the list of paintings are not the main problem. Rather, it is the way they are tackled that should be looked into and it mostly regards the fact that most students have to study the 80 paintings by heart, although these are in themselves good pieces of art.

> "There is always something you can improve from the syllabus, I'm not saying it's perfect. Something I have discussed often that should hopefully materialize in the future is that the student is given a picture during the exam as opposed to just four names. The list is what it is. I think there is no problem, especially since there are a wide variety of paintings. Something I could never understand however, regardless of the artwork or list, is that the student is being told to study something by heart and regurgitate everything that he has studied rather than discussing an artwork he can see. However this should be within next year's syllabus or the next where they are supposed to be given a coloured photograph as mentioned above.* As for the rest of the syllabus part from this little tweaking I believe that it should remain untouched and that it is fine as it is."

(* Note: this exercise was introduced from 2014)

Lecturer 2 also feels that the 80 paintings offer a wide enough spectrum for students to get a good artistic experience, but adds that it would be even

better had we to add other cultures, rather than just the European, such as the African and South American, which may link with Western art. When asked whether he considered the syllabus to be boring, the respondent answered that to him it was not. This was due to the artistic nature of the course and because there was an element of freedom which distinguishes Art from other subjects due to it not being restricted by content. This response is diametrically opposite to what Lecturer 1 said regarding the lack of time to try out new media. However Lecturer 2 thinks that the syllabus does not specify what medium must be used in the first place. It is quite open from the practical side because there are no specific skills that need to be taught compulsorily and it thus falls on the lecturer her/himself as to how s/he plans and conducts a lesson. He stressed that art should always be a free subject and not limited by a strict syllabus. He does not think that the syllabus should be changed in terms of history or practice as he feels that the system suits his preferences during lectures. On the other hand, due to a change in the art syllabus in the secondary and primary levels, he feels that the element of freedom is being threatened due to the fact that art is being treated just like every other subject, with a syllabus that a teacher must follow as well as tasks that must be done. He regards art as a liberal subject where the teacher can also be an artist at the same time and freely continue to teach within his own timeframe and preferences. With such a tight syllabus being introduced, he fears the worst. Namely that art may become just another academic subject without the fun element. In a nutshell, the lecturers seem to have a mixed opinion on the syllabus and imply that they do not really feel the need to change the situation. One can argue that the lecturers might also prefer the syllabus this way due to the fact that they have grown up in such a system and are comfortable with it. With reference to Deleuze and Guattari, it can be simply stated that the lecturers have become rooted within the whole structured system of the Art 'A' level syllabus, making them the 'tree' in their own respect: hierarchal and ordered.

When, on the other hand, the students were asked about the 80 works of art, they believed that 80 were too much. According to one student the paintings are hard to study due to the fact that there is too much to study and memorize. One sixth form student thought that "There's a lot to do, you can study a lot but you can't study everything – about the paintings, about the artists, background knowledge about the period ... how much can you fit?"

When asked if they liked the 80 paintings, all the interviewees said that they did not, not because of the paintings chosen but simply for the sheer number that they needed to study. However, they preferred modern art and ancient art over the Renaissance and Baroque periods. They felt that even though some works in bronze casting are indeed interesting, specifically studying

a technique that may or may not come out in an exam is difficult. Writing about bronze casting in an essay might be too challenging added to all the other works they also had to study. In general they felt that the works of art are just not striking enough and proposed that having some less from each period would help them savour certain works more. When asked whether they thought the paintings should be removed altogether, they claimed that they would not want all of them to be removed. Rather, they suggested, more recent works should be added to the list replacing some works which seem pointless and which are taking up the place of recent and more modern works. In their opinion the medieval works are the ones which do not really strike them and apparently have a 'boring' element. They did not by any means disregard medieval art but there simply were too many. When students were asked to point out any works they remembered from their studies, these respondents could not manage to remember some of the works. Those remembered were:

Student 1
1. Nike of Samothrace
2. Las Meninas by Velasquez
3. Maryln Monroe by Andy Warhol

Student 2
1. Maryln Monroe by Andy Warhol
2. Sketch for Composition IV by Wassily Kandinsky
3. The Holy Trinity by Masaccio

Student 3
1. Bison c.15,000-10,000BC
2. Bronze Warrior of Riace c. 450BC
3. Discus Thrower (Discobolus) 450BC

The point of this question was to discover the three most identifiable or noticeable works that students still remembered. The fact that the students remembered three in particular means that these paintings appealed to their taste, rather than they just randomly picking three from 80 memorized works. In fact Student 3 also claimed that she had a taste for ancient art. This is evident in her choice of remembered works. Therefore, in relation to what was discussed with the lecturers, some artworks will be more memorable for their particular tastes, uniqueness and role in art history. The present author can easily relate to Student 2 for remembering 'The Holy Trinity' due to the fact that Masaccio's painting had started off the Renaissance in terms of depth and composition. This following sample answer sums up the majority of the answers given on whether Art 'A' level students learnt anything substantial during the course:

"Yes I believe that I have learnt more about history of art and how painting and sculpture evolved. Nevertheless I also gained more practice throughout the course. However I regret to say that I did not gain any skills in new mediums. During the two years, the practical side of the subject was simply a continuation of what we had done in the secondary school, rather than an introduction to other media and concepts of thinking and creating."

It seems that there is a great emphasis on the historical part of the syllabus as the 80 paintings are given with great detail and there is much emphasis on how the students will carry out the study for these paintings as well as the assessment. However when it comes to practice, most of the answers were very similar as they did feel that they did learn new skills but were limited to only acrylics and charcoal and feel that 'A' level should present a wider range of media. Hereunder follow some of the answers and opinions provided by the interviewees – sixth form students – in the context of practical content within the Art 'A' level experience.

"...working with teachers who are actually very good and established artists [who] passed on some very good tips. Also it was great to have a history part although I think the teaching of this could have been made more interesting..."

"...I believe that a two year course should offer more aspects in art. If anything, if they should include still-life, landscape and figure drawing, they should be taught with greater emphasis on basic skills..."

"...I learnt a lot of things alone out of my own interest! ... Obviously there were some things that I learnt originally from the course..."

"Technique-wise and even history-wise, I learnt quite a bit – I have yet to find use for most of it though. Definitely yes, I learnt how to go about themes I've never tackled before such as the human figure. During the two year course I learnt how to make the best out of different media in particular charcoal and paint (mainly acrylics)."

As seen through the above samples, the reactions from the students are mainly negative ones and express a feeling that they have not really learnt anything substantial. Is this due to the syllabus' format or is part of it due to the tree mentality of some lecturers? I believe that this may be a mixture of both, especially if the lecturers do not resort to enough rhizomatic techniques of teaching. Unless they start to question the syllabus, the syllabus will not change.

The majority of students also seem to be irked by the fact that they have no use for the amount of material learnt and by the lack of use of different media that should have been taught at Art 'A' level. Regarding the 80 works, three students felt that it helped them widen their artistic horizons; yet another three felt that they were bordering on the "useless" as well as it not being beneficial for the student. However, a very valid point is brought out by each and every student – the works indeed are very hard to remember by heart. This is why some students feel that these compulsory paintings are useless – for the reason that learning by heart will not help a student conceptualize or gain any knowledge but would mostly keep them in mind just for the exam period.

The students on the other hand, as one can see, not only have a different opinion on the syllabus as a whole, but also have a different approach to art altogether through their attitude. This can also reflect the concept of the nomad according to Deleuze and Guattari and from their reactions, the sixth form students are displeased at the way they are taught. One can interpret this sense of outspokenness as rhizomatic in nature. The fact that they do not want to follow what is given to them through the syllabus is not an element linked to a rebellious nature, but to a sense of frustration and passion. This can be seen from the way the students did not just complain for the sake of complaining but also gave valid alternatives. Ultimately art should be educational and stimulating to the senses and not repetition and spoon-feeding.

Second theme: lecturer and student reaction and opinions on the 80 works of art

The 80 paintings are a controversial aspect of the art syllabus, mainly due to the huge mass of information students are expected to study by heart. It was felt that a lecturer's opinion is important at this point as he is the person constituting the link between the syllabus and the students. However this fully depends on the lecturer's attitude, teaching style, as well as artistic beliefs.

Lecturer 1's opinion when asked if suggestive works, such as those of Damien Hirst or Kiki Smith, ought to be included with the 80 paintings or in another part of the syllabus, was that they indeed should. The respondent continued that because students were living in 2012 (when the fieldwork was done), they would have to deal with the current way of thinking after their 'A' level anyway, so why not expose them to such realities at advanced level? In other words, what will they learn beyond sixth form? The problem, according to Lecturer 1, was that art history made up two thirds of the whole 'A' level

material and in his opinion this vastness of works remained a problem. However, there should still be a number of contemporary works so that the students could also use this as a link: "...the link combines the inside and outside of the school as the works being produced today practically reflect the general ideas of our young students...."

Within this aspect, Lecturer 1 had the right approach and felt that there should be improvements. However having a rhizomatic mentality did not necessarily make one a rhizome unless s/he acted on it and contributed to this cause. Was Lecturer 1 planning to move away from the syllabus to give a better art education to his students?

With regard to the Hirst and Smith pictures, the respondent said that he did consider them as art but it mostly boiled down to taste. It seems that he is evading a 'yes or no' answer in this case leaving the interviewer unsure on what he wants; unlike Lecturer 2, who practically states that they should be included. Although Lecturer 1 admits that he does not like them and that sometimes some artworks are called art only due to the fact that they are put up in a gallery, he concedes that it depends on the individual whether to appreciate it or not. When asked whether they should be added to the current 80 paintings, Lecturer 1 answered that the problem with the 80 paintings is that after a while they will be considered as canon works, something that we categorize as art and that beyond those, we may find it difficult to accept other works. According to him, this canon studying is good, however with regard to contemporary art, this is difficult to accept as canon in Malta and he suggests that to include some paintings, the whole syllabus would need to be changed because art cannot simply be put on a list. The 80 works need to start becoming less of a list to cover and more of a full artistic experience to discover. There simply is no limit to how much one can put in a list, he argues and questions which ones to pick over others meaning that the 80 paintings in themselves should start being questioned.

On the other hand, unlike Lecturer 1, when asked whether paintings of dark nature such as those by Francis Bacon, Kiki Smith and Damien Hirst should be included, Lecturer 2 stated that the problem with such paintings is how many of this kind should one include. Lecturer 2 thinks that paintings and works like these should be considered due to the fact that they are now historically acknowledged as art, even though one may choose not to like them. This is because according to Lecturer 2, some students will not really continue art beyond Advanced level, not because they are disinterested but rather because of the limited opportunities where art is concerned. However he opines that there should be only a limited number so that they would not suppress the learning of the other paintings and works. However at the same

time the inclusion of contemporary works would widen the artistic spectrum. Therefore he feels that some paintings that expose the skill of brushstrokes and technique should still be included to show the students that art had once worked that way.

One student's answer seemed more to the point.

> "I found this quite boring and remember just scanning through them. I particularly recall that there were no female artists on the list, and being quite pro-female advantages, I found that it made me feel quite aloof to the whole of the 80 works, except those that I knew from before, such as Picasso, etc."

A sample student interview reaction on the 80 works follows.

The students' first reaction to the Kiki Smith work was laughter and thought it was a humorous piece but in reality it is not. This is why the researcher wanted to show them such a picture, which can evoke different emotions from different people. The present author believes that unless students are exposed to this type of art, they will not accept such work but will disregard it as 'junk' or rubbish. However once given an explanation on the background of the artist and the work, these particular students understood immediately the message of the picture and concluded that it should indeed be one of the 80 paintings. They felt that there is a need for female artists among the 80 paintings and artists such as Kiki Smith should be included. Regarding the Bacon work they found it more artistically appealing due to the fact that it has a darker tone as well as for its painting technique.

Regarding the theme the students feel that such themes depict more expression, that they are entitled to be exposed to certain works and that they are sure that they would not be shocked by such works. They realize that this would enhance and widen their artistic knowledge. When asked why they thought that such art is important, the students felt that it would help them to see beyond the Renaissance or Modern period and give them an idea on what is happening today, because ultimately, they are not living in Monet's time, they are living in a time where art is diverse and is challenging ideals of past generations. Therefore the researcher, as an artist and as a prospective art teacher, feels that it is of the utmost importance that students at 'A' level, are prepared for what they will come across instead of being left to drift, or are blindly pushed, into the vast and complex world of contemporary art.

This is why it is proposed that some works such as those by Francis Bacon could be memorable. They do not need to appeal to the students for them

to understand their significance; however, paintings like these will provoke interest, argument, and emotion. These type of works would be remembered because students would feel involved in some way. It may even be ventured that ideally all 80 paintings should kindle certain emotions – each according to the style and era to which they belong. Then remembering should become less of a problem because the paintings would become an experience, each in its own way.

A student's answer after being shown Francis Bacon and Kiki Smith works: "I don't think that there is anything particularly wrong with them. This is art, and if an artist is not ready to look at such works I do not feel that they represent what an artist truly is."

Third theme: suggestions on change and improvement

The paintings shown to all interviewees have transgressive elements in them and Lecturer 1 believed that these were needed within the framework of works of art that should be portrayed in the Art 'A' level syllabus. However he did not specify any particular works that should be added, but instead questioned which ones to choose over others. He also felt that students were prepared for such works even though these might not be highly appealing. Exposure to such art would however help to teach them to accept art in all of its shapes and forms. He continued that the students can relate to these works also due to their very nature, although he did not state how he would change his lessons were such works included within the syllabus. His final message on 'A' level art education is that we could and should change the way we teach as well as the content, to look beyond the 1960s and help our students feel art as a living experience that is here and with us today rather than something that must be preserved from the past. This is a positive reaction from Lecturer 1 as here he is showing traits in line with a rhizomatic mentality and which contrasted with his previous view. This respondent demonstrated that he understands that there are certain lacking elements in the syllabus, which is encouraging. It transpires that his views were sometimes contradictory – on one hand he agreed with the researcher's rhizomatic ideas yet he resisted change when it came to actual execution. Lecturer 1 seemed to have a better combination of tree and rhizome qualities. His limitations regarded the syllabus itself.

Lecturer 2 thinks that the students should be exposed to works such as these as well as other multicultural art such as that Islamic or African. These works would be very memorable and he believes that students would be learning a better form of art if shown the examples mentioned. Too much of everything is still not a good thing therefore a balance of each genre of work within the

80 paintings should suffice. However for this to happen one should ask about which items should be replaced so as to include the contemporary ones. The intention of Lecturer 2 is to add rather than replace. The researcher feels that including multicultural art does not go far enough for a stronger focus on the concepts of art and more recent contemporary art.

When asked if nude figures were an option, Lecturer 1 did not really object to them, however he had his reservations on what use it would actually have in reality when they can also opt to draw each other fully clothed. For the present author this possible inclusion *does* make a difference, not just for the sake of exposure, but it is also something of a taboo in Malta and we are also afraid to admit it – we are apprehensive as to how this will affect the students. Do lecturers want to be the ones who fully expose full frontal nudity as a study to students from 16 to 18 years? Lecturer 2 clearly states that if he were the one to do it, he would feel as if he were treading on thin ice and thinks that there might be too many giggles around. However, he believes that when tackling such a topic one had to be aware that some students might be too sheltered and feel shocked or embarrassed in front of a nude live model. Lecturer 1 asked: "What should be changed at the end of the day, the pictures, the way we test, or the way we think altogether?"

This observation, as well as the lecturers' unsure attitudes to the nude figure, embodies the mentality of the anti-nomad, but in their defence they are also the ones who would bear the brunt from those objecting (such as some parents and others). The nomad, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is the artist or individual who acts but disassociates himself from any setting. Lecturer 2 states that there is space to move within the syllabus, but why is this not being utilized? What *is* being utilized? The students themselves had the answers for this question.

