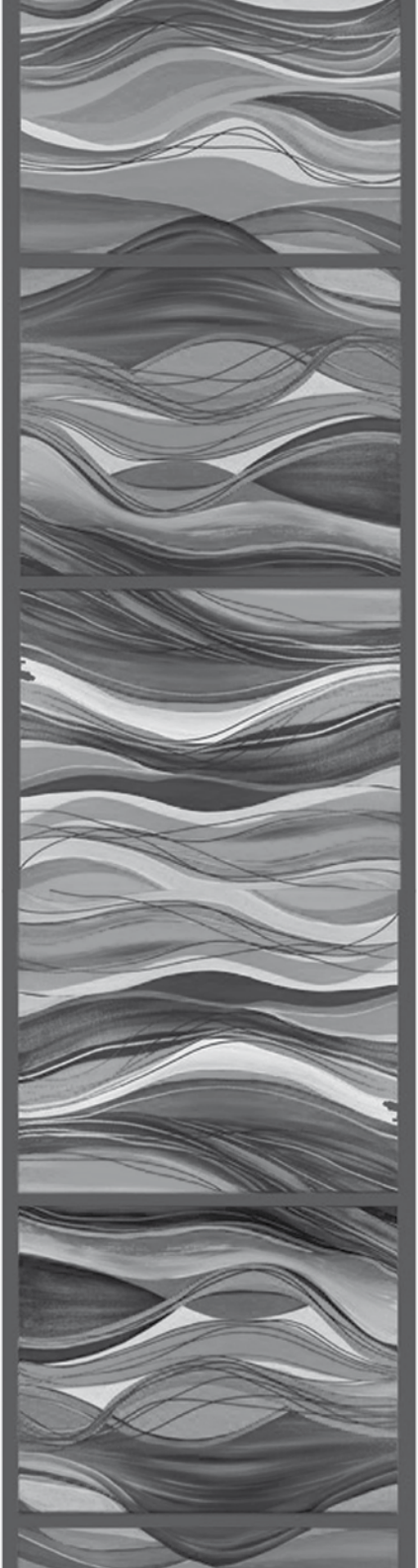
The Educator

A Journal of Educational Matters

MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS

No.5/2019



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CONTENTS

ARTICLES

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**

A message from the President of the Malta Union of Teachers

A national research platform for Education

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The education sector is going through many changes, some of which are necessary due to the evolving nature of the profession, students' diverse needs, technology and prospective employment. Other changes may only be carried out so that officials in authority justify their position, and to serve as a stepping stone for their prospective career paths. Some changes yield the desired outcomes without many hitches, while others are shrouded in controversy although they may lead to outcomes. Other changes are ill-timed and are either abandoned during inception or midway through the process, or are ignored by practitioners.

There is, however, a process which is not being given enough importance in the education field, either because policymakers are afraid about having outsiders analysing their systems or else because the 'know-it-all' attitude prevails. Research is an essential element in all fields, including education, and we must make efforts so that a principle adopted in many foreign systems is implemented locally. For years, changes in education were not founded upon any research but based on some perception or experience of an individual who went to study or carry out shadowing abroad, and who then compiled a list of changes to be carried out in the educational system. Often, when such changes reached the Maltese system, matters would have evolved and other countries would be looking beyond our implemented proposals, causing the local educational system to lag behind. MUT has been at the forefront to push for a model where local educational policies are based on research and to ensure that the research component is also present during implementation. Authorities have at times accepted this principle whilst in other situations they have ignored the process completely. In our view, whilst the research process can take many forms, a standard model needs to be introduced in the Maltese system which puts research at the centre of educational reform.

Another aspect is the coordination of research work. Although different institutions carry out their respective research, we feel that coordination of research in the education field is lacking. We commend initiatives being taken by individuals and institutions in promoting research work in education, as they are serving as a very good platform for research work. The next step would be to set up a national research platform for education, and I believe that the MUT, the Ministry of Education and Employment and all national institutions can have a central role in its inception. We are doing our part in this aspect, and our proposal to have a distinct foundation within MUT which shall cater for the professional aspect of the profession is the way forward. Meanwhile, we are holding our annual conferences, where we present local and/or foreign research on the sector whilst giving a platform to research in education through our peer-reviewed academic journal – *The Educator*.

MUT is passing through some exciting times, not only because this year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary from the foundation of the Union, but because we are harvesting the fruit of the hard work that was carried out during the last two years of this legislation whilst continuing our work for the benefit of members and students.

A union for all seasons – the first century of the Malta Union of Teachers (1919-2019)

George Cassar

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The centenarian Malta Union of Teachers is today the oldest union in Malta.[1] Established in 1919 it has been militating unstintingly and continuously in defence of Maltese educational workers for the last one hundred years. Life has offered the MUT both good and bad times, some positive and other negative outcomes, heart-breaking and elating moments; but whatever the eventualities, its officials have kept loyal to their commitment of working for, and assuring that, the teaching corps, which they represented, improved and upgraded their working conditions while moving forward and advancing professionally. This is the story of the MUT.

Remote preparation – Mutual Help Society

In the second decade of the twentieth century the Elementary Schools' Department took the decision to set up a mutual help association. Known to the Director of Elementary Schools, F.J. Reynolds, a committee formed from among the teachers began to support distressed peers. So much so that from May 1915 to October 1916 this committee had distributed about £39 in assistance to needy colleagues.[2] By November 1916 the large majority of the teaching staff had voted to form a Mutual Help Society. The Committee comprised three headmasters, three headmistresses, two male and two female assistant teachers.[3] The Teachers' Circulating Library, which had been set up previously, was now amalgamated with the newly formed Society.[4] The members of the first Committee signed the Society's statute on behalf of the teaching staff thus signifying the teachers' agreement to this new organisation. The founding Committee members were: the Director of Elementary Schools F.J. Reynolds; G. Rossignaud – President ; C. Vassallo – Secretary; L.G. Doublet – Treasurer; and V. Busuttil, C. Ferris, M. Busuttil, E. Wooton, E. Testa, and M.C. Mamo as members.[5] The MHS, which became official on 1 January 1917, was "entirely charitable, based on the principle that the richer should help the poorer."[6]

The work of this Society focussed on the relief from the poverty being suffered by a number of teachers, also due to the effects of the ongoing World War One. It was an undeniable fact that by 1918 many from the teacher corps were in dire financial straits. A free ladle of soup to a maximum of 120 teachers was offered by the Government towards relieving the most hard-pressed. Teachers needed to apply to the Treasurer of the MHS, Rogantino Cachia, to be considered for this charity.[7] When the neediest were identified, their head teachers were informed, and they were given one portion of soup daily till the end of the month at 2 pence a portion. On pay day the head handed the month's bill of expenses to the Treasurer and payment was effected.[8]

A remedy in the offing – the setting up of a union

Though this communal help offered some relief, it was at the same time a far cry from a solution to the teachers' social and occupational problems. Furthermore the teachers' plight did not find the support it required; to the

contrary the teaching corps experienced the indifference and ingratitude of the authorities and the public in general. A report issued by a commission set up to review the salaries of the government employees was testimony enough. While all other Government workers were recommended for an increase the teachers were not! One could conclude that this omission was due to the teacher corps being an adequately remunerated group, thus not requiring further support;[9] but this was utterly not the case.[10] Ellul Galea has argued that such an anomaly could be traced to the absence of a teachers' union.[11]


A young Antonio Galea

While this may have become evident to many, one young teacher in particular took it upon himself to set in motion a teachers' movement which would remain strong and active to this day. This was Antonio Galea, supported by head teachers Rogantino Cachia and Joseph Giordano – respectively of Valletta and Floriana elementary schools. Galea came from the Valletta school and thus the staff there helped him to start the process which would stress the "justice of our claims" and highlighting "the miserable state in which the majority of Teachers are found." This is what a petition of May 1919 from 28 Valletta staff, including Galea and Cachia, to the Director of Elementary Schools, had underlined. They implored the Director who had "at heart the welfare of the Teachers" to put their case "as strongly as possible."[12] Yet, up till November of that year there was still no indication of any breakthrough. Galea thus moved on to the only plausible option open to teachers; he called a general meeting for Saturday, 22 November 1919. Two circulars were sent out to the different schools around Malta announcing to all the teaching corps a general meeting and inviting them to attend. Two items were on the agenda – the formation of a teachers' union; and the examination of a new salary scheme which the authorities had recently proposed.[13]

Rogantino Cachia addressed the assembled teachers pointing out a number of caustic realities concerning his audience's status and esteem. He noted that while teachers were being labelled *ħabba assistent* and *ħabba surmast*[14] by the people, due to their low salary, their financial situation was truly miserable to the extent, he continued, that "it was indeed very humiliating to see Teachers obliged to stoop down so low as to receive portions of minestra like paupers."[15] The colonial authorities had not published the complete salaries list but sent separate extracts to each school. Thus "no one could form an idea of the criterion on which the classification or rather declassification was made." No one approved this Scheme and Cachia concluded that, "The general opinion is that it is bad in its conception and worse in its application."[16] With such an unsustainable situation, "We must unite together and co-operate to form a Union of Teachers which will safeguard the interests and rights of the Teachers."[17] This day, the 22 of November 1919, thus marks the birth of the Malta Union of Teachers with the three top officials being unanimously elected during this first sitting of the MUT committee.[18]

The persons forming the first MUT committee came from the committee of the Mutual Help Society. These were: Joseph Giordano – President , Rogantino Cachia – Secretary, Louis Doublet – Treasurer, Blanch Tonna Barthet LL.A., Paolina Busuttil, Giuseppe Borg Gauci, Anacleto Conti, Antonio Vassallo, and Antonio Galea. The de facto founder of the MUT, Antonio Galea,[19] became the Union's organiser. He did not seek higher posts due to the "rigidly hierarchical nature of Maltese society,"[20] while both the President and Secretary of the Union were head teachers.

The newly-born union did not go down well with the Education authorities. Director Reynolds thought that teachers were seeing big; an attitude of which he did not approve.[21] Yet the MUT was determined and knew what it wanted. This is encapsulated in Joseph Giordano's words of 29 December 1919: "Be sure you are right – Then go ahead." Within a month the membership had grown to 630 out of the 721 teachers then on the Government's books.[22] Work started immediately to improve the sorts of the teacher corps.[23] MUT Secretary, Rogantino Cachia, had described this energised start thus: "The Teachers of Malta have arisen from their deep sleep, they have shaken off their apathy, they have realised they are members of one body...."[24]

The road ahead would not prove comfortable or smooth. By early February 1920, the Union was already being assailed by some non-members who tried to weaken it through adverse propaganda, to which the MUT countered that "membership was continuously on the rise."[25] The MUT salary proposals were generally accepted by the Government, though the new Director of Elementary Schools, Dr A.V. Laferla, remarked that this incurred a large expenditure.[26] W.N. Bruce was also of this opinion when, in his report on education in Malta, he stated that without an immediate increase in pay one could not pretend to attract people to embrace a teaching career. Yet, this, he emphasised, required "a large increase in the biggest permanent item of an educational budget, viz. the salaries...."[27] This would be an endemic hurdle in the MUT's quest for teachers' conditions of work along its first century of existance.

Towards more exposure – affiliations, alliances and representations

The Union recognised that support from local and foreign entities, could contribute towards strengthening its status and standing in its dealing with the authorities.

From very early on the first local supporter of the MUT was the Malta Association of Civil Servants (MACS). Indeed MACS Secretary, Oscar Sammut, had given constructive suggestions towards the setting up of the Union as he believed that the civil servants sympathised with teachers and were thus ready to support their cause. Sammut was also of the view that the MUT's affiliation with MACS was not only desired but would also be mutually beneficial."[28] The Union also managed to get a meeting with the Lieutenant Governor, an

event that prompted Rogantino Cachia to expound that, "Never before in the history of the Elementary Schools have the teachers been invited to meet a Lieutenant Governor about their grievances."[29]

Exposure meant expansion and this was also effected through the Union's extending its presence to Gozo where a sub-committee was formed on 21 March 1920. This was done following a members' meeting for Gozitans in Victoria,[30] and the selection of Pietro Zammit as Chairman, Antonio Vella as Secretary and Emmanuele Xerri as Treasurer.[31]

Opportunities for foreign support and alliances were of course not to be missed. When Miss Wood, the President of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) of England and Wales, offered her Union's "fraternal greeting" and stated that Maltese teachers were considered colleagues of the English teachers,[32] the MUT grabbed the occasion and engaged in an association with the NUT which was to stretch from January 1920 to September 1964 (when Malta achieved political independence).[33]

A membership campaign was put into place, establishing an annual fee of 2 shillings,[34] while from March 1920 the Union also started its official publication entitled *The Teacher: Organ of the Malta Union of Teachers* sold at 2 pence a copy.[35]

Exposure and officialdom also took the form of a logo, a motto and an anthem. The logo or emblem consisted of a roundel incorporating the intertwined initials 'MUT' superimposed over the white and red national colours and encircled by the motto *'Vestibulum Famae Doctrina'* and the foundation year '1919' over a blue background. This emblem was designed by A. Debono Bartolo from Mosta. The motto translates to 'Knowledge is the gate to fame'. The Union's hymn was written by Joseph Giordano, the Union's first President, while the music was composed by Mro Giuseppe Caruana.[36]

The aims of the Union were at once clear. These were principally: the improvement of the welfare of Maltese teachers, and the development of education in Malta.[37] The MUT embarked on its role by establishing its unequivocal presence with the Education authorities. Its first intervention related to the 'New Scales of Salaries' appearing in the Draft Estimates for 1920-21.[38] It also submitted claims and observations concerning other matters, such as consultation with the Director of Elementary Schools (DES) concerning the appointment of a headmistress for the Training School.[39] It also experienced the first rebuttals from the authorities when the DES refused to discuss this post,[40] countered by the MUT when it did not recognise the appointee as it had not been involved in the discussions related to the said post.[41]

Such instances did not, however, demoralise the Union and it continued to vigilate upon whoever took the upholding of teacher status lightly. An incident in 1925 demonstrated this stance to the full. With the enactment of

the Compulsory Attendance Act (Act XXII of 1924) pupils who were enrolled in government and private schools had to attend until the age of 12 years (this being raised to 14 in 1928).[42] The law specified that attendance was to be not less than 75 per cent of the total possible every month. Parents or guardians whose children defaulted were thus served with Absence Notices (Form IV). The responsibility of serving these Notices was initially put on the teaching staff. To this pretension, however, the MUT took exception as, it reasoned, this "can only have a most humiliating effect on the whole teaching staff of the Department as it brings teachers down to the level of the lowest grade of messengers and school-caretakers." It thus suggested that these Notices should be delivered by caretakers as was done with other messages of an important nature.[43] Dr Laferla did not seem to take this observation lightly and retorted by querying whether the Union would have objected had teachers been asked to do this service against a remuneration.[44] Standing by what it had said the MUT responded that teachers "are still in receipt of an inadequate salary and no doubt, they will only be too glad to add to their low emoluments though in a form different from the one suggested in your letter." For, "the service alluded to considering the position teachers hold in the public service, is degrading." And the Unions committee pressed on, "They add to say with regret that it is the first time in the life of the Elementary Schools that their position in the Department is considered no higher than that of a caretaker."[45] Evidently angered by the Union's stand, the DES remarked that, "it seems that your Committee did not understand that "Staff" has a wider meaning than Teaching Staff. The concluding part of this letter is most unfounded and uncalled for."[46] This exchange demonstrated the mettle of the teachers' representatives, hitting back with unflinching determination in defence of what they considered to be their just claims.

The MUT worked to have a permanent and visible presence, and one sure way was that of having official premises. On 25 July 1925 the Union thus inaugurated its club which was situated at 127, Strada Sta Lucia in Valletta. For the occasion the orchestra of the Union played to rejoice the guests.[47] This was followed by the issuing of membership cards to the Union members for the purpose of recognition.[48]

Official recognition – a tough and tortuous goal

A most challenging aspiration the MUT faced from its establishment was the attainment of official recognition by the Government authorities. Though it was recognised as the representative of the teaching corps and its claims and requests were normally noted and generally granted, yet the ways to officialdom were much slower. The Union's work was evident, for example, in the abolition of the dated nomenclature 'Assistant Teacher' which thus created a more streamlined teacher hierarchy.[49] But such things did not seem to have impressed the powers that be. Notwithstanding effort to keep up as positive a relationship as possible with the DES and Government officials, this did not obtain the desired outcome.

Self-government in 1921 did not make much difference either as Maltese ministers too found it difficult to accept the Union officially.[50] On applying for recognition in 1923, the Minister of Public Instruction, Mgr F. Ferris, a clergyman of the conservative stamp, express his lack of sympathy to the Union.[51] He believed it had caused former DES Francis Reynolds a whole year of trouble, and had protested against a decision in Parliament regarding a reduction of summer holidays and required that no transfers were to be effected without its consent. Mgr Ferris felt that "all this shows that the Union is animated by a spirit of insubordination against constitutioned (*sic*) authority." He therefore proposed to the Head of Ministry that Government should not grant it official recognition.[52] A little later Laferla confirmed this policy of tolerating the MUT but not officially recognising it when he stressed that the Government could not "allow any administrative interference on the part of the MUT."[53] For instance, Laferla refused to allow any MUT representative on the Board of Education as it was maintained that the Department of Elementary Schools was already adequately represented by himself.[54]

A glimmer of light appeared in 1932 when the Minister of Public Instruction appointed the MUT President to sit on the Committee of Management of the Malta Public Library for that year,[55] for which the Union promptly thanked the Minister and added that this decision had been appreciated by teachers and was seen as "a great step towards the official recognition of the MUT"[56]

Teachers' conditions – ongoing efforts

Conditions of work can never be optimum, or remain so, regardless of all the goodwill on all sides. This because circumstances tend to change rapidly in a dynamic world and to keep up with all requirements is generally a tough affair. Working to gain some form of amelioration when conditions are at rock bottom becomes, to say the least, a gargantuan struggle. This latter reality was what the MUT faced in the 1920s and 30s. While much needed to be addressed, two particular difficulties concerned medical certificates and pensions.

Teachers in Malta have for decades been considered a depressed class. Low salaries were very much at the root of the depressed state of the teacher corps and it was because of this unhappy situation that when Circular No. 99 about sick leave was issued by the Government, the MUT was constrained to state that "many of the Class Teachers can hardly afford the double payment of a doctor's visit and certificate… [and] beg, you [the DES] will kindly obtain for the said Teachers the DMO's [District Medical Officer] visits and certificates free of charge."[57] Alas, this request was refused by the Minister of Public Instruction at that moment.[58] With time, maybe also due to a change in Government and a new Minister of Public Instruction, the request for free medical attendance and medical certificates[59] was granted, and both the regular teachers and the pupil-teachers benefited.[60]

Another difficult point concerned the question of pensions. The Union had discussed pensions in a General Meeting and resolved to ask the government

for a reduction in the retirement age for teaching staff from 60 to 50 years, and that a pension equivalent to two-thirds of the salary would be granted after 30 years of service instead of 40 years.[61] The pension reform was considered of vital importance to teachers, "as under the present circumstances it is hardly possible for a teacher to reach the maximum limit of service required by the present regulations."[62] To meet half-way and hopefully gain the comprehension of the authorities, the Union in due time re-proposed a structure by which retirement could be taken at the age of 55 on a pension of two-thirds of the teachers' salary after 35 years in the service. The reason, it claimed, was that, "The majority of teachers will be unfit for their arduous work after 35 years of service and it would be very hard to compel them to retire without being given the maximum amount of pension to which other Government employees are entitled."[63] Notwithstanding all the facts and reasons put forward, the Government's reply was a dry statement that the request "cannot be entertained".[64]

Of course, salaries remained the basic contention between the teachers and their employer – the Government of Malta. The Union made it a point to remind the Government authorities that it was in constant expectation of an increase in teachers' salaries. Thus, each time a new budget was being prepared the Union reminded the Minister of Public Instruction to include their claims in the General Estimates for the coming year. After the reading of the General Estimates, many a time the reaction would be that the MUT Committee "greatly regret the non-inclusion of the increase of salaries to the Teaching staff…"[65] It was a fact that salary increases had been a long awaited promise that never found a way to materialise. Some minor raises were granted along the 1930s but these were never really enough to make up for the dire reality and drudgery which was being experienced by Maltese teachers.