When asked whether object drawing, figure and landscape are enough to give them a proper experience of art, the sixth form students' answers were a chorus of "No" as they believed that although it was traditional it did not let the art student experiment much and after a few attempts it became too boring according to one of them. "I should try oil paints so that I can improve my techniques, sometimes when I use acrylics the teacher asks me whether they are oils. That means that if I am capable to imitate oil paints I think I have potential in that area"

Not that either of these topics are bad in themselves but by the students' reactions, and the present author's own experiences, it can be argued that the topics are overdone to the point where they become exhausting. One sixth former expressed this thus: "They [topics] shouldn't be replaced, but

done in a different way - just not in that routine." Another one opined that: "I think there should be a variation of contemporary works included since art did not stop at the Modern period"

When asked about the current artistic situation in Malta, the students felt that the island was "blocked" and stuck on the same landscapes with a lack of experimentation and motivation to try something different. They believed that people lacked appreciation due to the fact that they were only taught art up to Form 3 of their secondary school years. This did not provide a good idea of art and left them with the impression that art was a collection of 'pretty pictures'. As a group they also confirmed that someone who lacked artistic knowledge would dismiss the Kiki Smith painting immediately. They continued that we are too used to religious paintings and anything different would be considered as ugly. The students added that they were aware that there were not many openings for art courses in Malta. The main schools in Malta were the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (which at the time of writing did not lead to a degree) and the University of Malta which provided a B.A. degree in History of Art, and a B.Ed. course with the latter having been the only course offering some form of art practice (at the time of publication of this article the B.Ed. course was being phased out). The other alternative according to the students was to take up a course abroad but not everyone was ready or could afford to study abroad. This therefore left Maltese art students with very limited options.

Conclusion

It is true that the 80 paintings are given to widen the students' horizons. However as revealed by the answers of both lecturers and students, some, if not all, of the art works shown may well be forgotten if taught the way they are today. When asked if the 80 works should be removed, the forthcoming responses by the students showed a level of maturity when they replied that these should not be scrapped. If anything, the artistic horizon should be widened with more contemporary works to make the 80 items more educational, regardless of taste or topic, as this was an integral part of the art world. The fact that students could actually relate the works to their time will give the works more significance in relation to the theme. How can a 21st century student really relate to a Da Vinci painting unless there is an artistic appreciation? Surely Da Vinci cannot be related to today's moral and political issues. Take Cyprien Gaillard, an artist who tackles today's issues of degradation in relation to falling buildings. In his video installation *Desniansky Raion* (The Fight Against Vegetation, 2007), he shows a deserted housing complex in a wintery Kiev which is being left to rot. The whole architectural design is uncannily similar to the design of Stonehenge. This is a lost utopia

which was meant to look glorious but is now reduced to a gloomy circle of ruins.

These are the types of works that the syllabus lacks – the contemporary touch that most art students crave, living artists that they can truly relate to. One can conclude that the students do not fear change. Unlike their lecturers, they do not have a job to safeguard and they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. However after all is said and done, it is the students who need to learn and teachers must do their utmost to see that students remain rhizomatic with the strength of the tree as their background. There is a huge need for both students and lecturers to compromise and discuss what is best for them rather than limiting their skills to the present syllabus.

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Camouflaged or Visible: A Comparative Study in the Integration of EU Migrant Adolescents within the Maltese Formal and Informal Education

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Introduction

In Malta, all children have the right for quality education, including migrant students. Nevertheless, the educational experiences of these students "remain unexplored" (Attard Tonna, Galea, & Cassar, 2011, p. 90), even if their presence in the Maltese Education System is on the rise. This situation is becoming a concern for educators, to the extent that it has become one of the main issues for the Malta Union of Teachers (*L-Orizzont*, 2014), because both teachers and heads of school feel that migrant students are being 'dumped' on them (*It-Torċa*, 2014). This feeling is the result of a particular Maltese situation whereby there seems to be a lack of preparation and direction about their integration. This 'urgent' situation requires an immediate address by policy-makers.

As noted above, there are limited research studies which delve into the degree of integration of EU migrants in educational systems. A similar dearth in literature is especially evident with regard to their involvement in informal educational settings. This present research gap, the sense of urgency to address the issue of integration of EU migrant students, and the present author's personal interest in minority groups and in informal education, inspired this investigation related to how these students are integrating in both the mainstream formal and informal educational systems **–** making this the main research focus. Moreover, it is the intention of this research to give a voice to EU migrant adolescents, who seem to be voiceless, due to the lack of research about this cohort. In fact, using a critical theoretical paradigm, which has an emancipatory view of education and aims for social transformation, this author is interested in 'the voice of the other'.

Migration flows to the European Union

The European Union is perceived as the 'promised land' and a 'port of call' for an estimated 1.7 million migrants (Eurostat, 2013a) coming from all over the globe. In addition to these figures, it is calculated that internal migration between Member States amounts to another 1.3 million people (Eurostat, 2013b). As a result, "migration has become an increasingly important phenomenon for European societies" (Eurostat, 2011, p. 5).

The Maltese Islands, a relatively new entry in the European Union group (having joined in 2004), are experiencing new migration trends in the last few years (Amore, 2005 as cited in Galea, 2010). Contrary to the general perception which holds that the predominant migratory groups originate from African states and the Global South (United Nations, 2007), it is noted that the highest percentage of migrants coming and living in Malta are fellow Europeans (Galea, 2010). According to various studies and statistics these European migrants amount to 57 per cent (Galea, 2010); of which 34 per cent derive from countries in Western Europe whereas the remaining 23 per cent come from the Eastern Block (Calleja, Cauchi & Grech, 2010). A recent census

document compiled by the National Statistics Office of Malta confirms this tendency, reporting that out of 20,289 non-Maltese citizens residing in Malta, 12,215 come from EU countries (National Statistics Office, 2014) (Table 1).

British	Italian	Bulgarian	German	Swedish	Other EU Member States	Other European Countries	Total of non-Maltese population
6,652	947	850	736	447	2,583	845	20, 286

Table 1: Number of EU migrants in Malta
(adapted from National Statistics Office, 2014)

Migrant students in Maltese state schools

Needless to say, many of these migrants bring with them their children who have a right to education (Article 26 – The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. United Nations, 1948), irrespective of their belief, economic means (Laws of Malta, 1988; Hemelsoet, 2011), nationality (Hemelsoet, 2011), and immigration status (Galea, 2010), and who consequently end up in local schools. As statistics provided by the Directorate for Educational Services indicate, the spectrum of students' nationalities in secondary state schools is quite varied; nevertheless, they are consistent and in line with the data collected during the census.

Whatever the numbers and statistics of migrant students in schools, it is clear that the Maltese classrooms are becoming increasingly multicultural, multi-ethnic and diverse in terms of language, race, ethnicity (Calleja, Cauchi & Grech, 2010; Falzon, Pisani & Cauchi, 2012) and nationality; thus moving from an intake which is linguistically and ethnically homogeneous to one that is heterogeneous (Mercieca & Said, 2006).

Education as a tool for integration

Education is a key and powerful element for integration that helps to bridge cultural gaps between migrants and the rest of the population (Jesse, 2007; European Commission & OECD, 2003; Alba & Nee, 1999) and enables these migrants to become active citizens and participants in their host society (Aditus, 2014). This has also been confirmed by Hon. Minister Dalli (Minister

for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties) who has stated that an integration strategy should be based on education (*Times of Malta*, 2014). Analysing the role of education in this particular sector, it becomes clear that education has a two-fold role to play. From a functionalist approach, it is essential in equipping migrants with vital, practical and academic skills, including literacy, numeracy, language, science and humanities; but it is also important for intercultural education. In intercultural education, minority groups and dominant groups within the population learn how to appreciate diversity and how to live together (European Commission & OECD, 2003). In this way, integration is thus seen as a two-way process, in which 'being-different' is regarded as an added value, an exciting element (Sanchez, Li & Nuttall, 1995), rather than a burden or a problem.

The latter argument is quite contested in foreign (Crozier & Davies, 2008; Jourdan, 2012) and local literature (Mifsud, 2005; Chircop, 2005), as migrants in schools tend to be perceived as 'the other' (Levinas, 1969), as "somebody [who is] not 'us', somebody whom one cannot identify with" (Inokuchi & Nozaki, 2005, p. 62). The same literature denotes that the separation between local and migrant students is always present. Consequently, as the Critical Race Theory (CRT) asserts, this situation tends to privilege the dominant group (locals), thus marginalizing the 'others' who do not fit in it. As a result, advancement of minority groups are encouraged only with the assurance that the interests of the interest group are not 'disturbed' (Wright, Singh & Race, 2012, p. 28). In this context, rather than a two-way process, the onus relies on 'the other', who has to fit in and adapt to integrate.

With all this in mind, and as critical pedagogy and social theories alert, education can actually be a powerful medium for integration, while at the same time a vehicle for inequality (Peim, 2013). This happens when pedagogy and curricula serve particular groups in society at the expense of others, reproducing unequal power relations (Apple, 2011), maintaining dominant social order (Pisani, 2012) and reinforcing the "Western white culture" (Mercieca & Said, 2006, p. 2). Critical educators like Giroux, Freire, Aronowitz, Apple, Greene, McLaren and Macedo contest this discriminating mode of education, and propose a critical transformative approach model (of education) where "the unwavering liberation of oppressed populations" (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009, p. 9), the 'others' in society, is ensured. This can be the kind of education that can provide equal opportunities and access to all, including migrants.

The research study

For the purpose of this research, the present author made use of a set of qualitative semi-structured interviews with 17 EU migrant students, 4 heads of the selected schools, 4 teachers who teach these EU migrant students and 4 coordinators or helpers of informal institutions where migrant adolescents attend. Interviews were chosen as a method because the author wanted to

focus on subjective meanings and to have an informal conversation, shaped partly by his pre-set questions and partly by the emerging concerns, obtained in naturally occurring situations (Bryman, 2001; Denscombe, 2002), which in this case were the schools and the informal institutions. Accordingly, there was ample space to delve into the subjective experiences of the respondents (Hentinen, Kortesluoma, & Nikkonen, 2003), manifested through verbal and non-verbal communication. Moreover, this research tool is particularly suitable when doing research with participants from different cultures (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010) and with vulnerable groups (Davidson, 2008).

The research was held in formal and informal educational institutions. The fieldwork was restricted to secondary schools due to time limitations, as also because of the author's familiarity with the environment since he had been working as a secondary school teacher for the previous 14 years. For this research, the focus was on both boys' and girls' secondary schools, which had not yet implemented the co-education system, in the two selected colleges[1] (College 1 and College 2) hosting a considerable number of migrant students on the island. This information was gathered from Educational Authorities in the first phase of the study.

After ensuring that the necessary amendments in the list of interview questions were made (through the piloting process), and that the researcher had practised interview skills, the actual interviews were held. Languages used for interviews were English, Maltese and Italian, depending on the preference of the respondents. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and these were held at school in the case of EU migrant students, teachers and heads of school, and at the clubs or informal institutions in the case of informal educators. Interviews were recorded (Mohd Noor, 2008) and transcribed whilst following ethical guidelines. Transcriptions were written in the original language and only translated during the writing process.

Research findings

The aim of this study is to explore the integration of EU migrant adolescents in both formal and informal education; an area which, up to the present time of writing, was identified as being a research gap in Maltese literature. It was not the intention of the study to make generic conclusions on the two education sectors – since the characteristic of the constructivist grounded theory methodology is to generate substantive theory without making claims to generalise beyond the particular phenomena (Urquhart, 2013) – but to shed more light on this area of study, and try to give a voice to EU young migrants and educators thus producing a clearer picture of their experiences and needs in local education.

1 Maltese formal education is provided through a College system. The Education Act was enacted by Parliament in August 2006. Every College incorporates within it a number of primary and secondry schools.

In relation to the title of this article, the study identified specific factors that can mutually intersect to determine and facilitate integration, hence leading migrant adolescents to be 'camouflaged' (integrated) without renouncing to their personality and individuality, and factors which can hinder it, hence making them 'visible'. These factors are presented in Fig. 1.
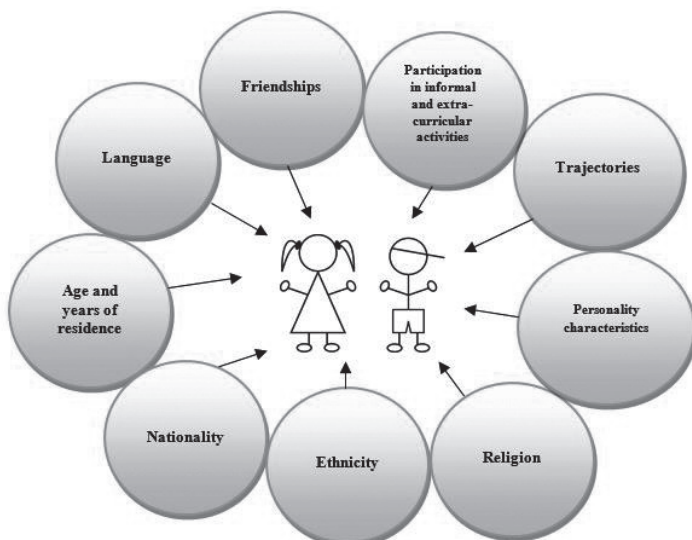

Fig. 1: Factors determining integration

Empirical data presented in this study suggests that those migrants who migrated and settled in Malta at a young age, and whose country of origin has direct connections (linguistic, historic and cultural) with Malta, tend to have a smooth integration process. This is further accentuated when physical markers and characteristics, as well as religious beliefs are similar to those belonging to the mainstream. In addition, distinct personality traits, such as being sociable, extrovert, helpful, friendly, resilient, self-confident and sporty, reportedly tend to help EU migrant adolescents to overcome migration difficulties and to be more open to integration. In turn, this also encourages them to participate in informal and extra-curricular activities at school, which as the research indicated, speeds up this process. The latter is further enhanced through social interaction and friendship-building. Through this study it was clearly evidenced that it is the combination of these factors, hence their intersectionality, and not one particular factor, which makes the integration possible.

The research also denoted that language skills are a fundamental aspect for integration. Data implicated that it is vital that EU migrants have a good knowledge of English language to settle in school and succeed academically, and to build friendships with peers. Moreover, it emerged that those migrants

who were also able to learn the Maltese language tend to have an additional advantage, and subsequently an easier integration. These migrants are not only 'camouflaged', but, as one of the respondents explained, they are not perceived by both educators and peers as non-locals.

Finally, data suggested that migrants tend to feel more relaxed and integrate almost instinctively in informal settings, such as in non-academic subjects. It emerged that migrant students are more participative and integrated in subjects like PE or PSCD, in which the tasks and activities are more experiential and practical, than in other academic subjects.

The study showed that the factors presented in Fig. 1 are particularly important for integration in formal education. Whilst also being pertinent to the realities in informal settings, data suggested that since these institutions are less formal and have a more relaxed environment, providing adolescents with space for better communication and socialisation, it is easier for EU migrants to integrate. However, respondents indicated that few EU migrants participate in informal education, due to various reasons; mainly related to financial barriers and access. Those who participated though, were mostly engaged in sports activities and in clubs, in which the language of instruction is English and where there are fellow foreign participants, such as in the Girl Guides organisation and in sports clubs.
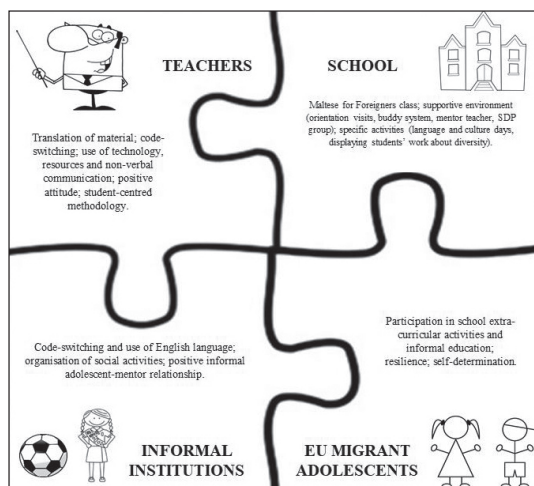

Fig. 2: Strategies for integration

Throughout this research it clearly emerged that integration of EU migrant adolescents is not a straightforward process. It is never easy to leave behind the country of origin and past friendships and settle in a new environment with different routines, cultures and languages, and build a new life. As an interviewed head of school explained, it is like the same difficulty that an uprooted plant goes through: "*dan bħall-pjanta. Taqlagħha minn hawn u tagħmilha hemm ... ħa tbati*" (it is like a plant. When you uproot it and plant it somewhere else ... it will have problems). This is mostly experienced in the first months of migration, and particularly when EU migrant adolescents migrate in their senior years. To overcome these difficulties, teachers, schools, informal institutions and EU migrant adolescents themselves engage in targeted strategies (Fig. 2).

The study also investigated the perceptions and reactions that the interviewed stakeholders have about integration and integration practices. Informal educators and the majority of adolescents expressed a sense of positivity about integration, and talked about the mixing of migrants and locals in terms of 'richness', as 'beneficiary', 'healthy' and as an 'asset'. Other educators, however, particularly those in formal education, spoke more about concerns and challenges; consequently perceiving the integration of migrant students in schools as a possible 'problem' and 'burden'.

Data signalled that these negative attitudes are in reaction to a sense of helplessness, frustration, uncertainty and insecurity originating from lack of related professional development, guidelines, support, direction and resources from competent educational authorities. Interviewed teachers and heads of school complained that in this relatively new multicultural environment they are left alone, struggling with the demands and the increased numbers of migrant students; didactically, pedagogically and psychologically untrained to teach and cope with these culturally, linguistically and academically diverse classes. They also proclaimed that the current employed inclusion practices, are not only inappropriate and put substantial pressure and responsibility on them, but can also constitute a 'disservice' for the migrant students. As another interviewed head of school asserted, "*Il-fatt li poġġejna lil xi ħadd ma' xi ħadd ieħor fi klassi ma jfissirx li saret inklużjoni*" (the fact that we have placed someone with someone else in a class, does not mean that there is inclusion).

As a concluding note, data suggested that educators, particularly teachers and heads of school, tend to perceive integration in terms of assimilation, in which migrants are presumed to have settled when they learn the host languages, especially Maltese, and follow and respect the local traditions and customs. In such a setting, integration implies trying to make migrants 'Maltese'.

In summary, different factors (Figure 1) and strategies (Figure 2) determined the extent and the way EU migrant adolescents are integrated within formal and informal education spheres. As a result, such factors and strategies also acted as constructive and obstructive practices that enhance or hinder the degree of integration. Finally, the above outcomes also shed light on the perceptions of different stakeholders about the research area. All this makes the study important because it provides research that can be used by policy-makers to inform developments. Such study is also significant since it presented positive and negative experiences about the degree of integration and conducive factors leading to these experiences.

Recommendations for practice and provision

This section presents a number of recommendations that were elicited from the different respondents. Although these are valid, and are meant to improve

the current integration practices, it has to be kept in mind that there is no magic formula or "single solution" (Buhagiar, Consiglio, Facciol & Randon, 2015, p. 18) to help all migrant students, since they are a heterogeneous group, and because integration is the result of the intersectionality of a set of factors. Interestingly, these recommendations are also listed in various local draft papers and reports (Ibid.; The People for Change Foundation, 2014; Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012a; Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012b) showing their pertinence and significance.

A national policy about integration
When considering the number of EU migrant adolescents present in Maltese formal and informal institutions, it was felt by various stakeholders that present strategies, based on personal initiatives, are not sustainable; thus it is time that the integration process is addressed properly with a national policy for the inclusion of foreign adolescents that can guide and assist all practitioners in ways how this can be achieved effectively.

More planning, guidance and assistance on a national level
Formal educators complained that there is lack of guidance in terms of resources, specific curriculum and training, and attributed negative feelings to this present current practice. As a result, it was suggested that educational authorities have to provide training to all stakeholders working with students. This can be held through an in-service course or other learning opportunities, where they can share and discuss their experiences and concerns. Respondents strongly suggested that there should be more coordination from the Maltese Directorate to guide them on the best ways and methodologies how to handle multi-cultural classes. They also expressed the wish to have adequate resources that can be given to these students so that they can follow the lesson easily. In regard to specific subjects like Maltese, History, Social Studies and Geography, it was suggested that there should be guidelines about this in the curriculum. In this way, teachers would know exactly what they can do when they face challenges related to the language of instruction and the content covered. These guidelines and training opportunities should also be extended to informal institutions, since presently this is absent.

University training that equips prospective educators to deal with multiculturalism
A recommendation put forward by all educators was the training about multiculturalism during their studies, as at the moment this seems lacking. This would imply that before formal and informal educators start working in these settings, they would already be equipped with the right knowledge, skills and attitudes to handle such circumstances.

The introduction of an integration officer in each College
It was suggested that in each College, there should be an integration officer who would be responsible for the transition exercise of each EU migrant student. This would entail work in the profiling of the student and in the

administration of the process of integration; evaluating and assessing the students' level of attainment in all subjects – especially Maltese and English – so as to avoid any mismatch of levels; monitoring of the student's holistic development and needs; acting as a link between the school, the family and the community; monitoring all educational progress; setting up of meetings between stakeholders; helping in overcoming communication barriers between parents and schools; and, providing guidance about possibilities of participation in informal education institutions.

Pre-schooling integration practice
In this study it emerged that in the majority of instances EU migrant adolescents are placed in classes without adequate prior preparation. Consequently, this suggestion entails more intense and organised induction courses to both migrant students and parents, so that they are prepared for social, emotional, language and cultural hurdles, and are instructed about the school system, duties and rights. Training in the host languages resulted as being fundamental for integration, so it is suggested that policy-makers plan, organize and sustain language courses before students start their formal education process. As a result, an organised transition period, before attending mainstream schools, would help them in their 'settling in' process. In addition to this, a pre-schooling integration practice would also mean that educators are well-prepared prior to the arrival of these students, by being informed beforehand and adequately trained to handle this situation. Such preparation may also be given to local students because they too need guidance and support on how to manage possible language and cultural barriers. In fact, formal educators suggested that there should be structured entry dates, instead of admitting these students throughout the scholastic year sporadically, through a "drop in and start approach" (Buhagiar, Consiglio, Facciol & Randon, 2015, p. 7), so that there is more preparation from all stakeholders involved, including also the adolescent and the family.

A person-centred methodology in formal and informal education institutions
To enhance better integration, it is vital that all educators have a positive attitude towards migrants, show sensitivity and celebrate diversity (Razee, Richters & Watkins, 2012), rather than perceiving them as a burden. This entails a change in mind set, in which migrants are seen as assets rather than thorns (Buhagiar, Consiglio, Facciol & Randon, 2015). This also means that instead of seeing migrants as 'others', they become an integral part of the educational institutions. In such an environment, educators need to "welcome[e] and mak[e] room for the Other" (Smith, 2005, p. 68), be responsible towards the advent and the demands of the 'Other' (Vergani, 2000), and endorse values of responsibility and hospitality. It also implies reaching-out to the 'Other' (Levinas, 1969 as cited in Jourdan, 2012) in our classrooms, schools, and informal educational institutions, and learn to listen to the voice of migrant adolescents (Beavers, 1990; Roberts, 2013).

In practical terms, educators must engage in a participative and person-centred methodology, which gives migrants individual attention, thus catering for their needs and providing ongoing psychological and emotional help to address possible issues resulting from past histories or difficulties to integrate, settle and accept the new reality of living in a new country. As a result, it is recommended that groups, both in formal and informal institutions, are restricted to small numbers.

A Cross-curricular approach

Educators in formal education recommended that instead of trying to enhance diversity and sustain integration through sporadic initiatives and celebrations, strategies for integration should be more structured and ongoing through a cross-curricular approach, engrained in all school subjects.

Enhancing and sustaining extra-curricular activities and informal education

From this research it emerged that non-formal and informal education tends to sustain and help integration of EU migrants because they facilitate interaction and teambuilding and are a uniting catalyst. Consequently, educators suggested that schools should enhance and increase extra-curricular activities, whilst sustaining and promoting informal education. The latter can be done by inviting informal institutions to school, opening up to the community and encouraging migrants to participate.

Conclusion

The journey of this research study was an enlightening process for the author, as a pragmatic researcher and educator. The outcomes of this research provoked reflection on the positive practices of integration, whilst prompting some form of further action towards the integration of these EU migrant students. As a result, besides encouraging the present author to share these results and to try to be an agent of social change within his community, it is hoped that this study proves useful to policy-makers for insights about subjective experiences in relation to the research area, and to be able to set more national guidelines and establish policies to guide every person involved in this process, and that would make every EU migrant student 'camouflaged' (integrated) and not 'visible' (not integrated).

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The Compulsory Attendance Act and its immediate aftermath in Malta's educational development

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The majority of Maltese children had practically no educational facilities that could offer them a measure of education before the onset of the nineteenth century. In earlier years the few who had gained a proper education did so because their families could pay for their schooling or as they found other sources of financial support which thus enabled them to continue their studies. The British administrators of the new colony slowly realised that they needed to take a strategic decision if they wanted to lift a mostly illiterate society from its flagging backwardness. This would be beneficial to the people but no less so to the colonial establishments themselves as the latter could depend on a more reliable and loyal workforce. An Elementary Schools Department was gradually introduced from the late 1830s, becoming quite organised during the directorship of Can. Paolo Pullicino who occupied the post between 1850 and 1880.

With the turn of the twentieth century educational developments took on a new dimension. Up till then children could attend school whenever their parents wanted, but there was no law to stop them from withdrawing their sons and daughters at any time. This was partially rectified by Act XXII of 1924, which thus regularised attendance in Maltese schools. The law became effective on 1 January 1925 and this obliged parents who had registered their children to continue to send them regularly to school. It had been anticipated that many would withdraw their children before the entry of the law or else keep back from registering them so that these would not be burdened by this new compulsion. Such concerns were well-founded when one consideres that from some years previously there had been much discussion regarding whether the state should interfere in the education of children and in this way replace the parents in this sphere. Furthermore, given that many lived on the verge of poverty, there was the undeniable fact that this law would preclude parents from the possibility of stopping their children's education at any point if they felt the need to send them to work to support their family. However, when the Compulsory Attendance Act came into effect, these apprehensions did not materialise; so much so that the average attendance in schools increased.

With the permanence of numbers, given that whoever was enrolled had to attend school regularly, classes became more populated and this was witnessed especially in the higher standards – from Standard IV upwards. This had its consequences as the schools, which were adequate up till 1924, now became too small and overcrowded to satisfy their purpose with students continueing to attend until they finished the full primary school course.[1]

Students were expected to finish their primary years at the age of 12 years, this being raised to 14 years in 1928. Whoever was on the register could not absent themselves for more than 25 per cent of the obligatory attendance and if this happened the parents were notified about the infringement. When the responsibility for this notification was put on the teachers,[2] their union – the Malta Union of Teachers, established in 1919 – took up its members'

objections with the Director, claiming this to be an added burden which also demoted their status to that of messenger or caretaker. The Union pointed out to the authorities that this task could easily be carried out by the school caretakers who were already delivering important messages as part of their work.[3] Dr Albert V. Laferla, Director of Government Elementary Schools, was displeased with the MUT challenge and retorted that he would ask whether teachers would have objected had they been offered payment for this undertaking.[4] The Union's reply was that it would have been gratifying had the teachers' meagre salary been topped up; however, surely not through the way suggested by the Director.[5] This was an angry reaction prompted by the fact that teachers' salaries had not been increased since many years and their

Dr Albert V. Laferla

disappointment was compounded by the authorities threatening further their social esteem by asking them to carry out tasks done by caretakers who occupied a lesser grade in the school hierarchy. Dr Laferla however sought to explain that when he used the word 'staff' he was not meaning the teaching staff as the term had a wider meaning.[6] In this way the clash was played down and it was left to fizzle out.
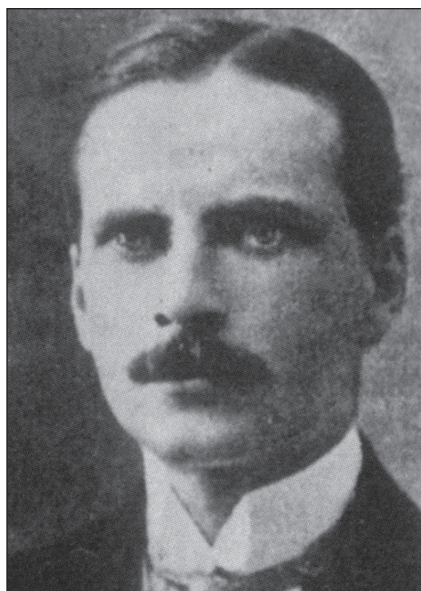
Maltese schools in the 1920s aimed at providing a general education to students thus stimulating their minds and refining their basic skills; this, it was hoped, would lead to the country having more law-abiding citizens and efficient workers. In other countries this phase had already being superseded by the introduction of a more hands-on education programme through the organisation of technical schools. Director Laferla, who was alert to such initiatives, emphasised that while general education needed to continue to be promoted and developed, only through vocational education would this educational programme become more complete and comprehensive.[7]

It is of note that during these years the elementary education system in the colony was basically linked to religion. This was so due to two particular reasons. The first, Laferla pointed out, was, because any person who abided by the Commandments would not break the law of the country and would thus be an ideal citizen. The second was due to the fact that the only subject which the students were familiar with, and that they could understand, was Religion – and this meant that any learning could only start from that which was known and familiar to the children.[8]

The early decades of the twentieth century found education in Malta rather scarce and much still had to be done to upgrade it. Educational annual reports, while registering some encouraging indications regarding the situation in the colony, concurrently pointed out a number of fundamental problems that had not been addressed. These basic deficiencies included the dire state of the teacher corps which had virtually experienced no improvement since the turn of the century. Dr Laferla, while penning down his educational report for 1926-1927, thought fair to speak out with the colonial administration, without much beating around the bush, about what needed to be done if education were to register any positive leaps in the future. He zoomed onto the problem concerning the teacher salaries, and to the fact that this was intrinsically tied to attracting new recruits. The Director made it clear that before teachers were granted salaries that would be sufficient for them to live decently, one could not expect people to join the teacher corps. He underscored what a difficult job teaching was, draining one's health while receiving no appreciation; it was stressful and taxing on the person. These were all reasons why teachers had to be paid adequately. There was nothing surprising about the fact that while young men started their working career as teachers they soon left with the first better opportunity that came their way. To illustrate his arguments, Dr Laferla highlighted a reply he had received from a promising young teacher who retorted that no one should pretend that he worked to die of hunger. The Director thus addressed the authorities directly, telling them that this critical situation would not be remedied by expressing sympathy with words but by demonstrating sympathy through actions – it required opening the moneybag and paying up. While helping to rectify the situation, this action would also enable children from poor families to benefit because talented teachers would remain in schools.[9]

Laferla's words painted a clear picture of the parsimony exerted by the colonial authorities towards the education of the people; a truth undeniably visible and tangible. One could perhaps extrapolate the reason for this lethargic stance considering that a fortress colony did not need intellectually vibrant subjects but ones who were obedient and subdued to the needs of the Empire. Though an Anglophile, Laferla was no less a son of Malta. In his responsible position as Director for Elementary Education in Malta, he could not accept a situation where his fellow co-nationals were simply allowed to wallow away in their ignorance. All his comments, his actions and his sentiments were intentioned to promote the well-being of the citizens of Malta and to strengthen the island's social structure. He felt it his duty to intercede for his countrymen.