To complicate things, in 1939 the question of teachers' salaries took a rather contorted twist. The members of the Finance Committee within the Government structure opined that "Teachers are being paid full salaries for twelve months while working only eight". The MUT Committee at once wrote a letter to the Governor to counter such insinuations. The Union emphatically stated that "only a person who can really understand teaching and the strain it imposes on Teachers and pupils alike, especially under the local conditions with poor accommodation and overcrowded classes, can say how absolutely necessary holidays are." The MUT pointed out that, while other government employees were entitled to six weeks holidays annually, teachers were not. The Union emphasised that it was in a position to show that in the Mediterranean area schools are closed for longer periods than in Malta, as teaching became almost impossible due to the summer season.[66]

The Union added that it resented the Finance Committee's proposal that "No more increases in salaries will be forthcoming in the future especially owing to the opportunities which teachers have for private practice." The answer to

this was that teachers should not need to depend on private practice to earn a decent living but should have a salary sufficient to permit them to live up to their standard. The Union further observed that, while other employees had the time and were allowed to indulge in private practice, teachers had to depend on it without having enough time to do private practice as this time was being taken by school work preparation and correction of students' work. Thus, the MUT considered these comments "to be a slur on the teaching profession as a whole."[67]

In an official response the Governor however noted that he could not agree with the Union that a slur upon the teaching profession was intended or that this could be deduced from the remarks of the Finance Report.[68]

Hard times with a silver lining – official recognition at last

World War Two reached Malta in June 1940. Teachers' lives, similar to those of their compatriots, were caught in the whirlwind of suffering and destruction. The war effort disrupted school life and those teachers who were not enlisted were employed in managing the needs called for by this time of emergency. Yet, while the MUT had to put any and all claims and trade union matters on the backburner till the return of calmer and more peaceful times, there was one very important trade unionistic development which indeed marked this otherwise turbulent period. The long-awaited, hard-fought-for, official recognition of the Malta Union of Teachers by the Government of Malta finally happened.

The appointment of John Brennan as Director of Education may have had some influence on this change of mind on the part of the authorities. Dr Laferla had always viewed the MUT as an organisation which interfered with the (his) administration of the Education Department and was thus opposed to conceding any form of official strength to the Union. Brennan may have thought differently, especially as he now had other plans for education in Malta, including that of squeezing in all the pupils who wished to go to school, notwithstanding the very limited space available at the time. The cooperation of teachers was essential and a closer, friendlier, relationship with their Union would have probably facilitated the implementation of his Department's projects. Another factor which may have helped towards official recognition was the sterling selfless work carried out by many teachers for their country during the hard years of the war. The Government may have wanted to demonstrate its gratitude for the teachers' work and recognising their Union would surely be an appropriate gesture. As one author described them, "These men and women of the Education Department stood head and shoulders above the rest. They showed outstanding ability, initiative, and resource. They displayed tact, patience, and courage. They knew a firmer, quicker grasp of a situation than their fellows. They were uncomplaining and enduring..."[69]

Peacetime – and a reinvigorated Union

The MUT found fresh energy in its new President, Francis X. Mangion. *The Teacher* reflected a newly-found enthusiasm which had somewhat waned during the previous years. In November 1943 the Union set the agenda for the future. "The present is indeed, no time to sit back and wait for the Golden Age that many fondly believe will make its appearance immediately after the cessation of hostilities…if we are to learn from the lessons of the past, we must not leave things to the time 'when the war is over'."[70] The level-headedness which the Union showed in this statement indicated a clear vision of things to come in the sphere of education in Malta.

Official recognition boosted the image of the MUT and attracted the membership towards the Union. There were 800 teachers and head teachers at a meeting held on 31 March 1943. The Union's President could well affirm that the membership could experience a "meteoric rise" reaching the figure of 1,000 and this number of members "would always command respect and fill our demands with power".[71] Indeed by 1944-5 the paid up members had reached 949.[72]

It was also at this time that as a trade union, it had to follow the Trade Union Ordinance and register with the Registrar of Trade Unions.[73] Concurrently it also decided to look for new premises to accommodate the Teachers' Institute. While committee meetings were at this time held at 14, Scots Street, Valletta, it was decided to fast track the search process by finding a small house or a flat and install the Institute there rather than wait until a bigger place was located which would mean a longer time frame.[74]

As a teachers' union, the MUT comprised various teacher categories. By 1946 the technical school masters had joined the Union and at this time they asked for their case regarding salaries and status to be put forward. They wished to be recognised as secondary school teachers and their salaries to be raised to the level of those of the Lyceum masters.[75] Technical school teachers were paid the same salaries as the primary school teachers even though technical schools fell within the secondary education sector. The Union thus took up their case with the authorities.[76]

It seems that at this time the Union was experiencing some difficulties with particular categories of members. In 1946 a number of Lyceum masters resigned from the Union. Their letter of resignation was considered by the MUT Committee as having "a deplorable tone…[and] left no way for a compromise…." It was made clear by the Union's President that this resignation had nothing to do with "the secession of the Secondary Schools from Union membership". It was further pointed out that a number of Lyceum masters and secondary schools teachers were still members of the Union and "as long as one secondary school Teacher would remain in the Union, it was the MUT's duty to fight for his or her rights."[77] With secondary school

teachers leaving the Union, it stood to reason that the MUT would embark on a drive to recruit other secondary school teachers.[78] This would help to keep the MUT from losing its nature as a heterogeneous constituted body representing teachers from various sectors of education, an objective which has continued over time.

A trade union – but not only

The MUT has always felt that it had to contribute to Maltese education in general. As its President, Emanuel Tonna, reminded his Committee in 1947, "it was also the object of the MUT to safeguard the interests of Education in the Island." Consequently, he felt that representations should be made to the DE regarding the fixing of an age limit for secondary school admission examinations. In this case it was a request to offer a chance to candidates not yet 14 years old on 1 October 1947 to be able to sit for that year's admission examination.[79] This, of course, was not the first time that the Union had put forward its views on educational matters, and this it continued to do and in this way further assert its position which transcended a purely trade unionistic role.

Another area where the Union saw it necessary to get involved was teacher training. The MUT Council asked the Rev. Mother Bennett, Vicar of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, for an interview to discuss particular items concerning teachers. This meeting was held at the Sacred Heart Convent in St Julian's and the topics discussed concerned a proper teacher training system to be introduced in Malta; the present shortcomings of the education system; and, the inadequacies of teachers' salaries.[80] The female teacher training college was to be run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

In its mid-year general meeting the Union also proposed a resolution urging the Government to step up its work for the establishment of proper teacher-training colleges and that the teacher-training course was to be immediately extended to one year.[81] The Union also protested to the Lieutenant-Governor against the lowering of standards in the qualifications for entry into the new training colleges. At the same time the Union sent a letter to Rev. Brother Leo, Principal of St Michael's Training College, by which sentiments of welcome and goodwill were conveyed.[82] Indeed, Bro. Leo not only appreciated the MUT's good wishes but also invited the Union's President and Secretary to the opening ceremony of the male training college on 17 October 1947.[83]

At the same time the Union took close care of teachers who were selected to go to England for their training. The four (3 men and 1 woman) candidates needed accommodation there. Though the DE had promised to see what could be done while he was in England, the MUT on its part also took up the matter seeking accommodation for these teachers. Telegrams were thus sent to the principals of St Mary's Training College, Strawberry Hill, Middlesex; St Charles Training College, South Kensington; and Endsleigh Training College, Hull.[84] All three replies were however in the negative.[85]

Internal reorganisation –
a general Secretary, official premises and a patron saint

It was in 1950 that the Union realised that as its work was getting more complicated, a part-time honorary Secretary chosen from within the MUT Council could not handle a full-time position while also taking care efficiently of the many secretarial and administrative requirements of a big trade union. The time had arrived to engage a full-time General Secretary. A call was thus issued and Victor de Domenico RMA was chosen as the first full-time salaried Secretary of the MUT.[86] The post designation was that of 'general Secretary' and this position was regulated by the enacting of a bye-law passed in February 1951. In the same sitting another bye-law specified that the Secretary of each of the various MUT committees appointed by the Union's Council were now to be officially known as 'Honorary Secretary'.[87]

Offices from where the Union and its newly appointed General Secretary could operate, became more of a priority. Up to this time Council meetings had been held at Floriana Elementary School. The establishment of a fixed official address had been on the agenda since the 1940s as the Union searched for a place from which the Teachers' Institute could operate. This search had not yet given the desired result, but a rent-free room had been offered to the Union in St Ursula Street, Valletta, which tended to fit the requirements. The Council thus accepted the offer and bought the required furniture for its new office.[88] In this way 9, St Ursola Street, would become the first official premises, while the Union continued its search for bigger and better accommodation to create the long-aspired for Teachers' Institute. During 1950 the Teachers' Institute was moved to 134, Britannia Street (now Melita Street), Valletta,[89] and in 1958 it was re-located to 7, Merchants Street, Valletta, which was officially occupied in January 1959.[90]

The MUT had also by now chosen St John Baptist de la Salle as its patron saint. From 1954, the Union began to celebrate the feast of its patron saint as an annual event. In that year it was thus resolved to organise a religious rally consisting of Holy Mass on the first Saturday following the feast day of the saint.[91]

Emerging dilemmas – gender issues

A matter which the Union had to decide upon in 1954 was the situation of married women. At the time the nomenclature for these staff members was 'visiting teachers - married women'. One of the Union's Council members, Rev. G. Cassar, treated the subject from its moral and social aspects. It was observed that while in the past, governments had a policy not to employ married women as teachers, in more recent times this policy had changed and for many years married women were now attached to the Education Department. Their post, being described as temporary teachers - married women was, according to him, "merely a screen". The Union's Council

followed this presentation with a long discussion and then arrived at the point where a decision had to be taken. Thus two questions were put to the vote. The first asked: "Should married women be employed as permanent teachers?" To this question the absolute majority of the Council voted against. To the second question: "Should married women be employed as Temporary Visiting Teachers (1 Scholastic Year) in case of gaps formed by permanent Teachers' illness?" The vote, just barely, tipped in favour. Following this vote the Union decided to meet the DE on the matter.[92] Evidently the time for women's emancipation was not yet ripe, at least on this issue.

Notwithstanding the gender dilemma related to married women, the Union had been striving for quite some time to achieve equal pay for males and females in the teaching profession. In fact in its last general meeting it had also approved the principle of equal pay for both genders. As the authorities represented on the Malta Government Joint Council did not seem to be sensitised to this proposal, in October 1955 the MUT decided that the motion which it had planned to submit through Staff Side on this Council, would now be tackled as a Union matter. This was to be done through a public awareness campaign about "the right claim of female teachers for equality of pay," by contributing articles in the local press.[93] The Union also followed what was happening abroad on this subject through the WCOTP.[94]

Furthermore, when the Government led by Dom Mintoff, decided in 1956 to review salaries and conditions of work of civil servants, with the help of a Civil Service Commission formed of independent foreign experts, the MUT set itself to prepare a memorandum. The areas the Union was interested in being addressed were: equity of pay, recruitment, salaries, promotions, special teachers, conditions of service and superannuating, education, secondary school teachers, and, technical masters in the Technical Education Department.[95]

After years of ups and downs the discussions on salary and the grade structure for non-industrial employees in the service of the Malta Government, in November 1959 a deal was finally struck between the Staff Side and the Official Side in the MGJC. Among the agreed items there was the acceptance that female regular employees would, in an established future date, reach parity of pay with males.[96] Salary negotiations continued with the Union trying its best to achieve the optimum for its members. The success registered in the salary negotiations resulted in an increase in the membership which took off in the last months of 1959.[97]

Teacher training – an indispensable requirement

In the late 1950s it was becoming evident that this sector was experiencing a number of difficulties. The Union was preoccupied that the requisites for student teachers were sliding, and this was bound to effect negatively the status of teachers in the long run. The MUT worried that St Michael's Training

College, which was responsible for the professional training of male student teachers, admitted 30 new students per annum. Steps thus needed to be taken to raise this amount considerably. The Union's President, Alfred Buhagiar, thought of contacting Bro. Cuthman, who was in charge of the College, to discuss the matter unofficially before any further actions was taken.[98]

The situation was similar at Mater Admirabilis Training. After an intensive meeting with Mother McCallum, in charge of this female training college, Alfred Buhagiar was left with no doubt in his mind that the situation "was no less than chaotic". There was the impending danger that the College would close down in three to four years, which was reflected in the lowering of standards for recruitment and the decrease in the number candidates. McCallum informed him that, though the College could accept up to 120 students, those enrolling did not even reach the quota of 90 which had been set by the Government. The Union decided to contact the DE requesting an improvement of the situation. Failing this, the MUT would take steps towards rescuing the training colleges.[99]

During this meeting with the DE and the A/DE, the Union's President emphasised the serious problems being faced by the teacher training colleges and stressed that, unless drastic measures were taken to address the situation, the MUT felt that it would have no alternative but to inform the public about this reality.[100] The chaotic state of affairs was also being noticed in schools. Five 17-year old visiting mistresses had been employed by the Government in the schools, and the Union could not but protest "against this unprecedented method of recruitment, which cannot but lower the prestige of the Secondary Schools in the eyes of Educationalists here and abroad," and an objection was lodged with the Administrative Secretary.[101]

Training colleges continued to be of concern as by the first years of the 1960s they still lacked that boost which could attract more students to enrol. They were simply not appealing enough for prospective teachers to undergo training. Student teachers could vouch for this lack of attractiveness which was also connected to the allowance granted by Government while during the training period. Student teachers were members of the MUT and the Union sought to improve their conditions. In October 1964 the Union tabled a motion in the MGJC which read: "That this Council agrees that the allowance of £18 paid to student teachers at St. Michael's Training College and Mater Admirabilis Training College be increased to £144 yearly, and the allowance paid to married students (men) be raised from £145 to £345 per annum."[102] However as student teachers were not yet Government employees the discussions could not take place within the MGJC but needed to be addressed to the Director of Education.

When the national estimates for the coming year became known it transpired that the student teachers' claim for an increase in their allowance had not been included in the Government's Budget. The MUT thus gave notice to the DE that an industrial action was being contemplated. It was felt necessary to

call a meeting for emergency teachers to discuss possible actions,[103] as it was this category that would have to undergo teacher training if they wished to be put on the permanent staff compliment.

Two meeting for emergency teachers followed and it was ultimately resolved that these would strike for one day on 25 June 1965.[104] Minister of Education Dr Antonio Paris thus asked to speak to the Union's representatives, in which meeting he promised to put the case before Prime Minister Dr George Borg Olivier if the strike action was postponed. The Union accepted to postpone the industrial action on condition that negotiations started immediately and that a final decision by Borg Olivier was taken on his return from abroad. In the meantime a meeting with high government officials took place and the student teachers' allowance was preliminarily discussed. An unofficial indication of the grant which the Government was ready to concede, was also disclosed. This was so trivial that the Union representatives made it clear that they would not even be prepared to discuss it if this increase was officially proposed. The Union was also vexed with the Minister of Education's conduct for not keeping his promise; in fact while the Prime Minister returned to Malta the Minister left for Italy on holiday![105]

Then, surprisingly, the Government decided to grant a raise in the student teachers' allowances from £18 to £36, which was communicated to the Union by means of a letter. The MUT Council at once protested as the Government had unilaterally terminated the ongoing negotiations and presented its decision as a *fait accompli* without the Union having the opportunity to give its views. The DE, however, appealed to the Union to accept the decision to implement this increase, adding that it had been an arduous task to persuade the Government to accept even in part to the Union's proposal. The Union thus decided to take the Government's offer only as a basis for further discussions and not as a final decision.[106] The Union also made it clear that it would not accept the implementation of this increase until it was made clear when negotiations would be resumed. It also decided that further procrastination would lead to industrial action. The strike action, which had been postponed, was thus still in force.[107]

The general election of 1971 put the Malta Labour Party, led by Prime Minister Dom Mintoff, in government. The incoming Administration brought with it new circumstances and the MUT was trying to adapt to them. The unions were informed by Mintoff himself that the national financial situation was bleak. Discussions with the UK Government were ongoing at that moment and a measure of agreement had been reached on financial aid. The Government of Malta thus decided "as an act of faith" to raise the minimum wage by 15 shillings per week which would be reflected in all the other wages and salaries of those in Government employment.[108]

While teachers were thus assured at least of this flat increase to their pay packet, the student teachers attending St Michael's Training College and

Mater Admirabilis Training College, were not. The Union argued that at this stage it more sensible and practical to ask for an additional 15 shillings a week to the students' allowance than to insist on its original £144 a year which it had asked for during the Nationalist administration.[109] As the £144 request had not been granted by the authorities, the Union appealed to the Government to give these student teachers the cost of living increase of 15 shillings, similar to the other workers.[110] This was however also turned down.[111]

A permanent Teachers' Institute at last – or was it?

In 1970 the Union's Council made a further attempt towards obtaining new premises. The out-going Council had in fact voted in favour of acquiring the building at 213, Kingsway, Valletta. However, during the vote there were two abstentions and two against. It was thus felt more reasonable to leave a final decision to the newly elected Council. The architect had been asked to draw up a survey and plans for the eventual improvement of the property, and this could thus be reviewed by the new Council.[112] The asking price for the building continued to be discussed and further reductions were obtained from the owner,[113] while a loan was also granted by Barclays Bank to cover the purchase, the alternations, and the construction of a third floor.[114] The new property was extended, on the advice of architect Italo Raniolo, who was in charge of this project, when the Union managed to acquire a garage situated adjacent to the new Teachers' Institute.[115] This was not, however to be the last premices of the Union.

More difficult times – a more resolute Union

The MUT found that the Labour Government was not really receptive to its claims and that efforts at communicating with this Administration were proving frustrating to say the least. The case of the Union's claims in favour of instructors at the Government Industrial Training Centre suffice to illustrate this reality.