In his attempts to improve the situation of schools and schooling Dr Laferla identified a fundamental problem related to the training of future teachers. The process involved new entrants to first attend the Central School and when this three-year course was completed, these would be appointed student-teachers and sent at once to teach classes of forty students or more during the day. With school over, in the late afternoon the student-teachers were

to correct all given schoolwork and prepare lessons for the morrow. Then in the evening they were expected to study for their own advancement and qualifications. Topping this, after a hectic routine running five days and five nights, the drained and weary student-teacher was to attend training school on Saturdays. Laferla concluded that given these circumstances, nothing but failure could realistically be expected, accompanied by a waste of public funds; all this in an attempt to achieve the impossible! It was clear that even with the strongest will possible, a tired teacher could never succeed. The solution was in upgrading the level of training and of education but this was to be done by offering incentives to those who wished to embark on a teaching career so as to entice them for this job. The Director wished to see a complete transformation in the system; he believed that the blame for the existing failure was neither due to the students nor to the teachers in the training school, but its deficiency traced itself to the present structures.[10]

Other reforms which were tackled under his directorship included the updating of the syllabi. Without an efficient syllabus, a subject could never be efficiently and effectively taught. This therefore meant that syllabi had to be revised periodically and kept up to date. In 1926 the Department also introduced new English reading books to replace those in use. The series chosen was *The Ideal Catholic Readers* which, according to Laferla, matched the mentality, the interests, and the way how Maltese children viewed the world around them.[11] It is noteworthy to consider how much the religion of the majority of the people dominated the life of the Maltese. Anything that was done, and any thought that came to mind, unswervingly followed the people's Catholic culture. And this also in aspects on which the colonial government, though being Protestant, had the right and the authority to decide upon. Thus, while the schools were run by the state and this could decide what ought to be taught, yet, the colonial government made sure that this never caused the Catholic Church to feel apprehensive or suspicious because this could only lead to immediate trouble. The British rulers had by this time come to understand this reality to perfection; the result of their experience over 126
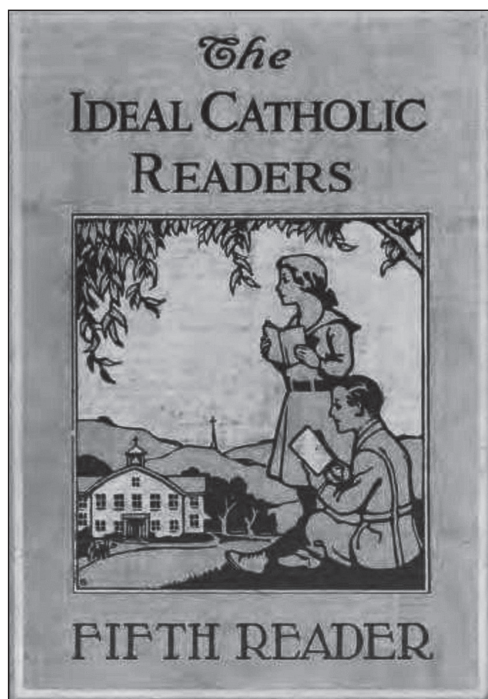
Front cover of *The Ideal Catholic Readers* which was introduced in Malta in the 1920's

years of presence in Malta. Thus, even the learning of English, about which the Maltese Catholic Church had been very suspicious as it considered it a means by which conversion to Protestantism could potentially be achieved, was allowed to be taught on the religious lines of the colonised and not on those of the coloniser. As the chosen books were American, these had to be edited so as to clean them from the elements that pertained to the American culture and these were replaced with items akin to local mentality and experience. For the first time, also, material from Maltese history was included in reading books in English that were now being used in the local primary classrooms. The Department also initiated the structuring of a set of lessons for composition and grammar adequate for children. The system adopted consisted of the writing of a series of lessons based on the English and Italian readers, and these began to appear in the publication *The Teacher*. It was proposed that if these were successful they would eventually be collected in a book. For Religion, a book titled *Ir-Reliġjon Imgħalma liż-Żgħar* was prepared. According to Laferla, 10,000 copies of this book were sold in less than a month. Another project in the pipeline consisted of a set of books in Maltese for students attending evening classes and other books for the infant classes.[12]

These rather broad reforms that were taking place in the Maltese educational system of the late 1920s also touched the internal organisation of individual schools. The 'house system' was now introduced on the advice of Mr Melton, a headteacher of a school in Slough, England, who had been on loan with the Department for six months. This system provided for each school to be sub-divided into 'houses' with every 'house' choosing a distinguished citizen as its patron, while also electing a 'house captain' and a 'room captain'. These latter two positions fell under the direction of the 'school captain'. A further reform concerned the annual and half-yearly exams. As from scholastic year 1927-28, these were put under the responsibility of a team of school inspectors, a decision aimed at achieving a certain level of standardisation among the schools.[13]

Laferla's initiatives extended towards a higher awareness of the natural environment among children. So as to appreciate more the nature that surrounded them, an Arbor Day was introduced. This initiative was borne out of the fact that the school timetable was already too tight for the inclusion of nature study. Thus, it was thought that Arbor Day could offer children an opportunity to get closer to trees, plants, birds and animals. The Director observed that the younger generation of his time was growing up unappreciative and disrespectful towards nature. Noticing that vandalism and the children's destructive instinct were proving to be uncontrollable, he felt that something needed to be done in an effort to reduce this widespread harm. The Director wished to convey an enhanced image of the importance of this event by asking the Governor, the Archbishop of Malta, the Bishop of Gozo, and other prominent persons, to preside over the planting and blessing of trees in the various districts of Malta and Gozo.[14]

The initiative taken by Laferla to introduce Arbor Day to school children has continued to the present where the younger generations are alerted to the need of taking care of the natural environment which includes the planting of trees. Organisations like Nature Trust Malta have kept alive this practice. (Photo source courtesy Nature Trust Malta: gozonews.com/60310/nature-trust-malta-celebrates-world-arbor-day/)

Some of Laferla's innovations drew on school life in England. The 'house system', for example, had originated among private schools in the mother country. On the other hand, Arbor Day though an American creation was celebrated in England for the first time in 1929.[15] Interestingly, in Malta this annual event was introduced the year before.

School attendance was showing positive signs by the late 1920s as the number of those parents wishing to enrol their children was on the increase. This was being interpreted by the authorities as a change of heart on the part of the Maltese who were now viewing education favourably. Laferla opined that parents from the lower social class were beginning to feel the stigma of illiteracy and thus wished their children to get some education and thus avert this label. Such parents were to the best of their abilities, and according to their circumstances, showing interest in the scholastic progress of their children.[16] These comments uttered at a time when even the Director himself admitted that education had still much to strive by way of improvement, hint at a people enthusiastic to learn.

This newly-found urge for schooling may, however, have had a more compelling mover. It was a time when the Maltese were embracing with

more vigour the prospects of emigration to faraway countries such as Australia and the United States of America. Quotas to the USA were increasing annually during this period,[17] while better prospects for a brighter future in Australia were also emerging.[18] As emigrants were generally required to have some schooling and a little knowledge of reading and writing, also to communicate in these foreign lands where English was the linguistic medium, it must have preoccupied the parents that if they wished their children to have a chance to settle in lands of opportunity, they needed to be literate and skilled.

Besides schooling during the day which was intended for children, those of an older age

Pope Pius XI who announced that co-education was not morally correct

had a different opportunity. Education in Malta in fact offered young adults a number of evening classes. Statistics for 1928 related to evening classes indicate that there were 33 schools for males and 15 for females on the island of Malta, while another 10 for males and 3 for females were located on the island of Gozo.[19] Yet, the numbers did not reflect the actual affectivity of these schools. This emerges from a comment by Laferla who noted that these were "tired classes under tired teachers"; an observation spurred by the fact that teaching and learning was not at all satisfactory. Those attending, when they did attend, were either illiterate or very weak in the school subjects. It also seems that the schools had remained open, more or less, not to deprive the teachers of that extra remuneration at a time when their salaries were quite wanting.[20]

A different story could be narrated for the day schools as these seemed to be experiencing a measure of success. Besides the many on the waiting lists to start their education, the schools themselves were full and crowded, with some described as crammed beyond their capacity. Yet, the space was limited and new measures needed to be introduced to address this pressing reality. One proposed remedy considered subsidising some private schools if these accepted students sent by the government. By 1929 this offer had been taken up by the Franciscan Sisters of Rabat, Gozo; the Missionaries of Mary of Balzan; and, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Marsa.[21]

The Central Schools in the 1920s continued to register some stability while certain developments could also be reported. What was known as the 'old' Hamrun School had been converted into a Higher Central School in 1928,[22] and could thus prepare students for the Senior Oxford Examination. The other central schools catered for the Junior Oxford Examination. Furthermore the number of such central schools had been increased, a move prompted by a particular reason. The first of these schools had been opened in Valletta in 1921 with another three, one of which was in Gozo, coming into operation two years after. In the scholastic year 1929-30 the Department of Elementary Schools had to open a fifth school, a consequence of the encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Catholic education[23] announced on 31 December 1929. Pius XI explained how the Catholic Church viewed the education of children and pointed out that the system called 'coeducation' was false and harmful. In *Divini Illius Magistri* it was explained that this system was based "upon a deplorable confusion of ideas that mistakes a levelling promiscuity and equality, for the legitimate association of the sexes." This, the pontiff continued, was erroneous as, "The Creator has ordained and disposed perfect union of the sexes only in matrimony, and, with varying degrees of contact, in the family and in society."[24] Faced with the religious direction set by this encyclical, Dr Laferla had to open another central school to segregate the boys from the girls in the only coeducational level that existed at the time.[25]

With regard to secondary education, up to the second decade of the twentieth century Malta had only two such government schools; these being the Lyceum for boys and the Girls' Secondary School. Admission to these schools, both situated in Valletta, was by examination from Standard III or IV of the primary school when the candidates were about 12 years old.[26]

The elementary school curriculum showed a clear distinction between the sexes, a reflection of how society viewed man and woman at this time. While the man was considered to be the head of the family and of the household, the woman was meant to take care of the home; a role which the female had been carrying with her throughout the centuries.[27] Education for the girl was structured on the premise that she needed to get training to prepare herself to become a good housewife and mother. This meant that she was taught the principles of hygiene, how to clean the house, wash the clothes and take care of the members of the family, besides learning how to sew. The girl's education started with sewing lessons while she attended the lower classes of the elementary school, with housewifery being introduced and expanded in the last two years of her schooling.[28] This emphasis on the position and function of the woman in society was a reflection of the Maltese religious beliefs. Laferla had maintained that the Maltese could only understand what had a religious connection and he thus followed the teaching of the Catholic Church in what regarded woman in society. A circular the Director issued in 1930 ordered all the female teachers and students to dress according to the directions set by Pope Pius XI, issued by the

A common scene in housekeeping classes for girls in schools in the early 20th century. The photo shows a kitchen housekeeping flat in a New York school. (Source: Shorpy Historical Photo Archive: In the Kitchen - approachaarch.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/1910-tenement-kitchen-class-via-shorpy.jpg)

Vatican on 12 January of that year. Furthermore, Laferla gave instructions that anyone caught breaking these orders had to be reported to him.[29]

Education for girls was extended in February 1931 when the Central Housecraft School was established in Floriana to cater for the teaching of domestic subjects. Girls from the elementary schools were taken to the school in Floriana once a week following a roster. The Central Housecraft School's objective was to act as an extension of the elementary school programme of domestic subjects, with the girls getting further training in housekeeping, cooking, table manners, and the caring of family members and babies. The setting up of the Central Housecraft School seems to have also been in response to parents' complaints that after attending school until the age of 14, their daughters were still lacking in their housework skills, despising it, and considering themselves as though they belonged to well-to-do families and forgetting their true social origins. To eliminate this effect girls' education was reoriented towards domestic work, where elements of housecraft were incorporated in the various aspects of their education. Girls were now being coached towards viewing manual work related to the house as noble and dignified. These measures convinced parents to appreciate education once again,[30] as they now deemed the concept of the girl as

housewife as having been brought back into Maltese society. To manifest a more explicit sign of the gratitude which society felt for this redirection in girls' schooling, members of the Catholic Women's League not only visited classes to encourage female students during lessons, but they also offered prizes to boost their entusiasm further.[31]

A serious logistical problem which began to emerge in the early 1930s concerned the employment of new teaching staff. While in past years the headache for directors had been about not finding enough people to recruit as teachers, now the situation was diametrically opposite. Laferla had to complain that newly qualified teachers were not being deployed due to lack of finances. The Director reported that there was a good number of student-teachers who had finished their course at the central school but these continued to figure on the waiting list as he did not have sufficient funds for new salaries. This situation was highly damaging to the system as, besides demoralising these newly-qualified persons, society was not benefitting from the skills and abilities of people who were qualified and up to date in the methods of teaching, thus putting to waste the efforts of all concerned. In an effort to reduce the disappointment of those who were still unemployed after more than a year, the Government decided to grant them £2.00 per month; in this way they would be encouraged to wait a little longer.[32]

Another decision taken concerned technical education. In April of 1931 boys could enrol in the first trade school that was opened in Malta. It was situated in a building situated in Mrieħel which was converted into a school; the initial group of subjects taught were woodwork, metalwork, and trades related to agriculture. Plans for the future considered the opening of other schools of this type so that there would eventually be three in Malta and one in Gozo.[33]

For those with more academic inclinations, the Government offered a generous number of scholarships to students attending both government and private schools. Generally, some of the scholarships granted to private schools were not taken, so these were then diverted to those attending the government primary schools and in this way none were wasted. This was quite beneficial for the poorer families as it gave their children a chance to continue with their studies and thus helped them to find a better future. Such yearly scholarships were offered for places at the Lyceum and the Girls' Secondary School,[34] where students attended against a fee. In this way those with lower means were given a chance to move on in life through free education.

Along the tenure of Albert V. Lafela, his office changed nomenclature and widened its purpose. In 1933, the position of Director of Elementary Schools was thus abolished and the new office of Director of Education was created, a post which came into being on 31 October.[35] In this way the secondary sector was brought under his direction; however the University continued to be the responsibility of the rector. This was also the time when Malta lost

its self-government constitution which had been granted in 1921. It was by Proclamation No XIV of 2 November 1933 that the British Government withdrew this constitution and put Malta under an Executive Council, meaning that the colony effectively returned under gubernatorial authority.[36] The last Minister of Education in a Maltese Government before the retraction of the constitution was Dr Enrico Mizzi, whose office was terminated in November of 1933. Malta had to wait until November of 1947 for another self-government constitution to be granted and which also ushered in its next Minister of Education.

As Laferla was now also responsible for secondary education, he could report on the state of the Lyceum and also on the secondary school for girls. Changes of note included the retirement of Cyril Leach, who had been in charge of the Lyceum between 1913 and 1932. Another development was the appointment of the Lyceum teacher Rev. Dr Albert Pantalleresco to the position of Director of Secondary Schools,[37] while a third concerned the retirement of Esther Collins, the head of the Girls' Secondary School, after 34 years in the service.[38]

A reform which was ushered in with the 1930s concerned Maltese; this was now introduced as a language to be taught and studied in the elementary schools as from the scholastic year 1931-32. The alphabet used was that of the *Għaqda* (*tal-Kittieba tal-Malti*).[39] The decision for this new measure was officially taken by the colonial administration as the self-government constitution was at that moment suspended; however, Gerald Strickland and his Constitutional Party were still the dominant political party at the time. When the constitution was given back to the Maltese in 1932, the election was won by the Nationalist Party. Under that administration Maltese was being taught as an introduction to the Italian language as the latter had been eliminated as a school subject by Letters Patent of 26 April 1932.[40]

Language and politics had remained a bone of contention and each administration on the island used its power and authority to introduce, reassess, change or strengthen its preferred language in an effort to exercise the most influence possible on the people. This presence was quite evident in the sector of teacher training during the year that the Nationalist Party was returned to government with the election of 1932. The party at once focused on how to bring back an enthusiasm among the Maltese for the Italian language. In 1932 four teachers were sent to England for training – the two men went to St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill in Middlesex, while one of the women went to Endsleigh College in Hull and the other to St Charles College in London. On the other hand, in line with the Maltese Government's pro-Italian policy, fourteen teachers were sent to Italy. These received lessons in the *Magistero* of Rome and attended a course for foreigners at the University of Perugia. A number of these teachers also sat for the examination at the University of Perugia and obtained the course diploma.[41] With the withdrawal of the self-government constitution and the return to gubernatorial

administration, Malta's education was put back on track according to what the imperial requirements dictated.

Education and schooling benefited from whatever positive could come out of the colonial restrains on a fortress-colony. Malta's mission had been, and would continue to be, until its independence in 1964, to serve the colonial masters and the British crown. Education was one means by which this could be achieved; the curriculum was structured in a way so as to shape obedient employees and faithful civil servants. Learning English and Maltese would bring students closer to their colonial masters and keep them within the fold of the Maltese community; learning Italian introduced the young mind to a foreign culture which the British considered alien and rival to their interests. Thus, while it was important for the next generation to be literate and know how to communicate in the tongue of their rulers, it was also essential that they remained appreciative of the benevolence of H.M. Government that employed them and protected them.

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Teaching women's history in history classrooms

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Introduction

Women's History has come a long way and as a field of study has today become very popular; slowly women from the past are getting the attention they deserve, hopefully the trend will continue until we can safely say that women are now no longer hidden from history. However, Women's History must not remain solely in the academic domain it has also to become part of public knowledge and discourse, and one sure way for this to happen is for Women's History to become part and parcel of History curricula in schools.

The nature of history

Undoubtedly teaching Women's History is very important but how to go about doing it requires some thought. Before anyone can do any teaching of anything in history it is very important to be aware that the nature of history can be difficult and problematic.