In August 1972 the MUT was informed that none of its claims regarding the instructors could be granted and moreover, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Welfare did not consider the minutes of 4 November 1969 (from the previous Administration) about the instructors to constitute an agreement, as had been assumed by the MUT. This official response prompted the instructors to insist that an industrial action should be taken. For the MUT the accord of 1969 reached between the Union and the Director of Education was an agreement in its own right and the present Government was not recognising it to the detriment of the instructors. They had done their best to cooperate fully with the authorities and ensure the smooth running of the Centre, "especially since they had to overcome the great difficulty of training the members of the Emergency Labour Corps." Instructors were hurt as, instead of being appreciated for their efforts, the authorities wanted to deprive them of their rights. The MUT Council saw that with the failure of all

other measures it was now justified to call industrial actions in defence of its members.[116]

On 6 September 1972 the President and General Secretary had a meeting about this issue with Dr A.V. Hyzler, the Acting Minister for Labour, Employment and Welfare. Hyzler announced the Cabinet's decision that instructors who followed the Union's directives for a one-day strike on the morrow and other industrial actions which may follow, would be immediately suspended and their service terminated in the public interest. The Minister made it clear that the Government had a policy to implement and this would be carried out at all costs. It was determined that no one would be allowed to obstruct it and planned to go ahead even if this meant that a general strike would follow. The members of the Emergency Labour Corps were to go on with their training and if the instructors took industrial action these would be dismissed. He continued that instructors from abroad would replace them, even if this meant spending thousands of pounds. Hyzler sugared his blatantly unceremonious statement by telling the Union not take this as a threat but as an appeal for cooperation. The Union was being given the chance to reconsider its position. The Government side refused to talk about the 1969 agreement even though the Union delegates tried to open this discussion. The present Government maintained that this agreement had been illegal. Apart from any other consideration, according to the Minister, leave was a concession and not a right, and could be availed of when and if the Government thought appropriate. President Abel Giglio and General Secretary Alphonse Farrugia said that they "had been astounded" by this official position.[117]

With this meeting over and the result communicated to the instructors, these showed their disgust, and after a secret vote, it was decided that the planned strike would go ahead while all the other industrial actions were to be implemented as established. The Union's Council agreed that "this threat struck at the basic root of trade unionism" and it was believed that if it were put into practice this would constitute the virtual elimination of the trade union movement in Malta. While the Union wanted to believe that the Government's threat was meant more to scare and intimidate than to be actually carried out, yet the Council thought of steps to counter any actions if the threats were to be implemented. In the eventuality that the Government carried out its threat then the MUT would support the instructors to the end "both morally and financially, even if it meant using all the Union's funds including the selling of the new Teachers' Institute in Kingsway." On the basis of this situation, the Council voted by secret ballot (15 in favour, Nil against) to ignore the Government's threat and proceed with the industrial action as planned.[118]

Following the pre-established plans, on 7 September the instructors of the GITC Marsa went out on strike. As all the staff obeyed the Union's directives the strike was a complete success. On the following day, a public holiday, the Union's delegate at the school was contacted by the officer i/c of the Centre

to convey to him a message from the Minister of Labour, Employment and Welfare in which he was asked to meet him on the following Saturday. The delegate answered that he would only come if accompanied by Union officials. This was granted and the MUT delegation met the Minister, Dr Joseph Cassar, on 9 September 1972. Minister Cassar took on a conciliatory stance opining that this dispute must have resulted from some misunderstanding. He admitted that he was not fully aware of the conditions of service of instructors and it was not the intention to deprive them of the benefits to which they were entitled under the agreement with the Union. He emphasised that some of the provisions of the agreement could not be satisfied for the time being due to the special circumstances related to the Emergency Labour Corps. The Government would not ignore the 1969 agreement but in the present state of affairs the cooperation of the instructors would be appreciated. In these words there was no hint to the threats made previously by Acting Minister Hyzler, though Cassar did confirm that the decision in question was that taken by Cabinet. The Minister concluded that he was prepared to continue negotiations immediately on all pending issues connected with the instructor staff at the GITC. Following these reassurances the Union decided to suspend the work to rule directive, while the ban on evening classes was also lifted.[119] Negotiations started immediately and progress was seen during the discussions. The Union was in no doubt that the industrial action at the Centre had strengthened its hand considerably in these talks.[120]

A trade union at its peak – mettle, nerve and courage

In its more than sixty years of trade unionistic activism, the Union had never found itself in the situation which it was to face during the first half of the 1980s. For long years it had been requesting a salary raise for teachers. On 21 December 1982 the Administrative Secretary informed the Union that in view of the Government's policy of a salary freeze, there would be no more discussions on this matter "for the time being". Not taking this as a final answer the Union wrote in reply asking the Government to reconsider its position. This would help keep the process going, while pressure would be exerted by holding a delegates' meeting followed by a teachers' rally in the near future.[121] This rally was in fact held at the ABC Theatre in Floriana on 31 January 1983. The place was "literally packed" and the last minute decision by Government to continue salary negotiations was very well received.[122] It seemed that the planned pressure had given the desired results; at least discussions were continuing.

In the meantime a report in *l-orizzont* of 14 March regarding a speech of Minister of Education Dr Philip Muscat revealed that he had stated that teachers were lazy and referred to them as rats, to which the Union responded through a circular.[123] Some time later, during the Prize Day at Marsa Secondary School, the same Muscat was reported as having called teachers "below average". The Union reacted to this comment sending a letter to the Minister on 3 May. In his reply the Minister, denied saying this, yet at

the same time he pointed out that results at Marsa School had been very poor – the results were 'below average' – and this fact indirectly reflected on the teachers. The Union asked its members at the Marsa School to confirm the Minister's comments, which they did, and the Council thus drafted yet another reply in this sense.[124]

While clashes of opinion continued between the Government and the MUT, the situation became heated over the issue of the Union's salary claim for the teaching grades. As nothing came out of the long-dragging discussions, the MUT decided that it was time to show its trade unionistic muscle, which coincided with another tough situation which was unfolding at this time – the confrontation over private schools. This latter educational issue while already complex in itself, involved the MUT on two levels: defending the interests of private school teachers, and supporting the right of parents to choose the type of education they preferred for their children.

In a meeting between the Administrative Secretary and the MUT representatives held on 14 June 1984, it was communicated that a response to the memorandum on salaries presented by the Union would soon follow. This seemed an empty promise however, and with no reply having been received after three months, stepping up Union pressure was thought to be in order. Thus a ban on mid-day break supervision was announced. The Union also contemplated strike action but decided to postpone a decision on this possibility to a later date. A plan of action was also discussed as had been prepared by the MUT Administrative Committee.[125] This plane was revisited in the following Council meeting and three membership meetings were set up, including a teachers' rally for 19 September 1984.[126] Directives were drawn up:

1. All teaching grades were to report for duty at the established official time both for the morning and for the afternoon session. This meant that teachers would be in their classroom (or staffroom in the secondary schools if they did not have a class in the first session) at 8.30 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. respectively – or at other times as established according to the schedules of particular schools. Heads of school and assistant heads were to be in their office at the official times indicated above. Where a school assembly was held in the morning or afternoon session, this was to begin at 8.30 a.m. or 12.30 p.m., and in this case teachers were to participate in the assembly instead of staying in their classroom or staffroom.

2. All teaching grades were to refrain from undertaking any extra-curricular activities, such as mini musicals, drama festivals, Carnival festivities, exhibitions, Christmas parties, etc.

3. All teaching grades were to boycott Prize Day and any other official or unofficial function or ceremony. In the case of such function taking

place during school hours, teachers were to remain in their classroom or staffroom.

4. Teaching grades were not to carry out any work outside their conditions of service. This included: (a) clerical work, including sending absentee forms; (b) distribution and collection of books; (c) distribution of milk; (d) compilation of medical cards; (e) distribution of stationery, materials, etc.

5. Teachers were not to accept classes with more than 30 students (primary and secondary Forms I and II) and 25 students (secondary Forms III, IV and V) on the register. Where classes were lower than these maxima, additional students were to be accepted only so long as the established numbers (30 or 25 respectively) were not exceeded and, provided that in the opinion of the teacher concerned such additional students did not disrupt the class.

6. Teachers in secondary schools were not to accept substitution periods caused by teachers who were on the school premises.

7. Teaching grades which were not officially designated as holders of special posts (i.e. form teachers, guidance teachers, and librarians) were not to perform any duties pertaining to such posts. In the case of heads of department, guidance teachers, and librarians, the appropriate reduced teaching load (as agreed between the Education Department and the MUT) was to be observed in all cases.

8. All teaching grades were to withdraw from Parent Teacher Associations.

9. Teaching grades were not to form any school committee (e.g. welfare, discipline) other than the MUT school committee.

10. Teachers were not to make use of text books other than those provided by the Education Department.

11. Teaching grades were to refuse to teach/work in classrooms, offices, laboratories, workshops, etc., which were not sufficiently clean; or which did not have the necessary amenities, e.g. proper lighting, window panes, ventilation, etc. In the case of lack of basic hygienic requirements in general, in any school, the MUT would direct the teaching grades in that particular school to resort to sporadic strikes.

Other possible directives were: a ban on mid-day break supervision; and general and/or selective strikes.

Student teachers and part-timers were exempted from certain directives, but were still directed to:

1. carry out only duties connected with the teaching of their normal class;

2. decline from accepting in their class any students of teachers following an MUT directive;

3. refuse posting in schools during their study phase (applicable to student teachers only).[127]

The planned rally attracted an attendance which was described by the MUT President as "extraordinary". The Union's directives had been received by acclamation. Following this rally the Minister of Education notified parents and members of the Parent Teacher Associations to go to the schools on the morning of 20 September as he was going to address them over the cable radio during a school broadcast. During this broadcast the neo-appointed Minister Dr Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici launched an attack on the MUT and told parents to approach teachers and find out who would be following the Union's directives. Thus teachers were approached and asked whether they were going to adopt the MUT's directive. In some instances incidents were reported as teachers declined to disclose what they were going to do. Mifsud Bonnici asked to meet the MUT Council, this meeting taking place on Friday 21 September at 11.00 a.m. The Union delegation was informed that he could not accept its directives as, according to Mifsud Bonnici, this meant that while teachers would not be doing their duties they would be receiving their salary just the same. The Minister then addressed the Union's representatives in their position as teachers in the Education Department. Starting with the President, he presented to him a declaration which stated that he, Mr Buhagiar, would not be obeying the MUT's directives. The President naturally refused to sign such a declaration whereupon the Minister handed Mr Buhagiar a letter – with the Minister's printed name but no signature – which declared that he was locked out. This same declaration was meted out to the Union officials Mr Napier and Mr Naudi. On the strong protests of the MUT representatives, the Minister retorted that as an employer he had the right to resort to such action in terms of the Industrial Relations Act. It later transpired that before this meeting, the Minister had sent for the three heads of school serving in Valletta and when they refused to sign the said declaration all three were also locked out. The MUT Council could not submit to this Ministerial decision and saw that it was necessary to call another rally to give the required directives to teachers. The rally was convened on 23 September at 10.00 a.m. at the ABC Theatre.[128] A two-day strike was announced for 24 and 25 September to which education officers, student teachers in their work phase, and instructor grades were also called to participate, while part-time instructors and teachers, and student teachers in their study phase were exempted from this industrial action.[129] According to Union calculations the response was 80 percent for the first day and 84 percent for the second day.[130]

On 25 September, the Constitutional Court commenced hearing the case which the MUT had instituted against the Government.[131]

The strike action was then extended by a further three days (26-28 September) while another rally would follow on Saturday morning, the 29th, in the grounds of St Aloysius College in Birkirkara.[132] After the rally Alfred Buhagiar returned home but at around 9.00pm he was called by a lady who lived close to the Teachers' Institute who informed him that people had broken into the MUT premises. The Police were called and a magisterial inquiry was initiated. The Council noted that the attack had taken place soon after a meeting held at the GWU headquarters where Dr K. Mifsud Bonnici had delivered a "highly charged" speech against the MUT and the teachers' strike.[133] Regarding this momentous period, Alfred Buhagiar expressed his conviction that "this Council session is being held at a time when the MUT is facing one of its most difficult situations since its foundation." Police protection on the other hand was not available. The "air was highly charged" and this created further difficulties, not least as the Minister of Education had asked fellow Ministers to each take charge of a group of people who were instructed to block children from entering those private schools whose license had been withheld by Government.[134]


Alfred Buhagiar

The Teachers' Institute was now to be made more secure and many had offered brand new office equipment to replace that which had been destroyed by the rabble. Certain documents were removed from the TI and taken to Council members' homes for safekeeping. The Teachers' Benevolent Fund and the Finance Committee were also to set up a Solidarity Fund for the teachers on strike.[135]

Mediation offers were received; one came from the Peace Lab which was accepted by the MUT. Another attempt at establishing contacts was being tackled by Salvino Spiteri, the Confederation of Malta Trade Unions President. Meanwhile the Union's premises were attacked once more when unknown persons burnt the side door of the Teachers' Institute.[136]

Following a meeting held on 1 October when a CMTU delegation met the Minister of Education, a second meeting was scheduled for 3 October. This time the CMTU delegation would comprise an MUT representation – in line with a strategy that had been previously agreed upon.[137] It was from 4 October that the Police accepted the MUT's request for a 24-hour police protection, and thus the Teachers' Institute was now guarded round the clock.[138]

Regarding the 3 October meeting, the Ministers present told the MUT representatives that they had chosen the wrong timing for its actions as the Government was engaged in the private schools issue. In these circumstances, the Ministers added, their only counter-action to bring an abrupt end to the salary claim dispute was the lock-out option. According to the MUT President, the meeting was at times quite stormy, and Minister Wistin Abela even told

the General Secretary Alphonse Farrugia to be careful lest he would let loose his thugs from Zejtun. When the Union brought up the matter of teachers who went on strike being coerced into reporting for work, Minister Abela replied that just as the Union had the right to picketing, the Government had the right to try to persuade teachers to return to their place of work. Here the Union made it clear that it left teachers at liberty to decide on what to do. Moreover the Union did not even organise picketing. The Government side pointed out from their end, if the Union withdrew its directives, then the lock-out would be lifted and there would be no need for any signed declarations by teaches. Negotiations could then be resumed as long as the claim was structured on some basis other than professional equivalence. The Union delegation felt that the Government was concerned that if it accepted the teachers' claim then workers from other sectors would submit their own claims for salary adjustments. While around the table the Ministers brought up the private schools issue, with the MUT countering that this was a separate subject altogether. The Government side however pointed out that the Union had directed the private school teachers in August not to accept the Government's offer of a job and insisted that the Union should remove this directive or else talks on the salary claim could not resume. The Union protested and maintained that the Government was mixing the issues. At this point the Ministers seemed to have realise that mixing issues was not going to work and thus changed their position on this point.[139]

Following the meeting the strategy adopted was that, in support of the MUT, the CMTU Council would order a one-day strike and direct the affiliated unions in the Confederation to collect a levy from their members which would go towards alleviating the financial burden of the striking teachers. On its part the MUT decided to extend the strike by five more days (8-12 October).[140]

When the planned one-day strike took place response was calculated at around 30,000 workers. The strike ordered by the CMTU was in protest against the lock-out of teachers. From feedback arriving at the Teachers' Institute, the MUBE claimed that all its 1,000 members had responded. The UĦM reported that the number of striking workers was approximately double its membership strength. From the University of Malta, it was reported that the strikers there reached 88 percent of the workforce.[141]

The court suit instituted by the MUT was finally decided in front of Mr Justice Filletti. The sentence delivered recognised that the Government had the right to use the lock-out tactic against a section of the workers, and this decision was based on court decisions in previous similar cases. Mr Justice Filletti however referred to the lock-out as "a loathsome weapon used against workers". The MUT decided to appeal this sentence while it was also made clear that this court decision had no bearing whatsoever on the Union's industrial dispute.[142]

The mediation process carried by Fr Dionysius Mintoff of the Peace Lab seemed to have arrived at its limits with the mediator informing the MUT that it should now lift the industrial actions. The Council felt that by this declaration the Peace Lab had effectively ended its mediation, so Fr Mintoff was approached to clarify certain points and possibly be persuaded to conclude the mediation rather than leaving matters half-way.[143] This proved futile as Fr Mintoff did not budge and added that he had felt annoyed seeing newspaper reports using the word "mediation". For him, this mission was never intended to bring the two sides around a table but was simply an exercise to clear the way towards an eventual solution. At this point the Union identified a new person who promised to take over the role of mediator.[144]

With the new mediator working towards a solution, and with matters seemingly a little more positive, the Government side came out with a new request; that of asking the Union to remove the directions given to private school teachers. The Union President held that this was definitely unacceptable as it amounted to a betrayal. Moreover, considering the Government's official declaration by which it was threatening to take over the private schools, such a request was probably intended to make this takeover easier through a simple requisition of school premises.[145]

The industrial action and weeks of mediation, by 2 November seemed to have led only to a situation of stalemate. The Government did not want to budge until the Union removed the clause regarding the resumption of talks. For the Union however the inclusion of that clause was essential.[146]

On 5 November 1984 Alfred Buhagiar's brother and sister suffered serious damages to their Valletta house and the shop that was part of it, when a bomb was planted and later exploded on the doorstep. The bomb caused considerable damage but no one was hurt. The MUT at once issued a statement to express its solidarity with its President and condemned this "cowardly" bomb attack. The CMTU followed suit with a press statement expressing solidarity with Mr Buhagiar.[147] Solidarity with the President was conveyed also after the teachers' rally of 7 November which was held in Gozo for the local teachers. These teachers not only massively expressed their support and solidarity but also sent a token of this solidarity in the form of a gift to Mr Buhagiar.[148]

While mediation continued it did not seem to be leading to any fruitful conclusions, as the Government side stuck to its basic requests, with the Union doing no less on its side. Then on 3 November, Mr Albert Tabone, who had been conducting mediation up to a week before, informed Alfred Buhagiar that the Prime Minister had sent for him personally and told him that the situation in the state schools had developed in such a way that he (Mr Mintoff) was now prepared to take a stand on the issue. Mintoff proposed that the Union's directives should be lifted and the lock-out would also be withdrawn. The strike should be called off and negotiations resumed

Teachers participating in the strike manifesting their requests

when the MUT lifted its directive to private school teachers. The Union saw in this latest development the creation of a very serious situation. The MUT could not betray the private school teachers. Buhagiar argued that, "We have a grave responsibility, we are faced with a very complicated situation." The Prime Minister had made it known that he would not wait any longer and was prepared to implement contingency measures. It also transpired through an influential person that the current dispute was on the agenda of the next Cabinet meeting scheduled for that same evening. The Council had to deliberate on what the Union should do. General Secretary Alphonse Farrugia concurred that this was a crucial decision. "It could be the most important decision in the Union's 65 years of existence. Blackmail is the name of the game even in international circles." Farrugia continued that the Union was faced with a similar severe test as that of 1972 regarding the case of the GITC instructors. In an analysis of what could happen, the General Secretary said that if the worse came to the worst the Government could amend the Industrial Relations Act so as to include teachers within the list of categories that were not permitted to strike. On the other hand the Government could not sack anybody. "It would be a question of calling his bluff." The Government's reaction was interpreted by the Union as coming from the fact that the lock-out had disrupted the schools and the Government was in a state of panic "and with their backs to the wall." Pressure had mounted as the Government had given a time limit up to 8.00 p.m. of that evening

(8 November) for the Union's response. However, as there were various viewpoints and the only specific point on which there was no divergence was that the private school teachers' directive should stay, the President felt that no rash decisions should be taken. Thus a decision which would be more unanimous was left for the morrow.[149]

On 9 November the Council reconvened to ponder on the next move. The first point of the Government's offer was the lifting of industrial actions by both sides. The second was that negotiations would resume when the private schools issue was resolved or when the Union lifted its directive to private school teachers. Up till the day before, this latter point had been adamantly kept – the private schools directive was not to be withdrawn. Now, the Council began to reassess the reality of the situation and following the President's observations focussed on the advisability of otherwise of pressing on with the strike action. One had to keep in mind that the Government had overnight made it public that it intended to replace striking teachers with casual teachers.[150]

The Council was invited to deliberate on the advisability of taking up the Government's offer which included its acceptance to reverse the decision of demanding the individually signed declarations. In the meantime it was hoped that the problem of the private schools would come to a solution and thus negotiations could start. The Union needed to keep in mind the tension which at that time was "visibly effecting" teachers. Buhagiar stated that "We managed to keep teachers out on strike for 7 weeks and this in itself is a great victory for the Union. We managed to put up a very noble fight in defence of our rights." The President asked if the Government had ulterior motives related to its offer. He wondered whether the Government had in fact been banking on teachers not returning to the schools, and thus volunteers could take over the schools and "sow political indoctrination". Buhagiar stressed that the Union needed to be responsible enough to realise what he was describing, and also to appreciate that recruiting casual teachers was no minor thing. Even if just 100 casual teachers were recruited, this would be enough to effect the morale of the striking teachers with catastrophic results. The financial situation also needed the Union's attention. The President believed that, "If need be we must sacrifice the salary negotiations to safeguard the private school teachers. We will never betray anybody – the directive to private school teachers remains." Thus, one would have to consider if it were not wiser to lift the strike, resume work and continue pressing for negotiations "from a position of strength" rather than prolonging the strike and see it gradually collapse. The General Secretary added that at least the Union needed an assurance for the teachers' safe return to work and the normalisation of schools.[151]

At this stage the lifting of the strike directive was considered. This would diffuse the situation as the Union could not take any more risks. The Minister of Education's response would however be sought before any other steps were taken. Certain clarifications needed to be obtained before the final step to call off the strike and withdraw all other directives was put into effect.[152]

On Friday, 9 November, the mediator informed the Union that a number of assurances had been given by the Government.

1. Over the weekend the Minister of Education was to appeal to all concerned to remain calm and welcome the teachers back to school.

2. The Minister of Education was to meet an MUT delegation on Monday, 12 November, between 10.00 a.m. and 11.00 a.m.

3. There were not going to be any transfers from Gozo to Malta or vice-versa.

Though no assurance had been given that no transfers would be carried out within Malta or Gozo, it was however realised that before the strike certain schools were understaffed while others were overstaffed. Thus, it was expected that there would be transfers according to the exigencies of the service.[153]

The General Secretary then read the full text of the letter to be sent to the Prime Minister in which the MUT communicated its decision to remove all the industrial actions on the understanding that the Government would lift the lock-out and desist from demanding signed declarations from teachers.[154]

Thus, on Saturday, 10 November, the MUT called a teachers' rally in which the lifting of the strike action was announced. The message given was a prudent one not to jeopardise the various issues that were interwoven within the current situation. Though there was a clear sense of preoccupation of what teachers may face on their return to their schools, the Union needed to project an image of courage and that the teachers were not afraid as if they were guilty of some crime. The press release on the termination of the industrial action was then read.[155]

Strike Called Of

> As a sign of good will, and because it has the interest of children at heart, the MUT has withdrawn the "work to rule" directive of 19th September and called off the teachers' strike with effect from today November 10.
>
> This decision was taken by the Council last night following the assurance that the Government will lift the "lock out" and that teachers will not be asked to sign any declaration.
>
> A meeting between the MUT and the Ministry of Education will take place early this week.
>
> A.M. Farrugia
> 10th November 1984
> General Secretary

Though the Council hoped that normalisation would be the next step this was far from what followed, as signalled by Dr Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici's speech at Sandhurst School, Pembroke. Alarmed by what had been said, the Council was convened on Sunday morning to deliberate on the Minister's indications regarding mass transfers and not transfers according to the exigencies of the service. The President described this as "a vile act, like a stab in the back". He believed that this move had been planned beforehand, but he warned that the Union should not let this decision serve as a weapon to break up the MUT. The Union needed to be wise in this circumstance as after the strike the teachers had "emerged as people of dignity". The President stressed that they should be leaders and the MUT Council should expose the Minister's "ungentlemanly act". Buhagiar feared that this ministerial decision would ruin the whole educational set up. The mediator too had been surprised with this news as he expected only transfers in the normal course. He gave the Union his word of honour on this and also confirmed that teachers were supposed to return to work on Monday. Now the Minister was saying that teachers were to go to the schools on Tuesday. The meeting ended with the President and General Secretary appealing to the Council members to uphold their image and to keep a grip on the situation. Alfred Buhagiar appealed to one and all, "We must not let our members lead us. We must lead them. We have to act as one coherent body."[156]

On Monday, 12 November 1984, the Union and the Minister of Education met as scheduled and Mifsud Bonnici opened the talks by informing the MUT delegation that he could not start discussions unless the directive given to private school teachers was removed. Alfred Buhagiar retorted that the private schools issue had nothing to do with the Union's salary claim, and continued that the MUT's position was clear – it could not accept a situation where the resumption of talks on the salary claim were conditional to the removal of the directive to private school teachers. It was also stressed that this condition did not appear in the agreement previously reached with the Prime Minister.[157]

Regarding the question of mass transfers, the Minister argued that these were not transfers but new postings made necessary for the teachers' own security. While the MUT protested strongly against these transfers, it made it clear that the reasons given in an attempt to justify them were "so transparent that one could easily see the vindictive element against those who went on strike," and what was being done violated the Industrial Relations Act. In conclusion some arrangements and assurances were agreed.

1. For the rest of the week the schools were to keep their half-day arrangements.

2. There was to be maximum police protection in schools.

3. Only the heads of school were to run the schools.

4. None of the student teachers were to be transferred.[158]

As expected, on the first day, Tuesday, 13 November, some incidents were reported related to the teachers' return to the schools. In certain schools the transfer of responsibility was smooth with the volunteers handing over the class to the in-coming teachers. In other schools, however, the volunteers remained on premises and the situation was quite tense. The worst incidents took place in the Cottonera area and especially at Senglea Primary and Paola Secondary. At Paola where Mr Buhagiar had been posted, a group of about 20 persons hurled insults at him and at Mr H. Bonello – the teacher who was accompanying him and who also had been assigned to that school. Though during the day the situation in the school was tense, yet nothing serious happened. At the end of the school day, at 12.10 p.m. a sizable crowd congregated in front of the school where there was only one policeman on duty to monitor a shouting crowd of about 300 persons. While the Director of Education was informed, Mr Buhagiar felt it more prudent to remain in the school and wait for police re-enforcements to arrive. The head of school suggested that he may leave by the back door, but it seems that the caretaker overheard this advice and part of the crown went to bang on the back door of the school. Eventually a police inspector and a police sergeant arrived and one other teacher, Mr J.D. Fenech, managed to get his car near the school, and Mr Buhagiar, escorted by the police, could reach the car. Though the mob manhandled the car, Mr Fenech managed to drive off without hurting anyone. Mr Bonello who was still in the school, decided to leave for his car parked some distance away. He was followed by some thugs who had recognised him and he was beaten. These also damage his car and broke the windscreen. This teacher who was 58 years old at the time suffered from severe shock as a consequence of this ordeal.[159]

Other incidents happened in Fgura, Zabbar, Vittoriosa and Senglea. Mr Buhagiar went straight to the Education Department to discuss the incidents with the Acting Director of Education. The staff of Senglea also went to the Education Department at Lascaris and a complete report was given to the Minister of Education. Dr Mifsud Bonnici sent them home on leave with pay until further arrangements could be made. In a meeting with the Minister the Union pointed out that one particular news item being broadcast by Xandir Malta was likely to create more trouble. The Minister concurred and phoned the station to stop this item at once. On the insistence of the Union, Dr Mifsud Bonnici also conceded to go on television to calm down the volunteers and parents, while launching an appeal for teachers to be left to work in peace. He also said that he would issue instructions to all volunteers to leave the schools. In the presence of the MUT delegation he also phoned the Commissioner of Police insisting on full protection for teachers in schools.[160]

Another achievement – teachers' professional status

The general election of 9 May 1987 resulted in a change in Government with the victory of the Nationalist Party led by Dr Eddie Fenech Adami who thus became the new Prime Minister of Malta. Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici became the

new Minister of Education. Talks began soon after with the Union resuming negotiations on the state school teachers' salary claim. This issue had been dragging for so many years that the membership had now become quite disgruntled. When on 2 December 1987 the MUT inquired about the salary claim, the Minister of Education informed the Union's delegation that the Government had accepted its claim for professional status for teachers. This status, the Minister continued, would automatically be established though the new Education Act which was soon to be enacted. Teachers' salaries would thus improve without any repercussions for other grades. The Minister also informed the Union about the preparations to set up a Commission to reform the Public Service. The MUT expressed its strong reservations about the long delay which would obviously ensue if the issue was left to the enactment of legislation, and even longer if this Commission were to be entrusted with its consideration.[161] In a following meeting the Minister gave details about the said legislation which was in preparation and which was to be passed on to the MUT in draft form before its publication. It was planned that this legislation would have been approved by Parliament before Easter of 1988. The Union insisted that the provisions envisaged should include backdating, to which request the Minister at that time was "rather evasive".[162]

Talks also continued on the new Education Bill which was being drafted. The revision exercise for the teachers in state schools was to be implemented in two stages. The first involved the granting of professional status to teachers in terms of the new Education Act. This meant that teachers would be placed in the appropriate scale within the salary structure in place at the time. The second stage was the negotiation of a new reorganisation agreement which would lead to improved salaries in a new structure as determined by the Commission which had been set up to tackle the reform of the Public Service. The Union at that stage was insisting with the Minister to expedite the finalisation of the new Education Act.[163] This would at least grant teachers the long aspired-for professional status.

With the enactment of the new Education Act on 27 July 1988, teachers in both state and private schools were to be granted a teachers' warrant in line with their new professional status. The MUT examined the new application for the warrant and found no objection to its structure.[164] Thus teachers could apply for their warrant.

Another element of the Education Act concerned the introduction of a teachers' Code of Behaviour. Minister Mifsud Bonnici expressed the wish that this Code should be drawn up "in consultation and preferably in full agreement" with the MUT.[165] This Code of Behaviour (Ethics) was in fact forwarded to the Union and was discussed at length in the Council. The Code was generally acceptable to the MUT and was sent back with some amendments to the Minister in September 1988.[166] These amendments were accepted by the Minister of Education and the Code was thus finalised.[167] It was published in the following weeks in the form which had been accepted by the MUT.[168]

A new millennium – trade union life continues

In 1995 a new institution was established under the name of Ġan Franġisk Abela Junior College. It replaced the Sixth Form and was put under the responsibility of the University of Malta. The launching and running of this institution created particular problems from its inception. One problem was related to the work resources which the academic staff of this new College were to be granted to support their professional output. The problem was created by the fact that the original negotiations with the University on this matter had been worked out on a complement of 400 full time academics. The fund had thus been of Lm400,000. The Minister of Education was not disposed to increase this sum, yet the University staff now included the Junior College members, which thus topped up the total number of academics to about 650. The MUT held that these new members from the Junior College were entitled to work resources and thus resolved to make representations on the matter. The Council also decided that if no progress was registered an action plan should be prepared.[169]

The MUT continued to stress that the academic staff at the Junior College was no different from that working at the University in Tal-Qroqq. It maintained that the conditions of work were the same for both staffs and there was no status difference. With no positive developments in sight the Union decided to direct the Junior College staff to report for work two hours late on 7 October 1999.[170] With this action seemingly leaving little effect as no progress was registered, the Council deliberated on calling a four-hour strike the following week.[171]

With time matters began to settle and some work resources were handed to the Junior College staff. However the relationship between the two bodied within the same institution never seemed to normalise. The academic staff at Tal-Qroqq sought to set up their own union called UMASA, founded in 2001, but for negotiations connected with collective agreements both unions were to be present for the dealings. This practice continues to this day and both bodies are affiliate members of FOR.U.M. Unions Maltin. The FOR.U.M. President is at the time of writing Mr Marco Bonnici, who is also the President of the MUT.[172]

Another institution which the MUT needed to address was the newly set up MCAST and by a letter of 25 January 2002 requested the Principal of this College to recognise the MUT as the union of the academic staff.[173] This recognition was confirmed by the MCAST Principal through a letter of reply dated 5 February 2002.[174] As soon as the Union had been recognition by this College negotiations began on a collective agreement. This was finalised with its signing on 16 March 2004. The MUT Council in fact approved the final draft agreement as this was considered to be a very positive one for the staff.[175] Representation continues to this day.

Regarding a third institution, the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), by May 1999 the academic staff of this Institute joined the MUT and thus the Union requested discussions for a collective agreement for these new members. A

meeting was held with the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism and with the Director of Tourism where the setting up of the Tourism Authority was discussed. It was agreed that as soon as this Authority was established talks would begin with it on the collective agreement.[176] Collective dealings thus took place and agreements were reached.

In the last decade till the 100 year birthday, the MUT was active in achieving the best conditions for the educators it represents. Success included stronger collective agreements for MCAST and ITS staff, and for a number of independent schools. Another collective agreement was signed for all Civil Service employees, while in 2012 the Teachers' Code of Ethics and Practice was also approved.[177] Between 2012 and 2019 the Union concluded seven agreements which included also those concerning the Church schools, while the process towards further agreements has also been started.

100 years old – and counting

The MUT has at the time of writing nearly 10,000 members. It has also moved out of Valletta to 759, St Joseph High Road, Hamrun. The new MUT offices were thus officially inaugurated on 9 October 2019. It continues to strengthen its two roles. The trade unionistic role is the oldest one as it started with the inception of the MUT in 1919. The professional role came much later and was triggered by the growing importance of the teaching profession and the requirements for a stronger and evermore efficient corps of educators.[178]

The MUT is Registered Trade Union No. 1. It has a status to defend and a mission to uphold. The next 100 years are bound to bring their challenges and debates, but if the past century is a mirror for the future, the Malta Union of Teachers will be able to overcome them for the benefit of its membership as it has always done.

The centenary logo

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129 *Ibid*., sitting no. 11, 22.ix.1984.
130 *Ibid*., sitting no. 13, 25.ix.1984.
131 *Ibid*.

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133 *Ibid*., sitting no. 14, 26.xi.1984.
134 *Ibid*.
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136 *Ibid*., sitting no. 15, 1.x.1984, 1st session.
137 *Ibid*., sitting no. 16, 2.x.1984.
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139 *Ibid*., sitting no. 18, 4.x.1984, 2nd session.
140 *Ibid*., sitting no. 20, 6.x.1984.
141 *Ibid*., sitting no. 22, 10.x.1984.
142 *Ibid*., sitting no. 29, 22.x.1984, 1st session.
143 *Ibid*., sitting no. 29, 22.x.1984, 1st & 2nd sessions.
144 *Ibid*., sitting no. 31, 24.x.1984.
145 *Ibid*., sitting no. 32, 26.x.1984, 1st session.
146 *Ibid*., sitting no. 36, 2.xi.1984.
147 *Ibid*., sitting no. 38, 6.xi.1984, 1st session.
148 *Ibid*., sitting no. 39, 7.xi.1984, 2nd session.
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150 *Ibid*., sitting no. 41, 9.xi.1984, 1st session.
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152 *Ibid*., sitting no. 41, 9.xi.1984, 2nd session.
153 *Ibid*., sitting no. 41, 9.xi.1984, 3rd session.
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155 *Ibid*., sitting no. 42, 10.xi.1984.
156 *Ibid*., sitting no. 43, 11.xi.1984.
157 *Ibid*., sitting no. 44, 12.xi.1984, 2nd session.
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Is it time to introduce a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for childcare settings in Malta to achieve and ensure high quality Early Childhood Education and Care experiences (ECEC)?

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In 1996-97, Malta saw the setting up of childcare centres; a decision linked to the Department for the Advancement of Women (Sollars et al., 2006). Before, women used to stay home to raise their family. Albeit by time female labour participation in Malta has risen, there was still a gap in the percentage of working men to that of women (Mifsud, 2016). Ten years after the introduction of childcare settings, in 2007, a tax rebate scheme was introduced for parents who were childcare consumers. Due to this, three childcare centres were opened on a public-private corporation model close to state primary schools to encourage parents to register their younger children whilst dropping off their older ones at school (Busuttil, 2014). Lately with the provision of European funds, the government introduced a scheme aimed at working single parents, parents who are either in education, or are both employed, where they are entitled to free childcare to help families achieve a work-life balance. Childcare is one of the pillars in encouraging women to go out to work and at the same time contribute to the country's economy (Mizzi, 2013).

Since the issue of cost is no longer a problem in Malta, there has been a high increase of children attending childcare centres (Curmi, 2016). Therefore, the number of such centres has grown rapidly in response to the demand for childcare services. At the time of writing, those who want to set up a childcare setting are not obliged to obtain registration, creating the possibility of settings that are not monitored and without an official status. However, parents who are entitled to free childcare must choose a setting from a list of childcare centres registered in this scheme. These childcare settings are licensed and monitored by the Directorate of Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) within the Ministry for Education and Employment, since the Department for Social Welfare Standards (DSWS) was focusing more on the 'care' aspect and little attention was given to 'education'.

In 2006, the Ministry of Education introduced the 'National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities' (Sollars et al., 2006) document, which includes ten standards with the aim to support and serve as guidelines for service providers of childcare settings, to help them provide children with a good quality setting that enhances their holistic development. Then in 2013, the White Paper, 'Early Childhood Education and Care: The way forward' (Sollars, 2013) was published, where a number of recommendations were made to ensure high quality childcare provision.

This study hopes to bring about a change in the cultural understanding and expectations of childcare settings and its human resources. If parents were aware of the quality education that their children can experience and know what is meant by high quality education, then cultural understanding and expectations of childcare settings in Malta will definitely change from

those of a babysitting service. By time, it will also bring a change in human resources management where the early care and education workforce will be professionalised to ensure high quality ECEC to our children. This change would promote constant improvement and innovation in the service sector.

The fieldwork and the resultant data

This section presents an analysis of the data collected during fieldwork done in the Malta. It also discusses the various elements that constitute Early Childhood Education and Care as resulting from the information given by operators and stakeholders in the sector.

Defining quality in ECEC

The quality of care and education children receive in childcare settings is of significant concern to researchers of ECE (Maccoby and Lewis, 2003). Since quality construction is an active process, the definitions may vary over time and stakeholders may not share the same views about quality, as everyone has their own beliefs and values (Spagnol, 2008). When asking childcare centre managers, caregivers, DQSE and EO (Education Officer) of ECE to define quality in childcare, responses thus differed. Managers' responses were that quality is based on clean and safe environment, the relationship between caregivers and children which has to be built on trust, that the caregiver loves the children and children are provided with stimulating resources. One can see that managers' responses are based on the care aspect, only two of the centre managers stated that quality is also related to caregivers providing activities and experiences to children that will help them in their developmental stages. Like managers, caregivers' responses were mostly based on the care aspect as for them quality is safety, enough space where children can play, having dedicated caregivers and seeing children improving and become independent. Ms Doris (names are fictitious for data protection purposes) added that quality is the way caregivers work together as a team and how they work in partnership with children's parents.