There are those, such as the positivists, who believe that history is a science and that the laws of historical process can be discovered, while others believe that what historians do is to collect and verify evidence and then interpret it in a way that is more or less acceptable to their readers. For a long time in historiography, university students, and I believe even today, were and are presented with two main classical works which represent these opposite poles of the debate. These are: E. Carr's *What is history*? (1964), and G. Elton's *The Practice of History* (1967).

In the nineteenth century myths, legends, supernatural or religious intervention were no longer acceptable explanations in history, now serious historians were expected to compile an objective collection of facts and present them as they are, letting the facts speak for themselves. This notion, enunciated especially by historians like Leopold von Ranke, would seem logical were it not for the point that there are problems when it comes to establishing historical facts. It was Carr who actually pointed out that facts in history only start to have meaning once the historian has gone to work on them. Facts are only the raw material; history is a continual process of interaction between the historian and his or her facts.

There are various problems when it comes to historical explanation, for all historical knowledge comes to us in an indirect way. This is true both for evidence coming from primary historical sources and for evidence coming from secondary historical sources. When working with primary sources we are dealing with what survives; other material which did not survive might have produced an entirely different picture. There will always be the possibility of sources being forged and the information they are giving is entirely false. This can also happen through mistakes occurring while the historian is working with the sources, for example mistakes during translations or while deciphering calligraphy. But even if one were to give allowances to these

A poster of 1942 entitled "We Can Do It!" depicting the power of women in the war effort during WWII. It came to symbolise the importance of women in society today.

human errors, there exist yet more serious problems when dealing with historical material. A truly untouched authentic piece of evidence cannot be said to exist. What we have, all comes to us second hand, even documents, which are often regarded as sacrosanct where facts are concerned, were written by fallible human beings. Even if they were actual eyewitnesses of the events they are reporting, their memory can be faulty. Furthermore the account is influenced by the eyewitness's prejudices and biases, which may cause him or her, even if perhaps subconsciously, to exaggerate or modify certain things.

With secondary sources there are even more concerns since now, besides the bias to be found in the original source of information, there is also the writer's bias to contend with. Facts become facts when historians decide to make them so, even when not expressing any judgements or opinions historians are being selective by the very choice of the subject they have picked to work upon.

> "The facts are not given, they are selected. Despite appearances they are never left to speak for themselves. However detailed a historical narrative may be, and however committed its author is to the re-creation of the past, it never springs from the sources ready-made; many events are omitted as trivial, and those which do find a place in the narrative tend to be seen through the eyes of one particular participant or a small group" (Tosh, 1984, p.113).

It is the historians who decide in what order and context to place the facts, and as any good journalist knows, to influence opinion in one direction you merely have to select and arrange the appropriate facts. Historians are products of their own culture and the society, and subject to their own prejudices and values. And it is now clear that the person writing, his or her gender, ethnic group, social class, political beliefs, when in time s/he is writing, in which society and to whom, is going to make a huge difference on the end product.

For a long time historians thought that only the history of kings, nobles and great men was important and therefore our history simply dealt with such topics, leaving out whole chunks of the population who because of their race, ethnic group, class or religion did not fit this paradigm and this is especially obvious when it comes to women's history. In this case it was half the population of the planet that was left out.

Women were for a long time, to coin Sheila Rowbotham's famous phrase, 'hidden from history.' With the advent of more and more women historians, women's history is now being written and our perspectives on whole historical periods have changed. For as Gordon (1990) says, "It does not simply add

women to the pictures we already have of the past, like painting additional figures into the spaces of an already completed canvas. It requires repainting the earlier pictures, because some of what was previously on the canvas was inaccurate and more of it misleading." (p.185)

But before giving a sigh of relief and start congratulating ourselves as historians of Women's History that finally we are here and the 'truth' is going to come out, according to the postmodernist view on history no such thing is possible.

Postmodernist theories on the nature of history present another perspective that goes beyond that offered by Carr and Elton. Postmodernism maintains that truths uncovered by history are highly imperfect and generalizations do not apply because we are dealing every time with a new and unique individual event or person. The questions historians ask are determined by the questions of their society, reflecting the same apprehensions or optimism of the time rather than the historical period the historian is studying.

Modern philosophers like the American Hayden White (1978), present history as a narrative discourse, the content of which is mostly invented! Historians build around stories with the little evidence that they find, but according to White past events do not have the shape of stories at all. There is too much sublimity in the past for it to ever be fully grasped in narrative form. Human beings try to instil order and meaning to the past, which is not possible, since according to White (1978) the past is chaotic and meaningless. Postmodernism of course also attacks Women's History and dashes any ideas of finally giving the 'true' picture of the past by finally including women. Different historical methods whatever they may be, Marxist, bourgeois or feminist, all read history in their particular way and historians of Women's History are just another group pushing forward their particular agenda and values, which in fact may have very little to do with the actual past. All this casts serious doubt on any objectivity in history.

The author does not fully accept this postmodernist stance, and counter-attacks on postmodernism. Notably Evans (2000) defends history and puts forward the argument that postmodernism is not such a threat to history as initially imagined. However, it is still important to be aware of the very real difference between 'the past' and 'history' which are often taken to mean one and the same thing, when in fact they are not. It is important to accept that history is merely a discourse about the past but not the past itself and to a certain extent what Keith Jenkins (1991, p.5) says is correct:

> *"History as discourse is thus in a different category to that which it discourses about, that is, the past and history are different things. Additionally, the past and history are not stitched into each other such that only one historical reading of the past is absolutely necessary.*

> *The past and history float free of each other, they are ages and miles apart."*

Jane Austen in her unique way came to a similar conclusion when in her book *Northanger Abbey*, over 200 years ago she said through her character Catherine Morland:

> *"I read it [history] a little as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all – it is very tiresome: and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention."*

But even if we accept that the study of history does not give us the truth and ultimately the most we can hope for when writing Women's History is just to present another interpretation, that in itself can never be a sterile exercise. As Brickley (1999, p.92) says:

> *"Thus since knowledge – historical knowledge – is, substantially at least, about interpretation, it follows that we never have a stable object to study. It is always changing under our interpreting activity and, therefore, as historians, we need to be able to see our historiographical 'footprint', for this is a part of the object itself."*

And why should Women's History not also leave its footprint on historiography? After all the only reality humans can know is what they interpret of the world around them. We create patterns and then attempt to fit over the realities of which the world is composed. Women's history needs to create its own patterns in history for without these patterns we are unable to make sense of our world.

Teaching history

As can be seen the debate regarding the nature of history is quite complex, but it presents issues which are important to the teaching of Women's History in the classroom. Beliefs regarding the nature of history in turn influence the methods and approaches adopted for teaching Women's History in schools. In view of the fluidity of history, traditional history teaching which reflects the positivist stance and rests on the assumption that history is a finished product – the work of historians – has absolutely no place in the classroom. Here the main objective of the learning process is to demonstrate mastery of conventionally accepted historical knowledge. History is seen as a body of knowledge which has to be passed on to pupils and unfortunately there are various courses on Women's History which are in fact based precisely on this approach.

A photo of the suffragettes Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst about 1908 - many women contributed to society and should be studied as role models and social heroines.

A quick Google search on Women's History will reveal various sites with lists of narratives and stories on the lives of usually famous women or lists and factual information on 'important' historic events which gave women political rights. Articles promoting women's history especially in America often focus on the lack of famous women taught in schools: "These are just a few of the most important women in history, but if you were educated in the United States, you might not know their names, largely because women's history is under-taught in American schools" (Warner, 2016).

Knowledge on famous women in history is seen as a panacea for the troubles of women today, women who made a name for themselves via their important status in society will in turn influence young women to also become great women. A kind of 'trickle-down theory', but this time instead of the general population benefiting from the economic wealth of rich people, ordinary women will benefit from the cascading brilliance of these women who 'made it'.

Susan Whiting, Chair of the Board of Directors for the National Women's History Museum, during one press conference stated that: "We know that there are many untold examples of women's contribution to our American history... Time and again, research has proven that female role models – heroines – are powerful motivators in women's personal and professional lives" (Williams, 2015).

Famous women should naturally be included in history and their importance should not be diminished in any way; they may or may not act as role models to younger women. One might actually empathise and in turn sympathise much more with the daily lives and struggles of everyday women rather than with Queen Elizabeth I, or with Agatha Barbara, the first Maltese woman President.

The best pedagogy to teach Women's History

There is a further problem with a Women's History that focuses on the narrative of the lives of famous women and important events marking moments when women gained rights. While it is tempting to say that it is high time pupils in school are taught these things and they should learn and be told of important historical information on Women's History; it is not an effective teaching method. It is not the way pupils in primary and secondary school learn about Women's History, or anything else in history for that matter.

History itself is mainly concerned with enquiry and with giving valid interpretations and so teaching accumulation of knowledge stops being the top priority. The focus in history classrooms should be on pupils gaining skills that help them to analyse and interpret historical material for themselves.

Therefore irrespective of the theme or topic being studied, pupils should be made aware of the main characteristics of the discipline. For this to occur the

classroom situation should offer an active learning situation for the pupil, rather than one which presents the teacher as the giver of information. If we limit Women's History to merely handing over one fact after the other, we would be missing the key objective of history teaching. Kitson Clark (1967, p.55) says that good history produces people that think about, rather than merely accept, information: "What is your authority for saying this? And, as a particular question: How do you know that this happened? They are questions which both historians, and men and women who are not historians, ought to learn to ask much more often than they do."

Therefore it is important to teach in Women's History not just the factual knowledge, but what Bruner (1960) calls the 'structure' of the subject. Historical method involves historical thinking and it is the analyses of sources in particular, that provide the practice for a mode of thinking similar to what the historian goes through. This approach in history teaching is in fact based on constructivist teaching methods. Constructivism refers to the process of change that occurs in one's thinking as learning occurs. Traditionally, knowledge has been treated as a collection of facts and information but 'knowing' also involves organising information and the forming of concepts. The very process of collecting information brings about new frames of thought into which the knowledge can fit. The knowledge itself is not fixed but it is continually transformed with each new discovery. So history teaching in the classroom should be "the most overtly constructivist subject" (Copeland, 1998, p.119).

Different theories of learning are constantly furnishing educators with new insights on how children think and learn, and this is very important since teaching approaches will only work if they match learners' ability to accommodate them. Studies based on Piagetian theory of cognitive development, most notably Hallam (1975), produced a rather pessimistic view with regard to young children's ability to understand history. This work claimed that it is only at around the age of sixteen that any real historical thinking can occur and even when given challenging and interesting history lessons pupils around the ages of 13 and 14 showed no improvement in their reasoning. Researchers in the 1980s and 90s, such as Dickinson and Lee (1984), Ashby and Lee (1987), Booth (1987), Shemilt (1987), Harnett (1993), and Greene (1994), amongst others, have shown that in fact the Piagetian model is not the best framework on which to assess children's thinking in history. Piaget's studies are biologically oriented, studying the innate developmental stages of children as they relate to their acquisition of knowledge.

Historical thinking is best described as a form of speculation, highly investigative in nature, so many of the learning theories are not immediately satisfactory approaches to history teaching. For example Dewey's problem-solving model, perhaps so useful in subjects like science and mathematics might be inadequate, because, as Watts (1972, p.33) says, "...the material of

history is uncertain and debatable, it is difficult, if not literally impossible, to solve problems in history...history is much more concerned with problem-raising than problem-solving," This does, however, go hand in hand with a constructivist approach to teaching, for as Noddings (1990, p.12) says:

> *"Having accepted the basic constructivist premise, there is no point in looking for foundations or using the language of absolute truth. The constructivist position is really post-epistemological. And that is why it can be so powerful in inducing new methods of research and teaching. It recognises the power of the environment to press for adaptation, the temporality of knowledge, and the existence of multiple selves behaving in consonance with the rules of various subcultures."*

Lee, Dickinson and Ashby (1996) showed that children's thinking in history is far more sophisticated than previously imagined; much of the history teaching that goes on radically underestimate children's thinking ability. After analysing children's ideas on testing explanations in history, Lee, Dickinson and Ashby (1996, p.19) advise:

> *"From the point of view of day-to-day classroom history teaching, our analysis so far suggests that we need to recognise that quite young children can begin to make sophisticated distinctions and develop powerful intellectual tools. We may need both to match such ideas with greater precision in our teaching objectives, and to increase our awareness of assumptions which hold some children back."*

The 'ways of knowing' in history are really the structure of the discipline as defined by Jerome Bruner. Bruner (1966) suggests that teaching students the structure of a discipline as they study the content, leads to greater active involvement as they discover the basic principles for themselves. Bruner emphasises intrinsic motivation, through discovery learning where the enjoyment of the discovery itself is the reward, and according to him discovery learning leads to what he calls "intellectual potency". As learners become more successful in their work they become better at organising their thought processes conceptually; this in turn leads to them becoming better problem solvers. Also, strategies which can be transferred to new situations emerge and the learning process becomes more independent. There is a limit to how much inert information the human brain can retain, however once a skill and conceptual learning occurs it becomes much easier to recall the process.

Vygotsky's theory, known as a socio-historical approach to learning, has contributed much to the constructivist movement in education. His famous contribution to teaching and learning is his idea of the zone of proximal development. This refers to the relationship between the pupils' developmental level and their instructional level, that is, the distance between their developmental level when working on their own and their potential development as determined by problem solving under the guidance of

Women's History should also focus on the 'invisible' women of all times.

Upper photo: Japanese young woman playing on a gekin - her past time or her work?

Lower photo: Four Maltese women - mother and daughters - so central to life in Malta in common-day affairs.

adults or peers who know more. Another of Vygotsky's concerns was the overuse and over importance given to abilities testing to measure children's abilities; according to Vygotsky these produce a static, not a dynamic learning environment.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasises the role of the teacher as facilitator. Absorbing skills and concepts on your own is a slow process; however under structured guidance a higher attainment level is reached. This does not mean a teacher can do the thinking for the pupils but by conscious propping and key questions on the instructor's part, skills and concepts in the learners start to emerge.

Human beings are capable of cultural mental behaviour, called by Vygotsky 'semiotic mediation'. This belief led Vygotsky to give great importance to the role of instruction in children's learning. Thus the intervention process is crucial and the teacher who knows his or her pupils well is in an even better position to instigate learning. Today we frequently refer to this process as 'scaffolding', a term first coined by Wood et al (1976) to describe the interactions between the adult and a child, the support provided as children learn how to perform a task they previously could not on their own.

In the last fifteen years research in history pedagogical methods have further developed along quite sophisticated lines of study and presently there are various investigations whose objective is to discover how to improve both the knowledge and the skills in history learning. The research tries to find how one can gain optimal responses from pupils when it comes to making sense of interpretation as well as historical accounts and involves an appreciation of multi-perspectivity (Counsell, 2011; 2013; 2015; Chapman, 2012; Ashby, 2011; Stradling, 2003).

Different examples of Women's History teaching and learning activities

Classroom activity
The following is an example of the traditional history teaching approach:
Explore the accomplishments of women in U.S. history with your class by creating a scrapbook that highlights the accomplishments of famous American women.

- *First, decide how to organize the scrapbook. Group entries thematically, such as Women in Sports, Women in Politics, or Women in Science. Pages can be arranged chronologically, by date, year, or decade. Students may also choose a unique approach, such as Women's History A-Z, with an entry for each letter of the alphabet. Use the Alphabet Organizer to get started.*
- *Have students work individually, or in groups, to complete each page. Each entry should include biographical data, a photograph or other representation, and a summary of the famous woman's contribution to history. The Bio-Cube can be used to organize the information.*

Your completed scrapbook can be displayed in the school library during Women's History Month and can serve as a reference tool in your classroom. You may also want to expand this activity to include women's contributions to world history.

(sources: readwritethink and scholastic websites)

On the other hand when using the Source Method, the difference in pedagogy can easily be detected by looking at the following approach:

Lesson Plan

Task	Activity	Time	Materials
Modern Stereotypes of Medieval Women	Watch three 'Medieval' clips	10 mins	We suggest YouTube clips from Game of Thrones, The Lion in Winter and The White Queen
Clips Discussion	Discussion of the clips and ideas about what women's roles in the middle ages were	5 mins	Whiteboard
Medieval Portraits	In small groups (3-4 students) discuss one depiction of an elite medieval woman. Questions: What have they chosen to be shown with? What do these differences suggest? Do the differing portrayals relate to the women's own personalities (see the fact sheet)? Who do you think made the decisions about what was portrayed? What messages about women's roles do you think these depictions suggest?	15 mins	Handouts: Portraits/ Depictions of Elite Medieval Women Medieval Women Factsheet Paper and Pens
Portraits Discussion	Each group briefly presents their ideas about the depiction they were given. The images can then be compared in a class discussion	10 mins	Whiteboard or flipchart

Women's Wills	Discuss what the wills reveal about the women who wrote them, and their decision making processes	15 mins	Handouts: Will of Alice Blakburn Will of Alison Sothill Paper and Pens
Wills Discussion	Feedback	10 mins	Whiteboard
Daily Life and Marriage	Use court case record to think about the daily life and agency in the life of Agnes Huntington	15 mins	Handout: Agnes Huntington's Day Paper and Pens
Daily Life Discussion	Feedback What were students' surprised about? What usual/unusual things did Agnes do?	10 mins	Whiteboard
Conclusions	Go back to first discussion about the roles of medieval women, have the students changed their minds? Think about: • Class differences – who had more freedom/agency? • Records – what types of sources have they been using for women in this period? Are they records that you would expect women to appear in?	10 mins	Whiteboard

This is teaching Women's History at its best. It is taken from the resource site 'Moving Beyond Boundaries: Gender, Knowledge, History', an AHRC funded student-led skills development programme run in 2014 by Abigail Tazzyman and Bridget Lockyer from the Centre for Women's Studies, University of York. The project has also worked in collaboration with the Feminist and Women's Studies Association (FWSA) and the Historical Association (HA) (see: https://teachingwomenshistory.com/abt/).

Their Women's History class activities bring together all that is great and wonderful in history teaching. On the one hand there are a multitude of

sources, both primary and secondary, offering ample opportunity for pupils to analyse historical evidence and build interpretation and come to their own judgement and conclusions; while at the same time integrating within the exercises a multi-perspective point of view.

Conclusion

The 'Source Method' is the best teaching method for Women's History, giving just a narrative is not advisable. It is also very important to bring the historians of Women's History on board; today there are many scholars working in Women's History, their work should be sought and used by teachers to create the right balance between a history skills approach and evaluating historical knowledge. Teachers also need readily available primary sources to base their teaching activities and classroom tasks. Another consideration when teaching Women's History should be the awareness that gender studies is not Women's History and there should be a clear distinction in the curriculum between the two.

It is always difficult to decide whether Women's History should be taught in an integrated way within general history topics or as a special area on its own. Presently there is no research that shows which produces the best learning situation. In all probability both have their merits and until there is clear evidence that one is more profitable than the other the best scenario is probably one where both are occurring simultaneously, that is, Women's History integrated within the general curriculum together with focused Women's History themes.

As stated in the introduction Women's History is today flourishing in the academic world. There is no longer any excuse not to teach Women's History because there are no history books and scholarly works on Women's History. However, it is now important to ensure that this invaluable work translates into real classroom situations so that solid awareness about the integral role women have played in the past, slowly but surely, becomes common knowledge.

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A Case Study of the Implementation of the Abacus Scheme to teach Early Number Concepts

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Introduction

This article presents a discussion of data collected in relation to the implementation of the Abacus Scheme in a primary school in Malta. So as not to reveal the identity of the school observed for this case study, this will be called Pepprina Primary School. The article looks into the Abacus Schemes F1 and R used in KG2 (kindergarten class second year) and Year 1 (first year of formal primary school) respectively at Pepprina Primary School. The range of texts that constitute Abacus Scheme F1 (i.e. the Activity Book and Teachers' Resource Book) and those that constitute Abacus Scheme R (i.e. the Teachers' Cards, Activity Book, Mental Warm-Up Activities, Photocopy Masters, and Number Workbooks [NW] 1, 2 and 3) will then be presented. Abacus F1 and R are divided into components dedicated to a particular aspect of Mathematics. The components are labelled for example, 'N1', and consist of approximately 3 pages. Throughout this article, reference to particular pages is given by providing the Workbook Number, the 'N' label and the page number – for example, 'Number Workbook 3, N5, p. 15'. Pages from Abacus F1 and R are highlighted as examples. It should be noted that in KG2, F1 is intended for the teacher's use, while Workbooks R are used by Year 1 pupils. The article will also discuss how Abacus R is used within Year 1 classes at Pepprina Primary School. The discussion is based on the teachers' and EOs' responses and children's reactions noted during the observations, along with a look at some feedback garnered from questionnaires distributed to a sample of 100 parents of Year 1 children.

A general overview of Abacus Schemes F1 and R

Abacus R presents colourful and appealing activities, which capture pupils' attention. However, it was noted that Abacus R presents similar activities throughout Workbooks 1, 2, and 3, which could result in repetition of content. What follows is an analysis of how the counting principles suggested by Gelman and Gallistel (1986), are implemented in Abacus F1 and R. Moreover, the Addition and Subtraction Problem Structures proposed by Van de Walle (2010) will be examined in relation to Abacus Schemes F1 and R. The design and sequence of activities in Abacus R will also be considered.

The implementation of Gelman and Gallistel's counting principles

Throughout the lessons observed, both KG2 and Year 1 teachers encouraged children to count and touch objects one-by-one. This was reflected in their comments; "*trid tmisshom inti u tgħodd*" [you have to touch them while counting] (Ms Kate), "*għodd waħda waħda u miss b'subgħajk*" [add one by one and touch them with your finger] (Ms Tiffany). The present researchers asked teachers to explain the reason behind reinforcing the importance of

touching each object while counting. They insisted that this would discourage counting each object twice. Alternatively, throughout the lesson, Ms Karen emphasised questions asking for the total number, "*Tista' tgħidli kemm hemm dots b'kollox?*" [Can you tell me how many dots there are altogether?]. It can be argued that similar questions help teachers to reinforce the 'how-to-count' principles, which we believe are important to reinforce during the early years of schooling.

From our observations, we noted that most of the activities done by the teachers observed, revolved around the 'how-to-count' principles. In KG2 classes the activities included counting the number of blocks (1-10) to find the total number (Ms Kate), counting the number of dots on the dice (Ms Karen) and combining two numbers that are equal to a total using the number balance (Ms Kelsey). In Year 1 classes, similar activities included counting the number of straws to match a total (Ms Tiffany) and counting a number of blocks to make a tower (1-10) (Ms Taylor).

We reflected on the amount of time children spent to work out NW1, N8 p. 23 (Fig. 1) (Ms Tanya and Ms Tiffany). As soon as the teachers asked them to work out this page, children commented that they knew what was expected of them, adding that it was very easy. For example, Ms Tanya asked a child to describe what they had to do without referring to the instructions and one boy explained: "*ngħoddu u niċċekjaw jekk jaqbilx*" [we add and check whether it matches]. In both classes, children finished working this page after a few seconds. This gave us the impression that children already had knowledge of the 'how-to-count' principles, as most children managed to get all of the exercise correct.

Starting from Abacus F1, some examples which consider the 'how-to-count' principles are the following: Term 1 - Week 1; Term 2 - Week 2; Term 3 - Week 4 (Fig. 2). Similarly, Abacus R Workbooks frequently emphasise the 'how-to-count' principles' (e.g. Fig. 3, Fig. 4 and Fig. 5).
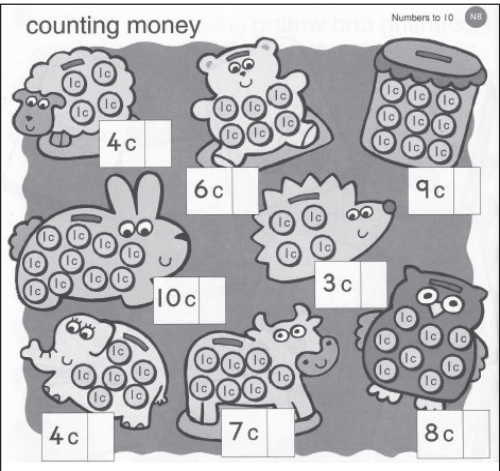
Teacher's instructions
Some of the money has been wrongly counted. Put a tick by the correct amounts. Put a cross by the wrong amounts.
Make some pliles of Ic coins. Label them with the correct amount.

Fig. 1: Number Workbook 1, N8, p. 23
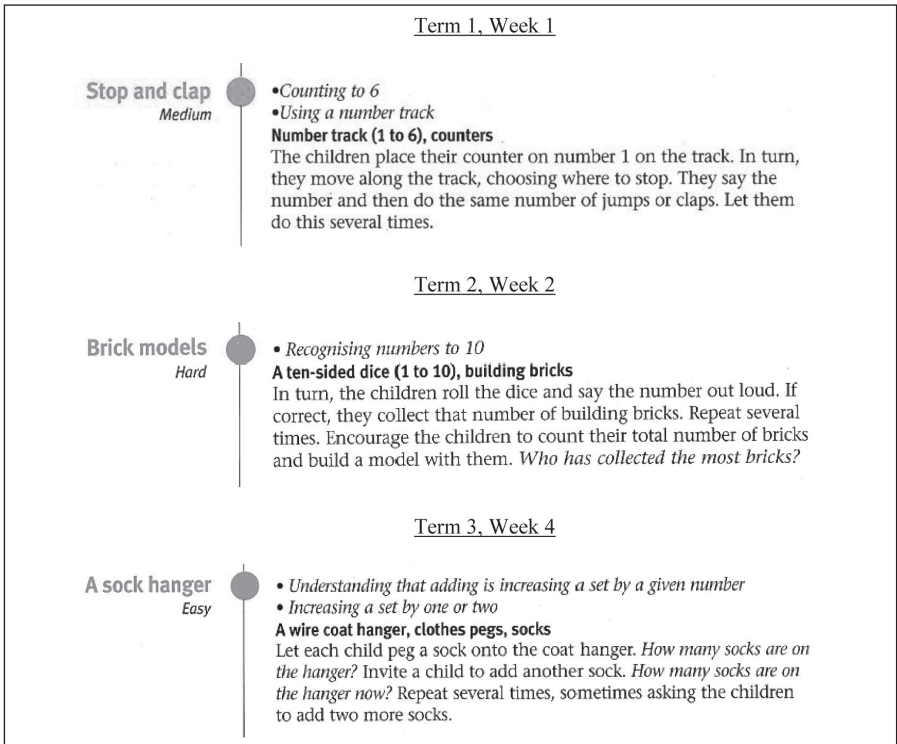
Fig. 2: Activites taken from Abacus F1 which implement the 'how-to-count' principles

Abacus Scheme R		
Number Workbook 1	Number Workbook 2	Number Workbook 3
N1 (stable-order)	N9 (stable-order)	N17 (stable-order)
N2 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N10 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N18 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)
N3 (stable-order; cardinality)	N11 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N19 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)
N4 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N12 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N20 (stable-order)
N5 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N13 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N21 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)
N6 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N14 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N22 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)
N7 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N15 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N23 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)
N8 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N16 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)	N24 (one-to-one; stable-order; cardinality)

('how-to-count' principles row precedes the above workbook entries; 'what-to-count' principles row below)

	Number Workbook 1	Number Workbook 2	Number Workbook 3
'what-to-count' principles	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 1: The implementation of the 'how-to-count' and 'what-to-count' principles in Abacus Workbooks R

counting

Numbers to 10 · N2

Write the missing numbers on the boxes. Draw a line from each set to its matching number.
Use interlocking cube to make a tower of cubes to match each number.

Fig. 3: Number Workbook 1, N2, p. 6

counting

Numbers to 20 · N18
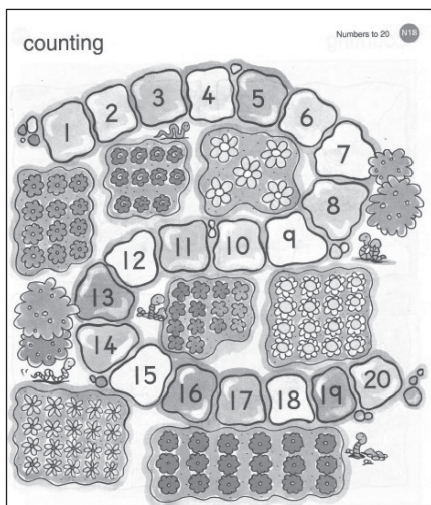
Join each flower bed to the matching number on the track.

Arrange some counters to match three more numbers on the track.

Fig. 4: Number Workbook 2, N10, p. 4

counting

Numbers to 15 · N10

Count the spots on the ladybirds. Join each ladybird to the correct number on the rocks. Draw sports on the last two ladybirds and join each to a rock.
Draw one greenfly for each ladybird to eat. Number the greenfly in order.

Fig. 5: Number Workbook 3, N18, p. 4

Fig. 6: Activity taken from Abacus F1 which implements the 'order-irrelevance' principle

Fig. 7: Activity taken from Abacus F1 that reflects addition as counting on

On the contrary, regarding the 'what-to-count' principles, only 'order-irrelevance' activities were tackled in Abacus F1 (Fig. 6). Activities which address the 'abstraction principle' were not included in Abacus F1. This is in line with Schaeffer, et al.'s statement (1974, as cited in Anghileri, 2000) that four-year olds are too young to understand that numbers can be applied to a mixed group of objects.

While analysing Abacus R we noted that the 'how-to-count' counting principles of Gelman and Gallistel (1986) are implemented throughout (see Table 1). This was expected; however, we believe that in Year 1, there could be more focus on the 'what-to-count' principles, as at KG2 children are already presented with the 'how-to-count' principles which are reinforced throughout Abacus F1. Thus, from teaching experiences in Year 1, the present authors are of the view that children may already be able to understand the 'what-to-count' principles. The latter is omitted from Abacus R. Hence, it is recommended that teachers should extend children's knowledge by integrating hands-on activities that address the 'what-to-count' principles. 'What-to-count' activities could include counting the number of different leaves during a science lesson, or counting the number of different items in pencil cases.

The interpretation of addition and subtraction

During the interviews, both KG2 and Year 1 teachers gave importance to number recognition and number value, and remarked that children have to know the number value when they are counting. However, the majority of Year 1 teachers interviewed held that counting is fundamental as it leads to addition and subtraction. This is sustained by Thompson (1997) and Frobisher (1999), who argue that counting on and backwards lay at the basis for addition and subtraction.

We observed that counting on and counting back activities were being indirectly addressed in KG2 classes through songs and play-based activities. For example, it was observed in Ms Kylie's classroom where counting back in ones was reinforced through the song: *Ten green bottles*.

From our observations in KG2, it was noticed that children were engaged frequently in counting on activities (eg. Ms Kate had some blocks in a sack and asked children to add two more to that amount). Another example from the Activity Book, which reflects addition as counting on, is Term 1 - Week 4 (see Fig. 7). Ms Kathleen argued that, *"aħna nagħmlu ħafna counting on biex nippreparawhom għall-Year 1"* [we do a lot of counting on to prepare them for Year 1].
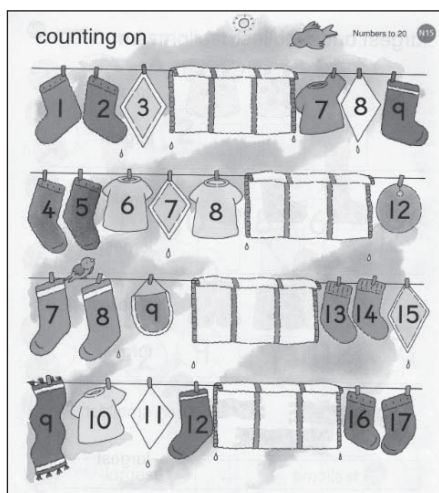
Teacher's Instructions
On each washing line write the three hidden numbers.
*Write the next two numbers on each line.*

Fig. 8: Number Workbook 2, N15, p. 19
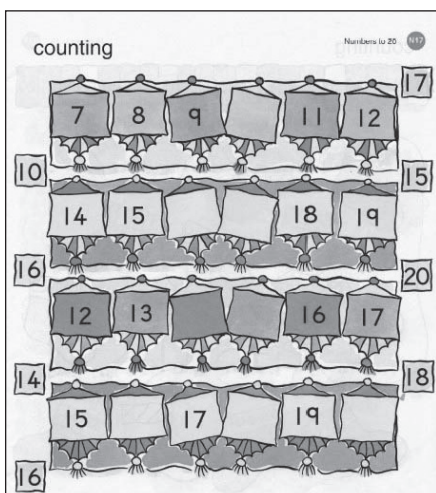
Join the number cards to the correct lanterns.
Write the numbers on the lanterns.
Write the number before and after each row of lanterns.