The EO of ECE stated that quality incorporates not only the care aspect but also the educational aspect, where the caregiver has to assess what the child needs and then provide them with experiences that help in their development. The DQSE stated that the activities and experiences that caregivers provide their children, should be facilitating the process of education for a child and assisting each child in moving towards their fulfilment in life. When parents were asked to list the factors that contribute to having a high quality childcare centre, their responses were mainly: clean and safe environment, caring, experienced and qualified staff, the kind of activities carried out and

feedback given to parents, spacious rooms and outdoor space and seeing the child improving, happy and content. Parents' responses were thus based on both care and educational aspects.

As Howes et al. (2008) has stated, the overall quality of ECE is defined by structural and process quality. All the factors that were mentioned earlier on by the stakeholders that define quality and contribute to a high quality childcare setting, are all placed between structural and process quality. The present writer wanted to find out the level of childcare settings' quality, thus it did not suffice to just rely on the childcare settings managers' and caregivers' responses from the interviews to find out whether these are providing high quality ECEC experiences to children. Therefore observations were also carried out in each childcare setting. What follows is an analysis and a discussion regarding aspects of structural and process quality in relation to literature, managers' and caregivers' interviews and observations.

Structural variables

The work environment

A friendly and supportive childcare setting environment facilitates caregivers' learning about child development and supports them to act on their environment (Klein and Knitzer, 2006). All interviewed managers declared that they do provide support to their caregivers by planning and discussing activities together, guiding them in planning the activities a week before and supplying them with the resources they need. Ms Christine stated that she was always on the caregivers' side and ready to listen when something went wrong. She also stated that once a year they got together to listen to and discuss what the caregivers needed or thought that the centre required, and they worked on that. For example, in the past year they had felt that the centre lacked teamwork; therefore they organised a team building activity. It is important that settings provide caregivers with professional development resources such as workshops and on-site library (Manlove et al., 2008). The three childcare settings studied had no on-site library, however one of the centre managers stated that she printed journal articles for caregivers to read. All managers' responses were confirmed by caregivers, where they all said that managers helped them with tips while planning appropriate activities for children and that they are always ready to listen and provide them with what they needed. This kind of supportive work environments facilitate the caregivers' complexity of thinking and the quality of teacher-child interactions (Manlove et al., 2008).

Caregivers' qualifications, experience and training

The EPPE project (Sylva et al., 2004) highlights the significance of teaching qualifications to achieve high quality environments and the positive impact of

the centre manager's qualifications on a centre's quality profile. Both the EO of ECE and the DQSE believed that caregivers and managers should be highly qualified as this will be beneficial for both caregivers/managers themselves and the children that are under their care, and any qualifications they have are never enough. Ms Stephanie stated that if a caregiver is educated then s/he is more flexible and can reflect better on what s/he is doing.

Although the 'suitable persons' standard in the 'National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities' (Sollars et al., 2006) stresses the significance of qualified staff in Malta's ECEC settings, it does not indicate the level of qualifications required or the number of years of experience. All interviewed caregivers had a Level 4 Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development. Two of the managers, Ms Christine and Ms Marisa, had a Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Early Years and Caregivers, but Ms Christine also possessed a diploma in Business and Management. Ms Stephanie had a degree in ECE as she came from Greece; when she worked there, caregivers were required to have a level 6 qualification. Currently she is reading for a Master's degree related to this area. All managers had no previous experience of management before applying for this position, which is not optimal as these are the persons who set the standards and expectations for others to follow, and in line with Sylva et al. (2004) childcare settings that are run by experienced managers do better in language and social development.

Notwithstanding qualifications are related to good quality ECEC and linked with better cognitive and social behaviour outcomes for children (Elliott, 2006), researchers (Sylva et al., 2004) believe that it is not the teachers' qualifications that affect outcomes but it is the staff experience that creates a better pedagogic environment that makes the difference. The EO of ECE believed that qualifications were important, but there is a gap between school and practice and once caregivers and managers are in the actual situation they need to adapt. Moreover, when managers where asked on what basis they employed caregivers, all of them answered that caregivers needed to have the necessary qualifications, however they also took into consideration their experiences and the way they behaved with children. Ms Stephanie said that from the caregiver's behaviour she could easily identify whether she was an ideal caregiver. Ms Christine said that before she employed a caregiver, she asked her to do a week of training so that she could better judge whether she was an ideal caregiver. One tends to agree with this practice as the employer must look for interactions with children, teaching strategies and the caregiver's knowledge of children's development and learning needs before approving their engagement. The most important thing for Ms Christine was that the caregiver had the knowledge and ability to put theory into practice.

Caregivers' training determines the quality of a childcare setting and its effects on children (Fukkink & Lont, 2007). Therefore, one should increase the number of staff with higher qualification levels but also consider funding in-service professional development training (Mathers et al., 2014) that is related to ECEC and provides specialised professional knowledge for caregivers (Munton et al., 2002). All caregivers and managers are provided with training for professional development, such as courses related to autism and dyslexia. Two of the settings sent their caregivers and managers to England to observe other settings that practice the Reggio Emilia approach, so that these caregivers and managers would find it easier to implement what they had observed. Their objective is to implement the Reggio Emilia system within two or three years. All the courses mentioned were funded by the directors of the three settings. However, the managers commented that they were not able to sustain continued professional development training as they could not keep up with both the training expenses and the running of the setting.

All interviewed participants agreed that training was important as education constantly changed and caregivers faced additional challenges in their pedagogical practice. The EO of ECE commented that most of the time they could not keep up with the many changes taking place.

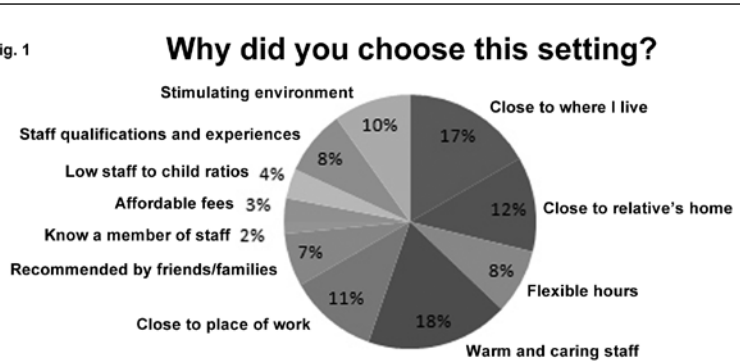
Staff-child ratios and group sizes

All managers and caregivers confirmed that adult-child ratios in each setting were in line with what was stated in the 'National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities' (Sollars et al., 2006). It is very important that settings abide by the recommended adult-child ratio, in concurrence with Mooney et al. (2003) that low staff-child ratios and group size leads to positive and sensitive teacher-child interactions which will ultimately lead to positive child outcomes. In fact, all interviewed caregivers believed that by having low staff-child ratio, caregivers would be able to give more attention to each individual child in their group. Ms Doris affirmed that this affected children's development and if ratios were not appropriate children would not reach their full potential.

Ms Leanne commented that during an activity she could engage in dialogues with children that led to language acquisition and ensured that each child grasped the concept. When it came to free play, Ms Deandra added that she could also join in on every child's play. As researchers (Vandell and Wolfe, 2000; Schanzenbach, 2014) argue, caregivers can provide more individualised attention, engage in dialogues with children and ensure mastery of content and skills. Though low staff-child ratio was given some attention, it seems that parents were not really aware of its great significance as from the questionnaires distributed among parents, only 4 per cent consider low staff-

child ratio when they choose a particular setting. Other factors were given higher attention (*see* Fig. 1).

Fig. 1



Healthy and safe environment

Having a good quality environment, means that a setting has to be safe for children so that children's health is protected (Dearing, et al., 2009). For an environment to be safe, according to Ms Doris there have to be safety gates all around the setting and wall corners should be covered with foam material. She added that a setting should be clean, both indoors and outdoors to reduce transmission of diseases. However, when the present author went to interview one of the centre's managers it was noticed that this had a very clean indoor area, while the outdoor was not; even the resources that were outside were not clean. This indicated that the outdoor area was not used so much, a fact which was confirmed by the centre's manager herself.

The physical environment is a significant characteristic of quality, where children spend time both indoors and outdoors. According to the 'National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities' (Sollars et al., 2006), the outdoor area has to be at least 20 per cent of the total space. However, one cannot give permits to centres to open just because their outdoor facility is 20 per cent of total space. The EO of ECE, in fact, added that one should consider what kind of area it was. For example, from observations made, one particular setting had a big back garden, another had a big front garden, while yet another centre had an outdoor passage around the building, which in the present author's view was not an ideal outdoor space. The latter outdoor area was at street level and very noisy – therefore quite adverse to the children's needs when it is considered that crowded and noisy environments tend to negatively affect children's health such as their stress levels and development, and this even more so in the case of children with special needs. Therefore, environments should be quiet so that children can feel calm (Mathers et al., 2014).

Children tend to be more physically active when playing outdoors and this affects their physical health and motor development (Brown et al., 2009). Therefore, children should make good use of the outdoor space available and engage with natural materials to promote learning and development. As stated above, one of the settings did not make use of the available outdoor space as also confirmed by Ms Christine herself. She stated that they only made use of the area once or twice a week, when the weather was sunny, and they tried to avoid it as the environment was very noisy and polluted. In fact, that was one thing that Ms Christine wished to change of her setting. Therefore, giving out permits just because there is 20 per cent of outdoor space is not a constructive decision. This situation is depriving children from gaining the benefits of making use of outdoor space.

Conversely, the other two settings made daily use of the outdoor area. From observations it was noticed that one setting tried to carry out all the activities outside, even circle time. The children could play with many stimulating resources and natural materials they found in the garden. The other setting spent around an hour outside to do an activity, however the children only played with natural materials that they found in the garden or that were provided by the caregivers, such as pine cones. For example, in one instance, while the children were watering the plants, a girl began to collect leaves to put them in a basket. Indeed, natural materials enhance children's learning, thoughts and interests (Dearing, et al., 2009).

Process variables

Teacher-child interactions

Attuned and reciprocal teacher-child interactions are characterised by joint attention, sensitive timing and responsiveness to verbal and facial expressions (Mathers et al., 2014). All caregivers observed interacted with children during an activity, however not all of them joined children during free play. Even while children were eating, the caregivers spoke to children by explaining what they were doing to prepare their food, for example: "*First I have to mix the food and then put it in the microwave to warm it up*". In this way children expand their vocabulary. Most caregivers engaged in positive and sensitive teacher-child interactions, they always greeted children enthusiastically and were always nice and warm to them.

However, one caregiver observed was not warm and sensitive to children at all. She scolded them all the time even when there was no need to and made fun of them. In turn, the children were all over the place, both while they were playing and when eating. They fought over toys, paint and paintbrushes, and they spilled their food on the floor on purpose. As a punishment she placed them in highchairs facing the wall. In this situation, children cannot develop

a secure and stable relationship with the caregiver and so they cannot develop relationship with peers and engage in play. In fact, Shonkoff and Philips (2000) assert that positive and sensitive caregiver-child interactions are significant for a healthy social-emotional development and advanced thought, language and social skills.

Stability and continuity of care

Staff stability is essential for caregiver-child interactions and for supporting children's learning and development effectively (Wise et al., 2005). At this age children need close and affectionate attention from caregivers to also adapt emotionally and form secure attachment. Ms Christine commented that one of their centre's policies was that children are always with the same caregiver, to help them develop a relationship and a secure attachment with the caregiver. Instability can be stressful for children, thus it is very important that they feel secure, sheltered and can rely upon adults to meet their developmental and basic needs.

However, according to Tran and Weinraub (2006) multiple care arrangements can have a positive effect on children's language development as those who are less familiar to a caregiver will find it difficult to make themselves understood and thus need to make an extra effort with their verbal communication. In fact, Ms Marisa commented that each caregiver was assigned to a group; however, when children were in the garden with other groups and caregivers, if a child needed something, s/he would go to the first accessible caregiver. This was noticed during observations, where a child went up to another caregiver to play with him rather than playing with his own. The present writer agrees with Mathers et al. (2014) that it is important for a child to be assigned to a particular caregiver as this will allow the development of meaningful and lasting relationships.

Instability can also be a result of staff turnover which will disrupt adult-child relationships. While Ms Christina and Ms Stephanie said that they were not experiencing any staff turnover; on the other hand Ms Marisa commented that she was indeed experiencing this situation, as most caregivers in the private sector work on part-time basis, therefore once there are any vacancies with the government sector on full-time basis they leave. She added that as a full-time manager she only has 10 days of sick leave and her salary is the same as that of a caregiver. It thus stands to reason that if managers and caregivers have poor working conditions this poses a challenge on quality and is also a barrier to stability.

Staff-parent communication

The 'National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities' (Sollars et al., 2006) stresses the importance of working in partnership with parents as this has

long-term positive effects on children's achievement (Tassoni and Hucker, 2005). In fact, all managers and caregivers interviewed valued the importance of parental involvement for the child's benefit. All caregivers commented that it was good to know what the child was doing at home, his likes and dislikes and what interested him. For these reasons, while they planned activities, parents' feedback was taken into consideration.

Childcare centres should enforce procedures for regular two-way communication between parents and caregivers (Mathers et al., 2014). From the questionnaires distributed for the present study it emerged that all parents ticked that they received some kind of feedback – 58 per cent of the parents were given verbal feedback, 33 per cent received written feedback and 9 per cent got feedback through digital means (email, blog, etc.). Moreover, caregivers said that they were always available if the parent wished to speak to them.

On the other hand, one has to analyse what type of feedback these parents were receiving. The study showed that 23 per cent received feedback related to child's behaviour and 22 per cent got feedback related to daily routine. In fact, all settings sent a daily sheet with the child which included comments regarding what s/he ate, how many times the nappy was changed, the child's behaviour, etc. Another four aspects were not given so much importance, these being: the child's level of engagement in activities planned, 16 per cent; personal development, 14 per cent; social development, 14 per cent, and language development, 11 per cent. This shows that caregivers were presenting most of the feedback based on the care aspect and less on the educational one. Moreover, apart from this kind of feedback one of the settings at the end of each month uploaded photos of all the activities done by each group. However, most parents commented that it would have been better had this initiative been on an individual basis as what they saw were photos of all children during an activity, and not the particular work of their own child and whether s/he managed to do it or not.

It is essential that parents know why certain activities need to be implemented as this will create a collaborative environment where families and caregivers work together to support children's learning and development (Bruce et al., 2006). Managers and caregivers said that parents were not usually informed about why certain activities were done. However, some parents did usually ask about such activities, and there were also cases when caregivers noticing that a child was falling behind others in certain skills would inform the parents about the reason why particular activities were carried out with their child. They added that parents were only involved in the child's activities once a year during the parents' day when they participated in an activity with their

child, such as threading. In fact, from the questionnaires it emerged that only 50 per cent of the childcare settings encouraged parental involvement, with another 43 per cent ticking no and 7 per cent not answering at all. It is not clear, however, whether those 50 per cent really knew what kind of parental involvement is expected from the childcare setting.

Families are always anxious and need support in meeting their child's needs during their first years of life. In fact, 90 per cent of the parents in the present study expected to be given daily feedback. Therefore, a two-way communication is crucial into building mutual respect and trust between families and caregivers (Rosenthal, 2000) to support children's development.

Pedagogy and play

Play supports children's development and learning (Curmi, 2015), therefore caregivers should provide age appropriate play-based activities and experiences where children actively explore the environment, both indoors and outdoors (Mathers et al., 2014). All caregivers interviewed, stated that they always planned activities which were age appropriate, safe and included the use of senses. Activities are based on children's interests and needs as the managers stated that they are the ones who come up with the themes and then the caregivers create activities related to the theme, but which are based on the children's interests and needs. For example, Ms Daniela stated that once they noticed that children were interested in trucks they did a painting activity using truck wheels instead of using brushes to paint with. Ms Doris added that when a parent is pregnant, she starts preparing the child for the new arrival of the sibling. She and the child pretend that they are taking care of the baby, by changing their diaper, clothes, feeding and giving them a bath.

From the observations in the present author's study, it emerges that all settings carried out both indoor and outdoor activities, except one of the centres which carried only indoor activities. Examples of indoor activities were painting, play dough, circle time and building using wooden blocks and pine cones. Examples of outdoor activities included free play and planting/watering activity. But during these activities not all caregivers sat and worked with children while these explored new things. During one painting activity a caregiver was noticed doing almost the whole painting herself, rather than letting the child take the initiative. There were caregivers who opted not to intervene in their play situations and used this time to engage in interactive talk with other caregivers. This should not be the case as if caregivers opt to stand back they should at least observe children's play to help them reach a new concept/skill, while providing suitable resources and environment for them (Tassoni and Hucker, 2005).

The paper will now analyse how parents chose a particular centre, whether they knew what was happening in the setting, and their perception of childcare centres.

Parental selection of childcare setting

Family characteristics play a key role in childcare selection. These include: socioeconomic factors such as income, education and employment (Huston et al., 2002) and parental beliefs (Lowe and Weisner, 2004).

The income level of the family and cost of programme may influence childcare decisions (Seo, 2003). The higher the income is and the more the mother's income is required by her family, the more likely it is that the child receives non-parental care. Furthermore, families with better income opt for a higher quality care, unlike lower-income families (Dowsett et al., 2008). However, due to the 2014 scheme of free childcare services aimed for working single parents and those who are either employed or in education, low-income families now have the opportunity in Malta to improve their monthly income by having both parents employed while also benefitting from access to high quality care.

There is a tendency that highly educated mothers value child caregivers in possession of better qualifications and centres with trained staff (Torquati, 2011). In fact, from the questionnaires distributed it emerged that out of the 60 per cent of the mothers who were highly educated and had been asked to write which factors they believed contributed to having a high quality setting, most of these indicated staff qualifications and training. These mothers may be more able to distinguish high quality among numerous childcare settings (Torquati, 2011) or may have enough time to visit different settings (Mocan, 2007) before deciding. In fact, 50 per cent of the parents visited different settings before making their final choice; in this way these parents had the opportunity to make the best choice for their child by choosing the childcare which best matched their requirements (Sosinky and Kim, 2013).

Most parents use childcare to support their own employment (Cohen and Korintus, 2017) and this was the main reason behind the 2014 government scheme – that of helping families achieve a work/life balance. In fact, in the questionnaires, when parents were asked what was the reason for sending their child to a childcare centre, most of them either responded that this was done as both parents worked, or else as while they were both at work there was no one with whom they could leave their child. Therefore, childcare services provide reliability and stability in maternal employment (Hofferth and Collins, 2000). Others send their children to childcare as they believe that

it provides more educational benefits (Sosinky, 2011). In fact, some parents commented that they sent their child to interact with other children and participate in educational activities.