Fig. 9: Number Workbook 3, N17, p. 2

Reflecting on this comment, we browsed through Abacus R and noted that counting on is reinforced often. Counting on activities include asking children to count in ones (e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 – Fig. 8) or counting on two from a number (e.g. 15, 16, 17 – Fig. 9).
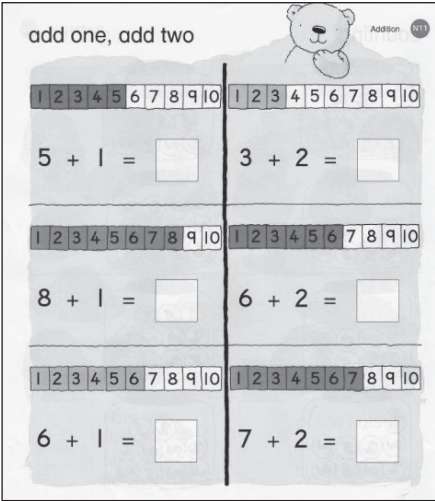
Teacher's Instructions
Look at the number of coloured squares on each book. Colour one more, or two more. Write the total number coloured.
Colour another square on each book. Write the addition.

Fig. 10: Number Workbook 2, N11, p. 7

We concur with Frobisher (1999) that counting on strategies lay the basis for addition (e.g. 5 + 1= 6 – Fig. 10). It can be observed that the concept of addition is prominently addressed throughout Abacus R. It is implemented gradually by introducing adding one up to adding six.

Year 1 teachers commented that when children are in Year 1 they have still not acquired the basic skills that lead to addition and subtraction. As a result, Ms Therese added that they have to reinforce counting on and backwards prior to focusing on addition and subtraction. As suggested by Frobisher (1999), counting back leads to subtraction. Abacus F1 presents activities emphasising counting backwards (Fig. 11). Abacus R also has several examples of counting back in ones (e.g. 5, 4, 3, 2 – Fig. 12).

It is our view that counting back could be reinforced more in KG2 as this lays the foundation for relating subtraction to 'taking away' in Year 1. Some pages in Abacus R present subtraction as taking away by removing one/two objects from a number and counting the remainder (Fig. 13). It is also noted that the topic of subtraction in Abacus R encourages children to first take away one in NW1 proceeding to take away two in NW2 and NW3.

Term 3, Week 9

Counting back
Medium

• *Counting forwards and backwards to and from 10*
**Number cards (2 to 10), 1p coins**
Shuffle the cards and place them face down in a pile. The children take turns to pick a card and count back from that number to 1. If they do it correctly, they take a coin. They replace the cards at the bottom of the pile. The first child to collect 20p wins.

Fig. 11: Activity taken from Abacus F1 that emphasises counting

Teacher's Instructions
Count back from the number on the first cloud. Write all the numbers.
Use number cards 1 to 20. Lay them out backwards from 20 to one.
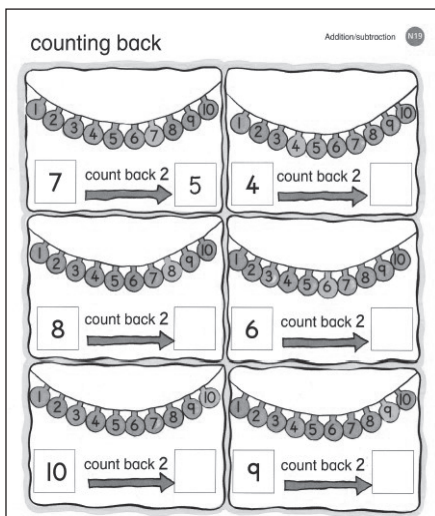

Teacher's Instructions
Sart at the bell coloured orange. Count back two. Write the final number.
Count back two more from the new number. Write the final number.

Fig. 12: Number Workbook 2, N9, p. 3 and Number Workbook 3, N19, p. 9

Van de Walle (2010) suggested various structures, namely "join", "separate", "part-part-whole", and "compare" problems. A look at Abacus R Workbooks to see whether these structures were addressed indicates that the pages of addition and subtraction fall within the categories suggested by Van de Walle, as presented in Table 2.

It emerges that the "join" situations are integrated in NW1, 2 and 3 (Fig. 14), "separate" problems are addressed less frequently (Fig. 15), while "part-part-whole" problems are tackled in all three Workbooks (Fig. 16).

When referring to Table 2 one will observe that all 'join' and 'separate' problems are of one type: 'result
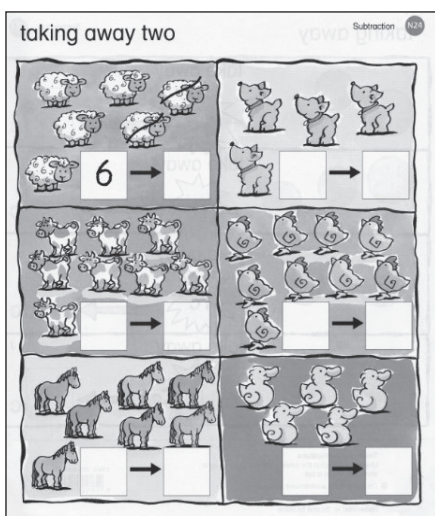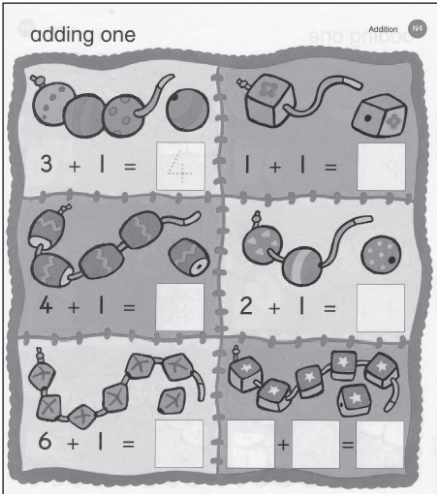

Write how many animals there are in each set. Cross out two. Write how many are left.
Draw a field of animals. Write how many, then cross out three. Write how many, are left.

Fig. 13 Number Workbook 3, N24, p. 22

	Abacus Workbook 1	*Abacus Workbook 2*	*Abacus Workbook 3*
Join Problems	**N3 p. 8** *(result unknown)* **N3 p. 9** *(result unknown)* **N4 p. 10** *(result unknown)* **N4 p. 11** *(result unknown)*	**N11 p. 7** *(result unknown)* **N11 p. 8** *(result unknown)* **N12 p. 10** *(result unknown)* **N12 p. 12** *(result unknown)*	**N19 p. 7** *(result unknown)* **N19 p. 8** *(result unknown)* **N22 p. 16** *(result unknown)* **N22 p. 17** *(result unknown)*
Separate Problems	**N6 p. 17** *(result unknown)*	**N16 p. 22** *(result unknown)* **N16 p. 23** *(result unknown)*	**N19 p. 9** *(result unknown)* **N24 p. 22** *(result unknown)* **N24 p. 23** *(result unknown)*
Part-Part-Whole Problems	**N4 p. 12** *(whole unknown)*	**N11 p. 9** *(whole unknown)* **N12 p. 11** *(whole unknown)*	**N20 p. 12** *(part unknown)* **N22 p. 18** *(whole unknown)*
Compare Problems	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 2: The interpretation of the Addition and Subtraction
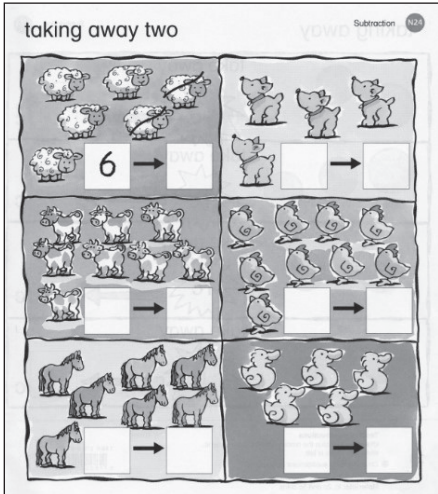Problem Structures in Abacus R Workbooks

Teacher's Instructions
Each set of beads has one more added. Write the new total. Write the addition for the last one.
Use a set of dominoes. Find three with one spot on one side. Draw them. How many spots in total on each domino?

Fig. 14: Number Workbook 1, N3, p. 9

Teacher's Instructions
Write how many animals there are in each set. Cross out two. Write how many are left.

Draw a field of animals. Write how many, then cross out three. Write how many are left.
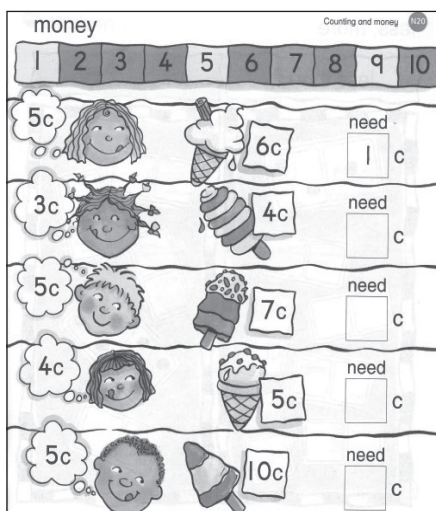
Fig. 15: Number Workbook 3, N24, p. 22

unknown'. The present authors believe that the more-able children could be exposed to the other structures ('change unknown' and 'initial unknown'). It is argued that Abacus R could have more 'separate' and 'part-part-whole' problems which provide more challenging activities. Although it was noted that 'compare' problems are not presented in Abacus R, we surmise that these would be difficult for Year 1 pupils. However, they could be provided as 'more/less' whole-class hands-on activities introducing children to the idea of, for example, comparing heights of block towers.

Find how much more money each child needs to buy a lolly. Use fingers to help you.
Draw two more lollies and price labels.
Draw the coins to match the prices.

Fig. 16 Number Workbook 3, N20, p. 12

Although Year 1 teachers are following the Teachers' Cards and Abacus R to teach subtraction, Van de Walle (2010) recommends that subtraction problems where children have to find out how many are left, should be tackled as 'separate' problems. We concur with Van de Walle; however, we argue that if subtraction is tackled as counting back, it could be reinforced with the use of a number line, as suggested in the current Mathematics Syllabus, leading children to subtraction problems (e.g. 5 – 2 = 3). Exposure to the '–' sign could be introduced in NW3, as proposed by the Teachers' Cards.

Analysis of the sequence of topics in Abacus Workbooks R

During the interviews, we asked Year 1 teachers to give their opinion about the page sequence of Abacus Workbooks R. Ms Therese highlighted that number formation (0-10) is done at the beginning of Year 1. However, the writing of numbers from 1 to 7 is covered at the beginning of NW1, while numbers from 8 to 10 are covered at the end of the Workbook. In our opinion p. 21 could be carried out after p. 6 (Fig. 17) so that number formation will be introduced to children in a progressive way.

Conversely, Ms Tanya states that the reason behind the fact that each concept is repeated throughout the three Workbooks is "*jekk kellek tifla* absent *fil*-first term *u tilfet il*-clock *xorta* she has time again in the second and third term" [if there was a girl who was absent in the first term and missed the clock
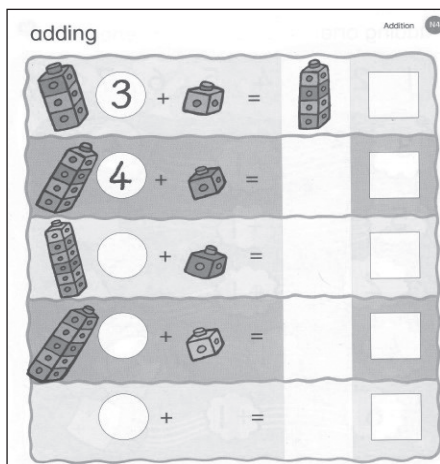
Teacher's Instructions
Write three of each number. Write the matching number for each card.
Use a pack of playing cards. Find cards 1 to 10. Place them in order.


Teacher's Instructions
Write the missing numbers on the boxes. Draw a line from each set to its matching number.
Use interlocking cubes to make a tower of cubes to match each number.

Fig. 17: Number Workbook 1, p. 21 and p.6

Teacher's Instructions
Build the towers, Write the number of cubes. Add one to each tower. Draw and write the total number of cubes Make up your own in the last space.
Add two more cubes to each total. Write the new totals.

Fig. 18: Number Workbook 1, N4, p. 11
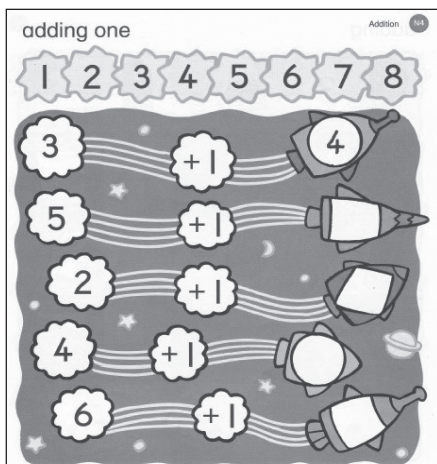
The number on the rocket is one more than the one on first cloud. Write the correct number on each rocket.
Choose another number to add to each rocket. Draw some more clouds and rockets and add your number.

Fig. 19: Number Workbook 1, N4, p. 10

she has time again in the second and third term]. However, it is our opinion that number formation should be tackled at the beginning of NW1 since these are the basis of number work. If the reason behind repeated content throughout the Workbooks is to ensure that all children keep up with the rest of the class, in our view, then, the activities could be more challenging by providing examples within different contexts, such as inviting children to write the number of items needed while preparing a shopping list (e.g. 3 apples).

We consider the way Abacus R presents the topic of addition as adequate as it first introduces children to 'join' problems and later

Write the answer to each addition. Use the number line to help you.
Throw two dice. Add the numbers. Cover with a cube the matching total on the numbers line above. Repeat until all the numbers are covered (except 1).

Teacher's instruction
Count the spots. Write the number in the pink box. Count on from the start number and write the total for each addition in the blue box.
Use a set of dominoes. Match the dominoes on this page. Sort into sets the dominoes which have the same total number of spots.

Teacher's instructions
There is one rabbit in its burrow in each picture. How many rabbits in total?
If there were two rabbits in the burrow each time, how many rabbits in total?

Fig. 20: Number Workbook 2, N12, p. 10, p. 11, p. 9

on to 'part-part-whole' problems. However, we believe that 'part-part-whole' problems could be implemented more frequently throughout the Workbooks, as most children are capable of understanding that a set of objects can be partitioned into two different groups, without changing the total (Van de Walle, 2010).

While analysing NW1, we noted that when children are presented with manipulatives, there is usually no number line (Fig. 18) and vice-versa (Fig. 19).

It is our view that in Year 1, the number line and manipulatives should be presented together as they facilitate learning. A number line provides a sense of direction as it helps children to understand that when they move from left to right the numbers increase and vice-versa (Frobisher, 1999). Alternatively, when manipulatives are integrated, children can assimilate them with real-life experiences (Tucker, 2008) and can easily visualise that when adding, the number will increase or decrease, accordingly.

Ms Taylor argued that: "*jien ma togħġobnix l-*order *ta' kif qegħdin* page *9, 10 u 11* [f'Workbook 2]*, għax* page *9 hemm l-affarijiet kollha f'xulxin, imbagħad 10 u 11 hemm* adding *b'mod differenti u dan igerfixhom ħafna lit-tfal.*" [I do not like the order in which page 9, 10 and 11 (in Workbook 2) are placed, because on page 9 everything is bunched together, while on 10 and 11 then, adding is presented in a different way, and this confuses the children]. We agree that it would be more appropriate had the following pages in NW2 been put in this order: page 10, page 11 and page 9 (Fig. 20). The visual representations of pages 10 and 11 are, in fact, quite similar making it easier for children to identify the combination of two sets. In contrast, page 9 presents all rabbits together. Thus, children have to partition the rabbits in two sets to find the total number of rabbits (part-part-whole).