Parents' values and choice of setting

Fenech (2012) has argued that parents are less aware of structural elements of childcare settings than of characteristics of process quality. Parents value physical environment and safety, location, fees and suitable resources (Rose and Elicker, 2008; Barbarin et al., 2006). They also value caregiver-child interactions, positive relationships between parents and caregivers, academic learning, opportunities for play where children are provided with real-life experiences and behaviour management (Da Silva and Wise, 2006). From the questionnaires, when parents were asked to list the factors that contributed to having a high quality childcare setting, most of the responses indicated: clean and safe environment, caring, experienced and qualified staff, feedback given to parents, the kind of activities carried out, and indoor and outdoor space.

However, albeit parents value aspects such as qualified staff and a positive communication between parents and caregivers, parental choice is predicted by the degree of flexibility parents are provided with between work, family and life. They often choose a childcare centre based on convenience such as proximity to work, home, length of care needed and fees (Meyers and Jordan, 2006). In fact, when parents were asked why they chose that particular setting, most of them stated that this was because it was close to where they lived, close to a relative's home, close to the workplace, and because it had a warm and caring staff. Moreover, when they were asked to mention which of the reasons they considered as most important, and the least important, when choosing a setting, most of them chose warm and caring staff, close to where they lived and close to a relative's home as the most important, while stimulating environment, flexible hours and recommended by friends/ families as the least important.

This tends to show that parents still perceive these settings as a babysitter substitute rather than as a place where their children could be provided with high quality experiences. According to the DQSE, sending a child to a setting for socialisation due to being an only child, was not a valid reason. The DQSE stressed that one should not put all the responsibility for a child's formation at this very tender age on childcare settings. Tending to concur, the present author also believes that parents should do their part as well and not rest their mind that what they themselves are supposed to be doing is being carried out by the caregiver. The EO of ECE added that there is still this

perception of a babysitter service as unfortunately most of the centres base their support on care only, which should not be the case.

Parents' perceptions of their childcare

Albeit parents value more certain aspects of care such as warm and caring staff and qualified and experienced staff, parents would not assess those characteristics of care explicitly, as they rate the quality of childcare services higher than trained observers and only a small percentage of parents are usually dissatisfied with their childcare setting (Howe et al., 2013). From the questionnaires, when parents were asked to rate the quality of the childcare centre, 47 per cent thought that the centre was of high quality, 46 per cent rated it as good, 7 per cent said that it was satisfactory, while none thought it was poor. It is felt that this result is inevitable as parents would not use a childcare if they were not happy with it. This showed that none were dissatisfied with the services offered. The present author however is of the opinion that none of the three centres observed were of high quality; each one had things that needed to be improved, and especially, the kind of activities carried out, the feedback given to parents, parental involvement, teacher-child interactions and outdoor space.

It is believed that parents are usually satisfied with quality of childcare because their priorities are different from those of early childhood professionals who assess quality (Li-Grining and Coley, 2006). In fact, as seen above, parents choose a childcare centre for their child on the basis that: it is either close to where they live, close to a relative's home, close to their work place, or has warm and caring staff. While professionals value factors like positive caregiver interactions, learning opportunities and health and safety (Li-Fen et al., 2014).

Furthermore, since the quality of childcare services is controlled by providers, it is difficult for parents to say whether a particular setting is of low or high quality without extensive on-site observations (Grammatikopoulos et al., 2012). Parents who send their child to one of the three centres chosen for this study do not, in fact, have the opportunity to experience what goes on in the centre. This was indicated by both caregivers and managers of the centres where they commented that parents only have the opportunity to enter the centre and observe what actually goes on when they are still in the process of selecting a childcare centre. On that day parents just spend half an hour at the centre to have a look at it and then they only have the opportunity to access the centre on parents' days. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, it was shocking to observe the lack of warmth and sensitivity of one particular caregiver that formed part of the centre's team. She scolded children all the

time and for punishment she placed them in highchairs facing the wall. It is highly presumed that the parents would not be at all pleased with this attitude had they known about it and had their child in that centre.

In Malta, due to the 2014 free childcare scheme, parents are allowed to choose care from among a number of licensed childcare settings. However, though not all settings offer high quality experiences to children, yet a number of parents state that they are satisfied with the service. It is advisable to cater for a wider awareness about high quality ECEC among parents, or else parents should be offered a professional rating system to help them choose and ensure high quality services for their children (Fenech et al., 2011).

A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

The data collected from observations, interviews and questionnaires indicates that a QRIS needs to be implemented to assess, improve and determine the level of quality in ECEC programmes for the sake of the children who are attending these settings mostly on a daily basis. The EO of ECE is of this same mind that if we want to ensure high quality in childcare centres then a QRIS must be implemented.

A QRIS may have diverse objectives; thus if this were to be implemented in Malta, it would seem that the two main objectives on which one needs to work should be the professionalization of early care and educating the workforce, and, improving parents' knowledge about local programmes.

Planning a QRIS

At the moment, as the DQSE had stated, licensed settings are monitored by trained observers from the Ministry for Education and Employment, who visit the setting three times a year and observe one or two standards from the 'National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities' (Sollars et al., 2006) document. Afterwards a report is sent to the directors of the settings with the things they have to improve upon. However as stated by the DQSE and confirmed by the managers responses, support is not directly given; they provide recommendations through respectful feedback, but it is then up to the management to voluntarily work on the recommendations. Support needs to lead to improvement. It begins with a detailed feedback on the results and is accompanied by a quality improvement plan. Furthermore, the DQSE believes that these external reviews are not enough as observers just go there for an hour and leave, there should also be a cycle of reviewing oneself, and this must be carried out by the childcare centre itself.

Since childcare centre observations are based on the 'National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities' (Sollars et al., 2006) document, the present author, similar to the DQSE, EO of ECE and childcare centre managers, believes that before a QRIS is implemented certain standards need to be revised – such as the working partnership with parents, and care, learning and play standards. It is argued that through these two standards the system will work better towards having childcare settings that provide both care and education experiences for the children.

A QRIS promotes professionalisation of the early educator workforce. This will increase professional development opportunities, support and training to all stakeholders (Lahti et al., 2015). It will determine the level of quality for this standard based on the educational level, years of experience and professional development training of managers and caregivers within the centre. According to the DQSE this will help to improve quality; however one must identify what will be expected from caregivers and managers. Moreover, since they will up skill themselves a claim for better remuneration must take place. At the moment managers and caregivers have the same wage, even though managers are more qualified than caregivers. Therefore, to effect change a QRIS needs to provide staff development and financial incentives. It must provide staff scholarships or other professional development courses and in return offer financial incentives to staff (Boller et al., 2015).

A QRIS provides families, policy makers and professionals in this area with information about the quality of care and education in childcare centres (Lahti et al., 2015) as ratings are usually available for the public. When the DQSE and EO of ECE were asked to give their opinion whether a list should be made available for the public, both were not convinced about this, as while they want continuous improvement, on the other hand they do not want to name and shame. The DQSE commented that if there were to be a list this should be kept internal as then the centres would start competing with one another and work to improve the scores and not to improve the experience. On the other hand, managers and caregivers said that they did not find any problem if a list with the quality level of childcare centres were to be published.

Since a QRIS is built on the principle of informing parents about high quality ECEC, and since the DQSE is not in favour of publishing a list with the quality level of childcare centres, the DQSE was asked how the parents could be made more aware about the quality indicators of ECEC. The answer was that this was an area in which the Directorate liked to work on as it was believed that parents must be educated about the quality indicators of ECEC, so when they are searching for a setting for their child, they would know what to look for. This would create a local market for high-quality care with parents

demanding high quality services which would in turn motivate providers to improve their standards (Sabol and Pianta, 2015). However, not enough time and resources are as yet being invested to achieve this.

Though it is believed that if parents had information about the quality of their childcare options, they would more likely choose high quality care if they had enough resources to do so, yet, from the questionnaires it emerged that while 73 per cent of parents would refer to the list, yet only 30 per cent would actually register their child at one of the high quality settings at all cost. Parents commented that one had to evaluate pros and cons before making the final decision. But the main reason was that they would try to find a centre that was close to home or their place of work. One of the participants did however add that she would not send her child to a low quality setting even if this was close to home/work. This response makes one think that it is better for Malta to invest in making parents aware about quality indicators of ECE rather than publishing a list with the quality level of childcare centres.

Implementing a QRIS

Both the literature and the data collected from the interviews, indicates that a mandatory system should be implemented while a pilot study should not take place. This is due to the fact that the centres that are not within the group of this pilot study will be at a disadvantage as they will not be getting the same support which they need to improve their quality. Furthermore, having a mandatory system should not be a problem, a view supported by Zellman and Perlman (2008), who argue that those settings that believe that they are providing high quality care will definitely participate, others who are not so confident may still volunteer because of the quality improvement support they will receive to upgrade their quality and they may also volunteer to gain from the incentives provided, such as financial and staff-training scholarships. In fact, the managers who were interviewed were all willing to participate in this system as these wanted to know where they stood so that they could work on their weaknesses to improve their output, while the financial incentives would surely help them build up their quality.

Yet, before this system is implemented, as the EO of ECE had commented, all centres must be given equal support to improve their quality, and once all centres reached the same quality level and it was ascertained that there were sufficient funds to run this system, a QRIS could then be implemented. This has to be gradual and planned over a number of years. However, the work does not stop there; one should evaluate the system to see how much it had worked, why it did not work if this were the case, and how it could be improved. In this way, one will be improving this system's effectiveness.

Conclusion

From the study it thus emerges that what concerns the characteristic of quality in ECEC in Malta there are still major areas that need improvement, such as staff-parent communication and caregivers' qualifications, experience and training. Furthermore, having parents choosing a setting related to the vicinity of the place of work or the home is quite worrying. It can be argued that such parents are being rather selfish as these are not considering what is best for their children or else they are not alert to the quality indicators of ECEC and their importance. This leads one to the conclusion that in Malta it is time to implement a QRIS. The main focus points of this QRIS should be the professionalisation of caregivers and educating parents towards an awareness on the quality characteristics of ECEC.

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Social Studies Education in Malta: A historical outline

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A brief historical background

Revisiting milestones in the development of education in Malta is not irrelevant for the subject under review as it is bound to throw light on a potential fertile ground for the first seeds of civic and social education.

Historically speaking, education in Malta may be traced back to at least the Arab occupation in Malta (870 CE to 1091 CE), with the introduction and dissemination of Arabic numerals as its foundation. According to documentary evidence produced by Prof. Godfrey Wettinger, the Christian community in Malta was extinguished as a result of Islamic rule. Rudimentary remnants of its legacy, however, seemed to have given a new breath of life to Christian belief. The role of Religious Orders was a determining factor in this as, with time, one by one these succeeded to establish themselves on the Island. The first to set foot were the Franciscans who settled here in 1350. These were followed by the Carmelites in 1418, the Dominican Order in 1450, the Augustinians in 1460, and the Franciscan Friar Minors in 1492, followed by the Benedictine nuns. It was the Religious Orders that provided the first instruction as private tutors to a number of inhabitants. However, only wealthy families benefitted from the teaching of Latin and Italian, which at the time was the main instructional content given.

With the coming of the Order of Saint John in 1530, coinciding with the successful efforts by the Church, preparations for the setting up of a *Collegium* began with Grand Master Verdalle (1582-1595). By the 16th century, this educational institution continued to grow with the teaching of philosophy, theology, grammar and the humanities added to its programme of instruction. Following representation by the knight Fra Catalino, Grand Master Verdalle received letters from Pope Clement VII expressing his desire to set up a college of Jesuits priests "in the city of Malta" (*civitate Melitensis*). Bishop Tommaso Gargallo was to provide a site and to transfer the money which the local synod of 1591 had earmarked for the building of a new seminary. The Pope's wish materialised in 1592, even if at that moment it was only partially implemented. With the recess of a bout of plague in Europe, a final settlement for the building of the *Collegium* in Valletta was reached in 1671 during the grandmastership of Nicholas Cotoner (1663-1680), while a diocesan seminary was eventually established in Mdina in 1703 (Grima, 2018, pp.58-9). When an epidemic that had hit Malta subsided in 1675, the Order, under the grandmastership of Nicholas Cotoner, appointed a lecturer in Anatomy and Surgery at the *Sacra Infermeria,* an act which many consider to be the precursor of Malta's medical school. Other institutions began to flourish around the *Collegium*, specialising in cartography, naval architecture, navigation and grammar. Private tutors were hired for philosophy, languages,

accountancy and navigation. Education, or more precisely, instruction, was indeed flourishing, but it was limited to those who could afford it financially. This meant that the poor, who made up the large majority of the Maltese population, remained uneducated and therefore were deprived of one of what are considered today as basic human rights.

Research on ecclesiastical education in Malta confirms and sheds further light on the historical developments of education in Malta. Work in this field has been carried out by Mgr Frans Bonnici through an intense and broad study on the academic formation of Maltese priests at the University of Malta between 1800 and 1939 (Bonnici, 2019a). Set against the scenario of educational history in the times of the Order of St John, the French Rule and the British colonial period, Bonnici based his research mainly on the *Fundamental Statute of the University 1836*, set up by Sir Gavinus Ignatius Bonavia, the *Informazione intorno il Liceo e l'Università, 1856-1865* (NN), and the *Austin and Lewis Report* of 1863. Data from these three basic documents make Malta's educational picture more complete. However, what is of particular interest for the present article is the indirect references of the abovementioned documents to Social Education. Their educational highlights will therefore be pointed out hereunder.

The *Fundamental Statute* makes reference to three areas of study in social education,[1] namely, the on-going human formation; respect, good conduct and decency; and, due respect to the Catholic Faith. The *Informazione* based on the Italian Casata Law (1860), gives a comparative study of curricula in Europe, introducing notions of the "duties and rights of citizens". The *Austin and Lewis Report* insisted on Logic as a subject of practical utility, giving students the "power of discerning, accurate thought, and fruitful speculation". The study of "elementary truths of science which dispel prejudices" is also mentioned.[2] That there is in these documents already an indication of the thrust of education in Malta in the sense of civic education is confirmed in the Report by Canon Emmanuel Rosignaud, Rector of the Royal University of Malta (1834-1841), where a kind of education is proposed "that would tend gradually to invigorate [students'] understandings and improve their moral dispositions". The proposal was eventually taken up by Austin and Lewis.

The *Fundamental Statute* of 1838 was abrogated and substituted by the *Statute* of 1887 which was signed by Governor of Malta John Lintorn Arabin Simons (1884-1888). The new statute marked a change from philosophy and arts to arts and sciences, reflecting the belief of Sigismondo Savona, who had been appointed Director of Education on 5 June 1880. Savona reported (1883) that he, "could not agree with those who think that, in an age when science has made such rapid strides and has invaded all departments and

all walks of life, the defenders and upholders of the spiritual and temporal interests of the community can afford to be entirely ignorant of the changes that have been effected by the progress of science".[3]

Through academic subjects the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts provided students with knowledge of the different dimensions of human life and the world around them. This was a continuation of the basic education for the upkeep of order, regard and respect to authority at home and school, a network of social relationships in the community, and intercultural experience through foreign languages offered by government and private institutions of learning.[4]

Bonnici summarised how the *Collegium* established by the Jesuits in 1592, together with the Arabic Language School set up by the Vatican Congregation for the Propagation of Faith in 1637, may be considered as forerunners of the University of Malta established by Grand Master Emmanuel Pinto in 1769. Documentary evidence shows that twelve diocesan priests hailing from Ħaż-Żebbuġ had studied at the University, and later took up teaching posts at this institution, and that Rev. Michelangelo Xerri (1737-1799) – popularly known as Dun Mikiel – and Canon Francesco Saverio Caruana (1759-1847), both originally from Ħaż-Żebbuġ, were among its early professors (Bonnici, 2019b).

Within its academic jurisdiction and administrative authority, the University had two levels of schooling, providing what might today be called a primary and a secondary school. Primary schools catered for the teaching of basic Maltese Language, Italian and Latin to children and young persons who received complementary training at home by private tutors. The secondary level offered a higher form of education in the Arts, Languages, Philosophy, Mathematics and Physics, as preparation for the traditional professions of Theology, Law and Medicine. All levels of formal education were concentrated at Valletta, with teachers and students travelling daily from towns and villages to the centre. A documentary entry also mentions the periods and areas of study taught by Rev. Michele Xerri. These were: between 1783 and 1784 when Xerri taught Economics; between 1784 and 1787, when he taught the Humanities (Languages and Mathematics) and Rhetoric (Philosophy, Languages and Mathematics), and from 1787 to 1799, when his teaching load consisted of Philosophy (Logic and Metaphysics). Professor Xerri had also guided and supervised University students in their theses.[5]

In the early years of British rule, following the departure of the French in 1800, Alexander Ball, the interim administrator of the Maltese Islands, then a British Protectorate, had appointed Canon F.S. Caruana as University Rector.

Caruana was also asked to appoint professors at the Faculties of Humanities, Theology, Law and Medicine in order to ensure continuity of tertiary level education.

Up to the early years of British rule, the method of instruction in Malta might have justified the comments made by an unknown 19th century Maltese writer who, in an article 'Educazione. Che cos'è l'educazione?' lamented that education under the Jesuits, "*insegnava all'uomo di tener sempre gli occhi bassi, invece di convertirli al cielo a cui siamo tutti destinati*" (transl. taught people to always look down instead of looking up to heaven for which we are all destined) (quoted in Calleja, 1994, p.185).

The period spanning from the last years of the Order's reign, the short interlude of French occupation, and the early part of British rule, was marked by Mikiel Anton Vassalli's (1764-1829) call for universal education, which accompanied his conviction that the Maltese population needed to learn its native language. This was the first motive that had driven Vassalli to work earnestly on the compilation of a Maltese grammar and dictionary, the basis for his Maltese Lexicon. Vassalli's Lexicon entitled *Ktyb Il-Klym Malti 'Mfysser Byl-Latin u Byt-Taljan* in Maltese, Latin and Italian, was eventually published in 1796. Vassalli believed that once the essentials of a language, namely, its grammar and lexicography, were in place, he could more comfortably and earnestly embark on the setting up of public schools in Malta and Gozo, with new methods of instruction of reading and writing the native language, arithmetic and religious knowledge. He had even proposed that public schools could be financed by village churches while schools committed themselves to teach Catholic doctrine. According to his vision, public collections in Maltese towns and villages together with ecclesiastical benefices by the Holy See could be further possible ways of supporting public education. In the introduction to the Lexicon, Vassalli named this educational national initiative as *'Progetto'*. Seeing more and more the need of the Maltese language as the medium of universal popular instruction, Vassalli intensified his advocacy and insistence on free national education. His dream was the most natural step of quality after the provision of instruction only for the elite as had been proposed and formulated by elitists such as Francesco Saverio Farrugia and Gaetano Pisani. In his *Discorsi Accademici* published in 1778, Farrugia referred only to "those children who had noble blood running through their veins", while believing that private tuition would season a boy into a man faster than could be done by any school. Gaetano Pisani, "another reactionary in the matters of education," proposed that "formal schooling be extended only to the noble and middle strata of society". These ideas ran counter to the opinion of British educationists at the time (Ciappara, 2014, pp.45-6).

In 1836, a Royal Commission had reported that "the working class people are so poor, and so little able to imagine the manifold advantages of knowledge that the exaction of [payments] would probably prevent [parents] from sending children to school" (Sultana, 2017, p.82). The need for an extended form of education than the traditional one which was only producing priests, lawyers, doctors and civil servants, was urgently felt. On this view, the Royal Commission recommended the introduction of the Maltese language as the most useful language of instruction because, "this would dispel prejudices that keep people bound to poverty". Recommendations went so far as to include the teaching of basic aspects of political economy. The Commission's recommendations were based on its belief that popular formal education was useful for practical knowledge and skills for life. Besides a feeling of success, popular education "would invigorate children's understanding and improve moral dispositions" (ibid. p.88). What is of particular interest in the Commission's observations is its emphasis on practical skills. This gives an indication of what we today call technical education or Vocational Education and Training (VET). The work of the Royal Commission had its influence on the way people started to think in that it stimulated educationists at the time to reflect on the meaning and usefulness of education.

Canon Paolo Pullicino (1815-1890), Chief Inspector and Director of Primary Schools, was intrigued to find a suitable answer to the question, "What is education for?" Why does society need to educate at all?" As already shown above, Pullicino's critically engaging question had intrigued the Maltese pedagogist in the 19th century. While distinguishing between real education and mere memorization of knowledge through instruction, Pullicino was convinced that real education is much more than learning to read, write and repeating what is learned by heart. His strong belief was that education should aim at the full development of the child. Hence teaching other subjects like Art, Music, Religious Knowledge, and rules of behaviour would have a stimulating and lasting effect on the child. Influenced by the educational theories of Johann H. Pestalozzi, Pullicino urged teachers to educate behaviour, attitudes and basic rules of morality. Being also somewhat of a pragmatist, Pullicino knew that this was not enough. Since children attending primary schools had to earn a living later on in life mainly through manual work, teaching had to include practical and industrial aspects. Emphasis on practical work as part of the programme of learning matured along the years. One would not be mistaken to conclude that the setting up of trade schools in Malta and Gozo in the 1970's could be traced to Canon Pullicino as one of their pioneers, and his theories of education as a guiding underlying principle. His early calls for manual and industrial training were an echo of the 1836 Commission, which had recommended a shift of emphasis from classical studies as this "in real terms brought no prosperity to the Island to more useful and honourable callings" for the acquisition of skills and success (Sultana, 2017, p.89).

By the 1840s the colonial authorities introduced a more formal school and new schools were gradually opened during the 19th and 20th centuries in the various towns and villages of Malta and Gozo. Naturally elementary schooling was modelled on the British system. In due time, the Italian language was systematically replaced by English as the medium of teaching and learning, while more use of the Maltese language was encouraged. However, with the large number of children staying away from school to engage in agricultural and other employment, Maltese authorities had to reinforce the 1924 Compulsory Attendance Act with the more stringent Compulsory Education Ordinance of 1946.

All this goes to show that education in Malta had in its different stages of development a history of foreign influences laden with cultural prejudices and political interests.

The end of the 19th century saw a revival of philanthropic movements and solidarity with the poor. The Catholic Church was at the forefront through the contribution of Religious Orders. Among other supporters of a more humanistic and/or religious education for the masses, there were people with a socio-educational conscience such as Manwel Dimech (1860-1920), Dun Ġwann Mamo (1878-1935), Fra Diego Bonanno (1831-1902) and Dun (now Saint) Ġorġ Preca (1880-1962) (Zammit Mangion, 2000, p.69). Maltese band clubs also gave their input through the teaching of music and the indirect passing on of moral lessons through the weekly *teatrin* (light stage plays) in towns and villages. This popular general education was helped by emerging literary writers. Ġużè Muscat-Azzopardi, Anton Muscat Fenech, Anton Manwel Caruana, Mikiel Anġ Borg and Alfons Maria Galea – with his 150-volume series *Mogħdija taż-Żmien* (1898-1928) – who were pioneers in the strengthening education for the masses with their works (ibid. p.70).

The early years of the 19th century were dominated not only by political and constitutional developments, but also by social questions regarding the life and working conditions of Maltese workers. Discussions on social questions were primarily driven by the Church's social doctrine enshrined in the Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII. This resulted in the Labour Party being cleared of its extreme beliefs and to develop a "distinction of moderation". The Church in Malta availed itself of the moderate climate, with Bishop Mauro Caruana encouraging Rev. Michael Gonzi to contest for senator on the Labour Party ticket at the 1921 elections, with a working class background and an enthusiasm for social doctrine as was being disseminated at the time by Fr Charles Plater, an English Jesuit priest and "pioneer in the Catholic social apostolate" (Agius, 1991).

Fr Plater arrived in the island on 15 December, 1920 following news from Malta about Maltese workers' conditions from a Catholic point of view. Studying local questions in Malta, he could not but notice the gap between Catholic social doctrine and the actual situation of the locals. This was the starting point for Fr Plater to change the situation, starting with his emphasis on social education. Education was, at that moment, the key factor related to the great social problems. Meetings with Bishop Caruana, Governor Lord Plumer, and various priests and laymen concerned with social education, Fr Plater set about to organise and establish what may be considered as a Catholic Union, the *Unione Leoniana,* to spread among all classes the social teaching of the Church. The Church seemed to have taken the leadership role in the endeavour, with clergymen like Mgr M. Camilleri, Mgr Joseph Apap Bologna, Rev. Enrico Dandria and Rev. Michael Gonzi being the founding members. Alfons Maria Galea was nominated president of the Union. Study clubs within the *Unione Cattolica San Giuseppe* were also set up to support the education programmes. Governor Lord Plumer, an enthusiastic promoter of social education, did his part by encouraging Fr Plater to seek the cooperation of the University of Malta.

Expressing the pastoral and social philosophy of Fr Plater, the Mission Statement of his educational project stated that, "Priests and laymen, rich and poor, old and young, employers and employees should unite in a great movement of Social Education on the lines of Pope Leo XIII *Rerum Novarum* [inspiring] an educational (a purely educational and not political) movement in which all classes may take part; a kind of popular university or school of Social Studies".

Such an educationally rich Mission Statement was to be translated into concrete actions by way of: training lecturers and club leaders; publishing and circulating books, pamphlets, leaflets, and other educational reading material; drawing up courses and organising examinations; setting up libraries with socio-educational resources; providing scholarships for social students; and, organising information bureaux to make sure wages and life conditions of Maltese Workers were in place and possibly improved.

The objectives witnessed his belief that, "social problems are very difficult [and] you must not hope to understand them all at once".

Fr. Plater was also instrumental in encouraging the *Unione Cattolica San Giuseppe* to open its doors for study clubs already functioning within the *Unione Leoniana*. The Carmelite Fr Anastasio Cuschieri was one of their early directors. The *Circolo Gioventù Cattolica* of Valletta formed and hosted two study clubs for the study of social questions in general, and for analysing

particular social problems prevailing in Malta at the time. The first meeting was held on 14 April, 1921. Mgr Enrico Dandria wished these study clubs to be called *'Società di Studii Sociali Carlo Plater'*.

Premier of Social Studies by Rev. Henry Parkinson was suggested by Fr. Plater as the standard textbook, while Mgr Dandria preferred Baretta'a book, *I Principi di Sociologia* since Italian was better known than English by the Maltese.

Fr Plater's social impact on Maltese education and Maltese society in general was also felt in his pioneer work on gender equality. With his understanding that, "women could help Malta to build up her social order", he invited women to become members of the social studies clubs which were being set up around the island.

By 1934-1938, Geography and History of Malta books in English were introduced in schools. These were translated into Maltese by heads of primary schools of the educational stature of Ġużè Ebejer, Ġanni Cilia, Salvu Gatt and Godfrey Zarb Adami.

The year 1956 saw the establishment of Training Colleges for male and female teacher trainees. Administration and programmes of study were entrusted to two Religious Orders: De La Salle Brothers for St Michael's Training College at Ta' Giorni, which catered for male students, and the Sisters of the Sacred Heart with responsibility for female students at Mater Admirabilis Training College, at Tal-Virtù. Even if indirectly, the very continuous presence, day and night, of members of these Religious Orders influenced the ethical and moral elements of the learning content, the social activities, and the Christian character of inmates. This was supplemented by specialised topics on social aspects of education as part of the curriculum.

The Malta Constitution of 1964 ushered in a new philosophy of education with its emphasis on Maltese culture, critical thinking, and independent decisions on matters of national interest. Though not formally written in the curriculum, such new ideas and values were gradually penetrating the people's way of thinking. The Constitution was the signpost for the educational road that was to be followed.

The National Development Plan (1964-1969) and its focus on education, and Malta's membership in the Council of Europe and the United Nations, indicated the way forward for the Maltese educational system. Accompanying challenges and developments in the new world order for Malta necessitated the updating of school curricula. The central administration believed that nothing better than education could give the people of the young

independent nation-state the tools to meet the new challenges. And Social Studies, or better still Social Subjects, were considered to be one of the main possible ways of achieving these aims. Social Subjects helped to make people more aware of their cultural values, history and traditions as pillars of national identity. A major contribution of the 1964 Constitution was Article 4 on Fundamental Human Rights inspired by the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the Council of Europe. It served to raise people's awareness of their rights and obligations as citizens of a free and independent nation-state. But this had to be managed by carefully designed programmes of studies in schools, and particularly in the Social Subjects.

Between 1964 and 1970, the Minister for Education, Dr Paolo Borg Olivier, invited Prof. Lewin from UNESCO and an expert from the Department of Educational Administration, London, to advise on a system of secondary education for all which was suitable for Malta's socio-political needs. The advice of Prof. Cameron, and Dr Francis Chetcuti who was on commissioned work with UNESCO, was also sought. Consultation resulted in a comprehensive report which served as a working document for eventual national educational planning. The main target audience of the Government's aspirations and innovations in education were the state secondary schools, although private schools, except two which were Church schools, were expected to follow suit. A local plan for the reform of Secondary Schools for All was drawn up in 1970. This was the third reform after that of Compulsory Primary Education of 1946 and Technical Secondary Education of 1955-1958. Proposed changes opened the way for a system based on the values and principles of the Independence Constitution, thereby in the standards of achievement in cultural, economic, social and civic aspects. The major benefit, however, was the shift in the educational philosophy ushering innovative policies and practices in its wake. Two important developments were stronger democratic relations among teachers and students, and more appreciation of Maltese culture, with the Maltese Language being its foremost element. Steps to implement policies in classroom practices were the setting up in 1970 of Curriculum and Syllabus Panels for Primary and Secondary Schools with a drive on Civic Education, History and Geography. Reforms in 1971-1980 saw the introduction of trade schools with financial and professional support of the Council of Europe and the Commonwealth. The first trade school was that at Sta Venera, named after Umberto Calosso, which opened its doors in 1971.

At this point, one is justified to ask: "What place has an account of historical development?" One reason is that one cannot understand the new needs of a society without a historical backdrop. One, therefore, cannot understand the emergence of Social Studies as a curricular area if it is taken out of the

context of the developmental process of education in general. It is even more relevant when one considers that it is in the development of History that one can trace the early seeds of the insights of social education which along the years developed into a subject the fruit of which we continue to enjoy to this day. A few examples will illustrate this consideration.

As early as the 18th century, M.A. Vassalli had claimed that the teaching of the Maltese Language was not essential only for Malta to become a nation-state, but also as it was the means by which to improve the intellectual and moral character of the inhabitants (Sammut, 2014, pp.120-4). Basic knowledge of Maltese, according to Vassalli, was essential for the population to live in a dignified manner as human beings inasmuch as other people in the world deserved to enjoy rights as human beings. Laws, he continued, were enacted in order to free human beings from the slavery of ignorance, for strengthening society, and for citizens to establish healthy social networks in peace and tranquillity. The lack of knowledge of the basic requirements of the laws of a nation was never a positive element. Worse still was the situation when laws were written in a foreign language which people could not understand. Hence, Vassalli insisted that the laws of Malta were to be written in Maltese for all the people to understand after being educated in their native tongue (ibid. p.45 ff).

One is correct to infer from such patriotic calls, the seeds of the need for social and civic education. Introducing children to the humanities and sciences, schooling liberates from laziness, thus preparing present and future citizens as "active members of the community". Vassalli foresaw the "*crucially important social function of education"* and how education served a "*social utility"* (Ciappara, 2014, p.51). It is on this reasoning that subjects like Arithmetic, Trade, Science and Mechanical Arts should also include a social education dimension.

Canon Paolo Pullicino as early as 1850 mentioned the importance of educating children in respect of the supernatural order, education of sexual behaviour, and religious and moral conduct (Camilleri, 2017, p.119). In his first address to teachers in 1850, Pullicino stressed that the very experience of the school is to create an environment where students acquire not only knowledge of wisdom but above all a life of virtue (Zammit Mangion, 2000, p.46).

Dr Albert V. Laferla (1887-1943), Director of Elementary Schools for twenty two years (1921-1943), worked with one aim in mind, namely, the extension and improvement of education in these islands. For this to be achieved, he inculcated in teachers and students the idea of order in behaviour, hygiene, and reticence, and indicated ways of living up to these ethical standards

(Abela, 2017, p.203). The national campaign for health promotion with the engagement of more health inspectors and the setting up of the Child Welfare Services may be seen as timely initiatives by Laferla to promote a civic school culture. This was reinforced by including, in the schools' instruction programmes, education in character building, which he considered valid for the education of children as future citizens (ibid. p.207). Besides offering a sound basis for character formation, Laferla insisted on the teaching of History which made children more aware of Malta's "glorious, interesting and romantic past" and created a sense of "patriotism and national pride" (ibid. p.211).

Vassalli, Pullicino and Laferla are only three exemplars of Maltese educationists whose vision for a renewed education system included a social education dimension. What most concerns us here is that their philosophy of education contained the early seeds of what was later to become Social Studies through the developments that took place between 1962 and 1988. This period is the formation stage of a structured programme of Social Studies. For an outline history of the subject it is worth pointing out the milestones in its process of development.[6]

Social Studies: the beginnings and work in progress

Between 1962 and 1964, Civics was introduced at St Joseph Secondary Technical School as a pilot project on a one-lesson-per week basis. This was considered a novelty at the time, even though it had its specialised teachers. The subject was, in fact, catered for by teachers of Geography and History, and occasionally also by teachers of other subjects. Textbooks were in English and as expected focused on society in the UK, and mainly on the British system of government. Local syllabuses for Civics were non-existent, and teachers had to improvise with self-designed schemes of work and lesson planning. Common topics included: The Family, Towns and Villages, Road Safety, Our Neighbours, Maltese Personalities in History, Medicine, Architecture, Philanthropy, Archaeology, as well as aspects of Nature Study.[7]

Civics started to be appreciated more following a Council of Europe seminar for which Mr Guido Saliba, a veteran teacher of History, had attended. News on the subject began to be circulated in schools through Letter Circulars by central administration. This led to Mr Victor Mifsud and Mr Vince Farrugia being appointed as the first two teachers of Civics (their appointment being that of Master of Civics) at St Joseph Secondary Technical School. Primary schools had also their share of Civics, but was catered for on a school basis. A syllabus I can recall was that proposed by Mr Anton Agius-Muscat, Assistant Head of School at Birżebbuġa Primary School between 1962 and 1967. The proposed syllabus contained elementary aspects of Nature Study, Geography of the Maltese Islands, Hygiene, Road Safety Rules and Maltese History.

Due to the increasing interest in the subject and more teachers being attracted to teach it, the post of Education Officer for Social Subjects (History, Geography, Social Studies) was created following agreement between the Education Department and the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT). The first to be appointed in this post was Fr Dionysius Mintoff. An urgent and pressing task for the new Education Officer was the provision of syllabuses, textbooks and teaching resources for teachers and students. As close collaborators, Fr Mintoff had two Heads of Department, Mr Anthony Bugeja and Mr Charles Galea Scannura being responsible for Social Studies. This important and urgent curricular task led to the setting up of a specific unit for Social Subjects at Connaught House, Floriana, which also served as a centre for regular meetings with teachers, seminars, designing of teaching resources, the setting of examination papers, and interview sessions for new recruits. By 1974, Social Studies was acknowledged officially as a distinct curricular subject. This coincided with three events of educational and political importance: the Act on Education, 1974, with its innovative measures, mainly the raising of compulsory school leaving age from 14 to 16 years, the compilation of several fragmented laws into a more comprehensive legislation, and the consolidation of special education. Different opinions were expressed by the general public on the Act's proposal for the abolition of compulsory teaching of Religion for non-Catholic pupils. From the political point of view, the year 1974 marked an important amendment in the Constitution which established the Republic of Malta with a quasi-unanimous decision in Parliament. The developments which took place in 1974 could not but leave their impact on the way forward for education in general and Social Studies in particular. It may be argued that as a result of this, the first textbooks for Social Studies were introduced. For the upper forms *Malta Ir-Repubblika Tagħna* was introduced; students in Form 1 received *Bis-Saħħa ta' Xulxin* (1980); those in Form 2 were given *Nikbru Flimkien* (1984); those attending Form 3 received *Magħqudin Flimkien;* while *Naħdmu Flimkien* (1986) was written for trade school students. Fr Dionysius Mintoff was the author of all the five textbooks. When the SEC syllabus was introduced in 1987, a second edition of *Malta Ir-Repubblika Tagħna* was launched in 1991. Such curricular initiatives could not succeed without a planned remote preparation. In 1977, a week-long seminar titled 'Towards Better Citizenship' was organised. The encouraging attendance of teachers was an indication of the growing awareness and increasing interest in the subject. One important outcome of the seminar was that from then on Civics became officially acknowledged as Social Studies which eventually gained its deserved curricular status similar to other subjects. Another important outcome was the designing of syllabuses for Primary and Secondary School levels, with Fr Mintoff, being supported by Mr Charles Galea Scannura as the coordinator of the project, and a team of teachers. The success of the seminar and the need for disseminating and discussing the syllabuses gave

rise to several in-services courses. Course topics discussed included 'Social Studies for Trade Schools' (1980), 'Teaching Geography' (1982), 'The European Dimension in Primary Schools' (1995), and 'Environmental Studies' (1995). Two other courses, 'Human Rights Awareness in Schools' (1994) and 'Geographical and Historical Aspects of the Mediterranean' (1995) were coordinated with the Council of Europe which sponsored the participation of three teachers from Europe. Under the guidance of Fr Mintoff, all educational levels, that is, from kindergarten to trade schools and from primary to junior lyceum, had their syllabus in place, supported by teaching materials. For the eventuality that MATSEC would introduce Social Studies as a SEC subject, in 1987 several meetings between members of the Social Studies Unit and MATSEC officials were held to produce a specially designed syllabus which was relevant to the challenges prevailing at the time. The SEC syllabus was initially based on the draft proposals of Fr Mintoff and Mr Galea Scannura. It is noteworthy to recall that this draft attracted favourable comments by the UN Economic and Social Council. One comment described it as "an example of the concentric circle approach for Secondary Schools in Malta". The E.O. for Social Studies was usually nominated as SEC Syllabus Panel Member. Several representations with the MATSEC Unit, accompanied by draft proposals for a practical component (Coursework/Project) as part of the written examination in Social Studies have failed to give the desired results.