Analysis of the presentation used in Abacus Workbooks R

We agreed with Year 1 teachers who pointed out that certain pages in Workbooks R have ample instructions for children to follow. Some also argued that due to the number of instructions given, children might get mixed up, even though they know the concept (Ms Therese: "*Le le mhux il-*concept*, iktar minħabba li l-*instructions *huma kemmxejn diffiċli*" [no, no, it is not the concept, it's more because of the instructions which are a little bit too difficult]). This is seen for example in Figure 21, Figure 22, and Figure 23. We advise that the instructions should be concise and clear for all.

Regarding Abacus Workbooks R, Ms Tamara commented that these are brightly illustrated, and ideal for practising and reinforcing number concepts.
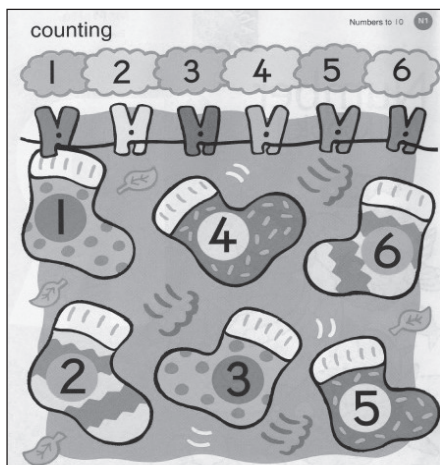
Teacher's instruction
The numbered socks have fallen off the line. Colour the top of each sock to match the correct peg. Join each one to its peg.
Make some number cards 1 to 8 and put them in order.

Fig. 21: Number Workbook 1, N1, p. 1
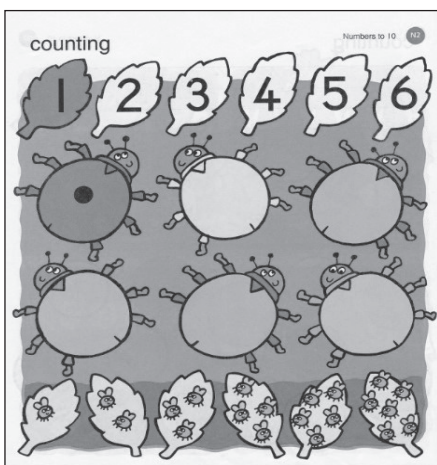
Teacher's instruction
Colour each numbered leaf to match a ladybird. Draw the correct number of spots on each ladybird. Join the ladybirds to the correct number of greenfly.
Draw leaves and number them '7' and '8'. Draw ladybirds with spots to match.
Fig. 22: Number Workbook 1, N2. p. 5

Estimate the total on the dice by choosing one of the numbered counters and write your estimate in the box. Count the totals and join to the correct counters.
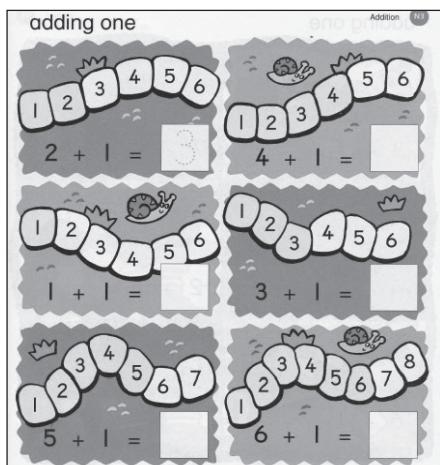*Throw four dice. Estimate, then count the total. Repeat.*

Fig. 23: Number Workbook 3, N18. p. 6

Join each card to the matching space.
Write the missing number in the space.

Cover each number with a counter, Choose a counter to take off but guess the number first. Were you correct? Report.

Fig. 24: Number Workbook 3, N20. p. 10

Colour the next number on each track. In the box write the total number coloured.
Colour green the next number on each track. Write the new addition to match.

Fig. 25: Number Workbook 1, N3, p. 8

As argued by Murray (1984), one of the main purposes of illustrations in children's workbooks is to capture children's attention. Murray suggests three types of illustrations: 'decorative', 'related but not essential' and 'essential'. 'Decorative' illustrations do not have a purpose and are there to make the page look more attractive. For example, the ladybirds, caterpillars and flowers on page 10 serve as decorations (Fig. 24).

The grass and snails on page 8 (Fig. 25) also serve as decorations, but when children first look at the grass they might think that they have to start counting from the number the grass is placed on. It thus emerges that while the illustrations in this case are decorative, these might confuse children. This could happen since on
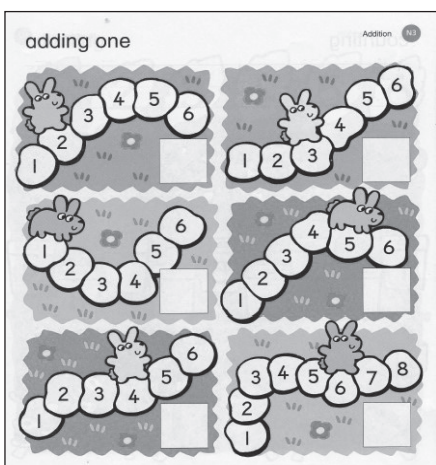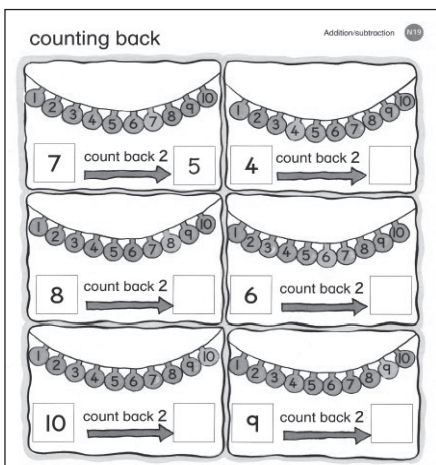

Teacher's instruction
Each rabbit hops on the next number on the path. Colour the number it lands on. Write the number in the box.
Write which number each rabbit would land on if it hopped on two more.

Fig. 26: Number Workbook 1, N3. p. 7

Teacher's instruction
Start at the ball coloured orange. Count back two. Write the final number.

Count back two more from the new number. Write the final number.

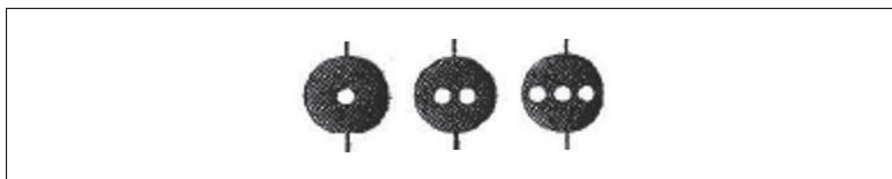Fig. 27: Number Workbook 3, N19. p. 9

Fig. 28: "Easy", "Medium" and "Hard" respectively

the previous page (Fig. 26), the rabbits are essential to finding the answer. In fact, 'essential' representations are necessary as they help children to figure out the answer.

'Related but not essential' illustrations present decorations related to the theme of the page. For example, one can still figure out the answer without having a different coloured bulb; however, this could be helpful to some students (Fig. 27).

The use of Abacus Schemes F1 and R

In our case study, we looked at how Year 1 teachers were using Abacus Scheme R. A remark put forward by the majority of the teachers was that Abacus Workbooks R and the Teachers' Cards help practitioners to plan and deliver a Mathematics lesson as these books provide guidance to teachers.

During the interviews with Year 1 teachers, Ms Taylor claimed that they planned the Mathematics Scheme of Work collectively, "*aħna nagħmlu l-i*Scheme of Work *billi nirreferu għal N1, N2, N3*" [we prepare the Scheme of Work by referring to N1, N2, N3]. We were surprised that none of the Year 1 teachers referred to the Year 1 Syllabus to plan their Mathematics lessons. Rather, what they mentioned were the Abacus Workbooks and the Teachers' Cards, stating that they found them helpful as each card had the objectives already stated for each topic.

Another common issue was that none of the teachers commented that they referred to Activity Book R. From our observations, we noticed that teachers prepared activities that were not related to the Workbook pages. For example, children were encouraged to sing along *"One, two, three, four, five...Once I caught a fish alive"*, whereas the lesson's objective revolved around counting backwards. We would propose that the Activity Book and the Teachers' Cards can be integrated as they provide graded challenging activities that match the objectives presented on the Teachers' Cards for each topic. In fact, the Activity Book presents three different levels of activities for each 'N' labelled with dots as: 'easy', 'medium', 'hard'. The symbol for each level is seen in Fig. 28. And illustrated in the Activity Book as in Fig. 29.

N22 Addition

ACTIVITY 1
Whole class, in pairs

- *Matching numbers to objects*
- *Adding by combining two sets*
- *Partitioning a set into two*

Number cards (1 to 10) (PCM 6) one set per pair, 1p coins

Hold up a number card, e.g. 8. Ask each pair to count out that many coins and split them into two piles, one each. Each child chooses the card which matches their number of coins. They hold up their cards, e.g. 5 and 3. Select examples, among the pairs of correct additions, to write on the board and discuss. Make sure you look at all the possible options, e.g. 4 + 4, 5 + 3, 6 + 2, 7 + 1. Repeat, choosing a different number card.

ACTIVITY 2
3-4 children

- *Counting*
- *Matching numbers to objects*
- *Adding two sets*

Number track (1 to 12) (PCM 5), two dice, interlocking cubes

The children take turns to throw the two dice, add the two numbers and place a cube on the matching total on the track. Some numbers will end up with more than one cube. They should continue until every number except 1 is covered. Discuss why 1 will not be covered.

ACTIVITY 3
3 children

- *Counting*
- *Adding by counting on*
- *Matching numerals to spoken numbers*

Number cards (1 to 10 and 1 to 5) (PCM 6), spotty cards (1 to 5) (PCM 15)

Shuffle the set of 1 to 5 number cards and the spotty cards and place them face down in two piles. Spread out the 1 to 10 number cards face up. The children take the top card off each pile and turn them over. They add the spotty card to the number card to find a total and find the card on the table that matches the answer. They write down the addition and continue until all the cards have been used.

ACTIVITY 4
3 children

- *Coin recognition*
- *Adding three coins and finding the total*

Several coins (1p, 2p, 5p, 10p), several large triangles drawn on separate sheets of paper (PCM 16)

Spread the coins out on the table. The children each choose a coin and place it on one corner of a triangle. They work out what the coins add up to. How much have they got? Use 1p coins to help work it out. They write the total amount in the middle of the triangle. Repeat, using another triangle and different coins.

Fig. 29: Example from the Activity Book R

Ms Kate commented that "*l*-activities *ta'* Abacus F1 *[it-tfal] ma jsibuhomx tqal għax vera sempliċi"* [(the children) do not find the activities of Abacus F1 difficult as these are really simple]. Similarly, it was emphasised by Year 1 teachers that children find most of Abacus R pages and activities relatively easy. It was noted that very few children waited for the teacher's explanation or referred to the instructions given on the Workbooks. Just by looking at the

Workbook page, children appeared to know what was expected of them and most started immediately. In fact, Ms Tamara remarked "*it-tfal stess jgħidulek li dawn [*activities *mill-*Abacus*] jafuhom*" [the children themselves indicate that they know these (activities from the Abacus)]. We are of the opinion that children completed pages from the Workbooks in a short period of time because they knew the content presented to them. This, in turn, resulted in disruptive behaviour which was noticed in both Ms Tamara's and Ms Tiffany's classes, where most children got bored waiting for their peers to finish, so they started fidgeting. The long waiting time resulted in these children having less time on-task.

The EO for Primary Mathematics suggested that teachers should consider all of the Abacus Scheme and not just the Workbooks; otherwise, they risk leaving out important content. She added that "*l-*Abacus *huma serje ta' kotba – skema – jiġifieri jekk xi ħadd qed jirreferi għall-*Abacus, *jekk jara biss il-*Workbook*, żgur mhux se jieħdu l-frott kollu*" [the Abacus is a series of books – a scheme – therefore if anybody is referring to the Abacus, if they simply look at the Workbook, these would surely be missing part of the benefit]. She emphasised that "*il-*Workbook *qiegħed hemm bħala wieħed mir-riżorsi li għandek...l-ebda riżors mhu biżżejjed waħdu*" [the Workbook is just one of the resources available ... no resource is sufficient on its own]. Indeed, from our observations and personal teaching experiences, we noted that teachers are concerned about what parents might comment if children do not work out all Workbook pages. We feel that pressure from parents may be leading teachers to drive themselves to cover all Workbook pages without considering other essential factors. This situation may be the result of the parents' lack of awareness that the Workbooks are to be used at the teacher's discretion.

The EO for Primary Mathematics further argued that teachers are free to use any pages of the Abacus Workbooks rather than feel obliged to cover the entire book. She proposed a suggestion to practitioners that it would be more beneficial were teachers to choose what to teach from the whole Abacus Scheme by following the Syllabus, "*is-Sillabu...u mhux il-ktieb imexxik*" [it is the Syllabus ... and not the book that guides you]. We concur with the EO as, in our view, using only the Abacus Workbooks to plan lessons is not sufficient. For example, we noted that N24, which focuses on subtraction, does not introduce the '–' sign to the children. However, the Teachers' Cards R recommend exposure to the '–' sign. Thus, if teachers follow the Workbooks only, they would not be aware of this learning objective. Hence, teachers should refer more frequently to the Syllabus, so that children's learning will be based on the learning outcomes set in the Syllabus. Then, through the Abacus Scheme and other supplementary resources (e.g. an IWB activity or

an online game), children will achieve these learning outcomes.

From our observations, we noted that no challenging activities were prepared for the more-able students as Year 1 teachers focused mainly on supporting the low achievers. This situation occurred in Ms Tamara's classroom where she argued that since she has a mixture of abilities those who finish early have to wait until the rest are ready. This should not be the case, as the teacher would not be maximising children's learning time. Rather, we believe that teachers could refer to the 'Explore' section, which is presented at the bottom of each Workbook page (Fig. 30). The 'Explore' activity can be assigned to those who finish early and to those who are capable of doing this challenging activity.
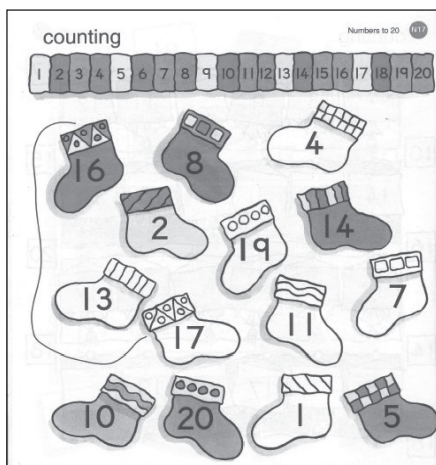
Teacher's Instructions
The pairs of socks are next-door numbers.
Join the socks in pairs and colour so they match.
For each pair of socks write the number before and after.

Fig. 30: An example of the 'Explore' section

In Year 1 classes, comments like: "easy peasy" or "*tal*-babies" were heard from children in relation to the Mathematical activities provided by the teacher. When children were given pages to work from Abacus Workbooks R, they finished them within a short period of time. This occurred in Ms Tanya's classroom where children were asked to work out three consecutive pages from Workbook R at one go. We feel that children are not being challenged because, finishing three pages in a couple of minutes, means that they found the exercises quite easy. A reason for this may be related to the fact that children would have already covered the same topic in KG2 and therefore in Year 1 teacher would be mainly reinforcing the same concepts without leading children to more challenging content with this being repeated instead of being extended.

The parent's feedback with regard to Abacus R topics indicated that 37 per cent and 48 per cent opted for 'easy' and 'average' difficulty respectively. There were parents who reported that Workbook pages were not set for homework that often; therefore, as parents, they did not know what their children were learning at school. It is essential that parents are involved more in their children's learning, so that they can provide adequate support at home (Vandermaas-Peeler, 2008). Some parents who commented that

Abacus Workbooks are of average level of difficulty included a comment stating that the Workbooks are adequate for five-year-old children. It is our view that more challenging activities should be presented to these children as has already been indicated above.

It seems evident that the Abacus system needs to be looked at more closely and monitored better in class. It definitely needs to be understood and evaluated meticulously so that more effective teaching and learning can take place in the classroom.

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