The proposal for including Social Studies in the SEC list of subjects was backed by the fact that Social Studies was already one of the areas of specialisation in the full-time undergraduate day courses at the University of Malta. A further opportunity to specialise in the subject was offered by the launching in 1981 of an evening part-time five-year course with the Faculty of Arts. This was a joint initiative of the University of Malta and the Open University, London. Professor David Boswell was entrusted with the responsibility of designing the curriculum into 14-hour modules and of coordinating time schedules for the wide range of lecture topics. Professor Mario Vassallo and Professor Edward Zammit seemed to have been the two leading members of the supporting lecturing team. Mid-way through the course, lack of agreement between the Labour Government and the University over the role the latter was to have in the economic development of Malta at the time led to a serious threat to the continuation of the course.

Evidence of the increasing importance of Social Studies was shown through the inclusion of selected topics in Social Studies and Sociology in the curricula of undergraduate courses in Labour Studies, Gender Studies, Public Policy, Youth Studies, Legal Studies, Disability Studies, Forensic Studies, and other areas in the Humanities. Opportunities for post-graduate courses at Master's and Doctorate level were offered by the University.

All this goes to show how much the efforts of the pioneers in the early 1960s have yielded their fruits towards a better understanding of society, and in scientific research that feeds into public policies and hopefully political decisions for Malta.

In 1988, Minister of Education Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, included Religion and Social Studies with the former three subjects, English, Maths and Maltese, for the Junior Lyceum Entrance Examination. Mr Galea Scannura was tasked with the designing of *Noti Għall-Ghalliema* on the four components of the J.L. Entrance Examination Syllabus (History, Geography, Social Studies, Nature Study). The University of Malta also consolidated its recognition of Social Studies as an academic subject to the point of including it as a core subject in a Diploma Course in Education for instructors, with Mr Charles Galea Scannura[8] being appointed part-time lecturer for this purpose.

Up to this time, however, syllabus planners and textbook writers relied solely on foreign literature on the subject, mainly publications by Denis Lawson and the National Council for Social Studies Curriculum Standards. This lacuna instigated Dr Godfrey Baldacchino (later Professor) to write a new textbook, *Introducing Social Studies* (1988), later revised in a Maltese version, *Ninvestigaw is-Socjetà* (1999), while Rev. Effie Masini published *Madwar is-Socjetà* (1987). The need for new and updated textbooks was further felt due to the challenges brought about through the developments taking place in Europe and the world order, with environmental education on the European and the international agenda gaining new attention. In 1996 a professional development seminar titled 'Tomorrow's Environment' was organised. This paved the way for the introduction of an environmental education dimension across the curriculum. Malta felt the need for a further upgrade of syllabuses owing to preparations for Malta's accession to the European Union. By this time, the Social Studies Unit, including History, Geography and Social Studies with the respective Education Officers responsible for the three areas of specialisation, was fully functioning to service primary and secondary schools in Malta and Gozo.

Consolidation and new areas of action

It was now the time when Social Studies was the fulcrum subject for cross-curricular themes. Human Rights Education (HRE), Children's Rights Education, Peace and Tolerance Education, Holocaust Education, Global and Development Education, Gender Equality, Disability Issues, Citizenship and Democracy Education, Environmental Education and the European Dimension in the Curriculum, also came within the domain of Social Studies. This was indeed an opportunity for an opening up and enrichment for the subject, but it also added to the responsibility of Education Officers for the drafting

of Letter Circulars, disseminating the idea behind school-based activities on the respective commemorative days, and coordinating activities together with subject coordinators and teachers. It was due to this awareness and the already established school-based projects that the new *National Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012) included these and similar cross-curricular areas of study as cross-curricular themes.

With the European dimension as one of the responsibilities of the respective Education Officer for History, Geography and Social Studies, the E.O. for the latter subject was nominated by the Education Department as Malta's delegate for the *Europe at School* Project. This was a school partnership project among European schools, with some of the schools coming from European Union member states. The partnership consisted of regular six-monthly meetings to discuss progress related to activities on the European slogan proposed by the respective European meeting and on the benefits gained through an inter-school art and essay-writing competition on purposely selected themes of European interest, planned and organised by each member state. A drawing/art competition was meant for primary schools and lower secondary classes while a full-length essay-writing competition was aimed for the upper forms in the secondary schools. Meetings were held in a European host country, sometime between September and March, and in Strasbourg between April and August. Prize-winners were then asked to attend a students' meeting/celebration in Strasbourg in the following summer. This competition became an expected school event, with a small prize-giving ceremony and an exhibition of students' work organised at the Education Division Head Office in Malta. Prizes were provided by the central European Coordinating Team. On the wish of several participating countries, Malta tried to be a host country for one of these meetings, but plans to address this contribution never took off. An exception was the organisation of a week-long, European Youth Meeting with the collaboration of the Youth Service Organisation (YSO) headed at the time by Mr Alfred Mallia, then Education Officer and later Director of the Human Resources Directorate. This was hosted at the Marsaxlokk Youth Hostel.

Learning experiences in the new pedagogies in Social Studies were continually updated through participation in Council of Europe conferences and seminars across different European countries. Exchange conferences were held annually in Malta as the host country, with the Education Officers of the three Social Subjects being members of the coordinating team within the Department of Professional Staff Development.

Four important areas of responsibility were in-services for teachers, the Chairmanship of the Public Service Commission (PSC) Panel for selection

interviews for newly recruited teacher applicants, the animation of staff development meeting in schools, and the continuing updating of learning resources. Following developments abroad, greater administrative challenges at home, and curricular renewal brought about the need in schools to start designing their School Development Plans (SDPs) for the scholastic year. Education Officers were not infrequently invited by Heads of School to give their input regarding their subject. Social Studies teachers were supported and mentored through E.O.'s regular school visits, and informal discussions with Heads of School on curriculum matters and school daily work were held. Democracy and Active Citizenship Education appeared in the new National Minimum Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999), with nearly all Education Officers appointed as members of Focus Groups set up specifically for the implementation of the curriculum. The E.O. for Social Studies was one of the members of the Focus Group on Democracy and Citizenship Education, chaired by Mr Joseph Giordmaina (later Dr) from the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta. When all focus groups had submitted their reports on what were the current practices and what could be the way forward, a national conference on the implementation of the new curriculum was organised in Malta between 9 and 11 June 2000. The conference was organised by The National Steering Committee on the Implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum, the Division of Education, the Ministry of Education and the Socrates Office. Academic papers and research findings were presented, followed by the communication of workshop and focus group reports. Mr Giordmaina edited the fully comprehensive book *Proceedings – National Curriculum on Its Way* (Giordmania, 2000). Implementation was carried out through meetings with members of staff, parents, the general public, trade unions and other interested NGOs, while public education campaigns on the philosophy of the curriculum and the new learning approaches were embarked upon through programmes on the media. In-service courses for teachers, staff development meetings, and learning resources were prevalent activities for a long period of time.

Social Studies was one of the first subjects to benefit from the introduction of the new information technologies in schools, Mr Frederick Fearne, Director General of Education, asked the Education Officer to coordinate with the Centre for Information Technology situated in Dingli to develop this cooperation. Meetings with staff at Dingli began on a programme of lesson planning which resulted in the designing of lesson plans with information technology as an objective. ICT-based lesson plans were then tested in Social Studies lessons in schools. One of the first Social Studies teachers introducing the use of ICT as an instructional tool in Social Studies was Mr Charles Galea. Operating with a team of ICT specialists from an Education Division centre situated at Dingli Complex, Mr Galea, assisted by the present

writer as E.O., and Ms Josephine Vassallo as Subject Coordinator of Social Studies, produced lesson plans with curriculum support material as basis for the first Power-Point Presentations for class use. Mr Charles Galea was at the time a Social Studies teacher at St Theresa Girls' Junior Lyceum, Imrieħel, with further duties at the Dingli Education Centre. Later on he became the coordinator of the ICTs programme for schools at the Education Division Head Office.

With the installation of the new post of Subject Coordinator, the E.O. was appointed by the P.S.C. on the interviewing board. From this exercise, three subject coordinators were appointed. The E.O. and the three newly appointed subject coordinators as a team were responsible for the setting of the school-based half-yearly and the national annual examinations papers for General and Option Social Studies classes.

A reorganisation of trade schools on the insistence of Minister Michael Falzon necessitated, first of all, a re-designing of syllabuses, textbooks and other learning materials. A learning pack with a differentiated learning rationale was developed. The implementation of the revised programme of studies and the workings of the new learning pack were followed by regular visits to trade schools and teacher mentoring.

The more the preparations for Malta's accession to the European Union intensified, the higher became the need for stronger student awareness on the European Union. A new subject, European Studies, was launched and intended as an Option Subject for Forms 3 to 5. Responsibility for the designing of a completely new syllabus was entrusted to the E.O.s for Social Studies, History and Geography. Guest experts from the Council of Europe were invited to Malta for advice on the draft syllabus which was commented upon favourably. To gain further experience on the most appropriate methodology, the three E.O.s spent a week familiarisation visit in the Republic of Ireland. Teachers who were selected to teach the subject after a call for application had to follow a short course on the syllabus content and pedagogy. Each of the five components, namely, Citizenship and Democracy in Europe, Historical Developments in Europe, Social and Economic Realities, Geographical and Environmental Issues, and Arts and Culture in Europe, were addressed by respective Education Officers. Two textbooks, *European Studies* (Williams & Pearce, 1998) and *A Geography of the European Union*: *A Regional and Economic Perspective* (Nagle, G. & Spencer, K. 1996) were introduced. These were supplemented by three learning packs corresponding to the sections in the syllabus for Forms 3, 4 and 5. These were prepared by the teachers of European Studies themselves. No Subject Coordinator for European Studies was appointed up to the time of writing, but teachers of

the subject took the initiative to unwrap the syllabus and support it with teaching and learning resources. These were then shared among schools that had European Studies as an option subject. Regrettably, this led to Social Studies beginning to lose popularity as an option subject. On the insistence of the Department of Professional Development and the three Education Officers responsible for the Social Subjects, European Studies was introduced as a SEC subject, with the three E.O.s nominated by the University Senate as Syllabus Panel Members chaired by an academic from the Department of European Studies at the University of Malta. The subject began to gain popularity among secondary school students, with its coordination, syllabus support and monitoring carried out mainly by the E.O. for Social Studies.

When the Faculty of Education decided to introduce Social Studies as a PGCE subject, applicants for the one-year professional training course could apply with Social Studies, Sociology or any other related area of study such as Youth Studies, Communication Studies and Public Policy. Initially the subject was put under the responsibility of Mr Michael Sant and partially coordinated by Dr George Cassar (later Professor). This wide range of study areas, however, was considered problematic in regard to the selection criteria set by the Public Service Commission. Following representations with the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the time, Dr Ronald Sultana (later Professor), the situation was normalised through the introduction of Social Studies on the list of PGCE subjects. The Department for the Arts and Languages in Education had also asked the E.O. for Social Studies (the present writer) to design a Programme of Study in Methodology for the course. Together with two subject coordinators, a fully-fledged PGCE course was designed, with Dr (later Professor) Yosanne Vella as the coordinator of this new course and for Social Studies (History, Geography, Social Studies) in the primary schools. As a result of these developments, applicants for the post of teacher of Social Studies were selected only from those who had followed the PGCE course with Social Studies as their area of specialisation, after graduating with a degree in Social Studies or Sociology. An average of sixteen applicants were reviewed each year, with only eight candidates being selected through a University-conducted interview. Logistics of school placements limited the number of students on the course. A textbook titled *Il-Ġenn tas-Soċjetà* (2011), edited by Mr Brian Chircop (presently E.O. for Social Studies), was introduced to support the SEC and the School Leaving Certificate in Social Studies.[9]

An important milestone in the history of the subject was a re-thinking on how to reach the different student abilities in all subjects. This gave rise to the concept of Level Descriptors of different achievements. With the knowledge and guidance of educationists from the UK, Level Descriptors

for Social Studies and European Studies were thus designed. An important contribution in the designing of Level Descriptors for European Studies was given by Mr Ray Spiteri, the Subject Coordinator (later E.O.) for History. The rationale and function of Level Descriptors were explained during in-service courses and staff developments meetings in both primary and secondary schools. If not completely understood or implemented, at least the concept had made educators more aware of reaching out to all levels of student achievement thus leading to more student inclusion and engagement in their own learning. They could also facilitate parents' understanding of marks or grades awarded in students' assessment tools and reports.

The year 2012 marked the time for a revision of the 2000 National Minimum Curriculum. The wider use of the new information technologies as instructional tools in all school subjects, the spread of the digital means in education and the wave of globalisation in the new world order necessitated the upgrading of the programmes of study so that these could catch up with challenges and opportunities opening up for the student population. The response to these developments was the formulation of the *National Curriculum Framework* (NCF, 2012) based on the principles of entitlement, diversity, continuum achievement, learner-centred learning, and quality assurance. Such basic principles were to be supported by the concept of a Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) and a multi-levelled syllabus. It is interesting to point out that out of the eight Learning Areas, 'Education for Democracy' has long been an integral part of the Social Studies syllabus, while among the cross curricular themes identified, two are clearly Social Studies-related, namely, 'Education for Sustainable Development' and 'Education for Diversity' with emphasis on inclusion. The New Curriculum Framework marks a paradigm shift from the National Minimum Curriculum in educational philosophy, teaching/ learning content, methodology, approaches, and methods. Among the latter, the digital age has taken on a major role with its emphasis on learner-centred constructivist approaches. Social Studies enjoyed its deserved share of these new benefits making teaching and learning the subject more attractive. This was passed on to the new Education Officer for Social Studies, Mr George Said Zammit (later Dr) who joined the Government Service after his experience as Subject Coordinator for Social Subjects with the Church Schools Education Secretariat. His major task was the revision of syllabuses for primary and secondary schools to reflect the LOF in the Humanities area. Mr Said Zammit with his team of subject coordinators and the new Assistant Director of Education for the Humanities, Ms Josephine Vassallo, had carried out wide research in curriculum development in Social Studies and Citizenship Education in other countries, especially in the UK, Canada and USA, before actually embarking on local syllabus design. Mr Said

Zammit also took on the added responsibility of part-time lecturing on the methodology of curriculum development to PGCE student teachers with Social Studies as their special subject.

Syllabuses for primary and secondary schools can now be uploaded, learning resources can be shared online, a website and Facebook page, and on-going new links to YouTube spots, research and documentary material with a Social Studies content can be easily accessed. This has generated interest not only among a good number of teachers and students, but also among members of the general public who are interested in the subject. The merit of such new insights and inroads in the subject belong mainly to the current Education Officer, Mr Brian Chircop, who, together with his team of three subject coordinators and two educational mentors, is facing the challenges of what many are considering as too rapid reforms in the Maltese Education System. The team is meeting the challenges successfully by making use of several instructional methods, not lease those offered by the new information technologies. These efforts are rendering Social Studies more interesting and relevant within the Education Vision 2014-2024.

Continuous assessment in Social Studies is given more importance as another assessment method, together with summative assessment. This has given rise to the gradual phasing out of half-yearly examinations, starting from the primary. Continuous assessment is gaining popularity worldwide and is being supported by UNESCO and OECD. Both international organisations have as special areas of attention education, training (especially vocational training) and employment, and argue that continuous assessment improves student learning as these receive continuous feedback on their work. This brings about a shift in the learning process enabling students to "engage fully and purposefully in their learning". This form of assessment may have reduced the content of the Social Studies Syllabus. Individual and class projects on selected topics, out-of-class activities such as museum visits and interviews with local councillors, simple data collection and interpretation, re-enactment of historical events and the production of short videos, are examples of how students can be engaged in continuous assessment. Continuous assessment goes hand-in-hand with a revision of both primary and secondary Social Studies syllabuses based on the eight Level Descriptors proposed by the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Descriptors defining the eight levels in the European Qualifications Framework refer to Knowledge (theoretical and/or factual), Skills (cognitive, creative, and thinking) and Competence (responsibility and autonomy). Social Studies as one of the Humanities falls within the 'Social and Civic Competences' domain. Social and Civic Competences include:

> "all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life and, particularly in increasingly diverse societies, to resolve conflicts where necessary. It is based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation" (Malta Qualifications Council. 2007).

In this European view, benchmarks for the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) were established, and syllabus designing for all subjects, including Social Studies, followed guidelines and recommendations therein. Identification of key competences in different levels of qualifications in eight levels of achievement was to be followed by an action plan which was to be in place by 2006.

On-going reforms – new vision and values

The *Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024* (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2014) is the way forward for Maltese children and young people as students and citizens. Teaching and learning approaches, methodology and teacher professional training and development should fall within this strategy. The general aim is the link between education and national development, with emphasis on matching skills. The aim is to set the education agenda for Malta in line with European and world benchmarks. The strategy identifies four measureable targets towards implementation. These are:

i. reducing the gap in educational outcomes, raising the literacy and numeracy level, enhancing competence in science and technology, and increasing student achievement;

ii. supporting educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty from low socio-economic status, and reducing the relatively high incidence of early school leavers;

iii. raising the number of students continuing their schooling and encouraging further vocational and tertiary education;

iv. increasing participation in lifelong learning.

This new vision and values of education in Malta is inspired by the 2005 Concept Document, *For All Children to Succeed* (Policy Unit - Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment. 2005), which proposed the decentralisation of state schools into ten colleges. It was the next step after the elimination of the 11+ Examination and the harmonisation of State, Church and Independent Schools. The highlights of this new vision can be summed up in the values which underlie the following initiatives:

i. liberalisation of syllabuses and greater autonomy to schools and learners to move away from centrally-controlled knowledge-based programmes;

ii. encouraging and supporting schools to work towards implementing the Learning Outcomes Framework (LOF) proposed in the *National Curriculum Framework for All* (Ministry of Education and Employment. 2012), by fulfilling the demands of the framework of knowledge, attitudes, and skill-based outcomes. This is in line with the ESFI 228 Project that sets out the *Design of Learning Outcomes Framework and Associated Learning and Assessment Programmes*.

The last years saw parallel initiatives which are having their impact on the method of teaching, assessing, and on students' constructivist learning approaches. Parallel initiatives include:

i. the National Policy and Strategy for the Attainment of Core Competences in Primary Schools;

ii. the National Literacy Strategy for All;

iii. the Framework of 10 Levels of Achievement catering for differentiated learning contexts, implemented in Forms 1 and 2 in 2014;

iv. piloting of Vocational Education and Training (VET) option subjects in secondary schools. In 2014/2015 these were developed into VET subjects at MQF level 3 designed to match the Maltese socio-economic context;

v. the End-of-School Certificate and Student Profiles at MQF Levels 1 & 2 that acknowledges different forms of learning and assessment;

vi. the development of Core Curriculum Programmes, with a certificate at MQF Level 1;

vii. the introduction of Alternative Learning Programmes (ALP) for secondary school students who may be less academically motivated and challenged but more skill-oriented and hands-on experienced students.

How do all these new initiatives affect and improve the programmes of teaching and learning in Social Studies? The revision and updating of the syllabuses, methodology and approaches of the subject suggest how this can happen through *the gradual transformation of learning and assessment for Social Studies into modules with the possibility of school-based selection and development of topics, and more formative assessment approaches.*

Notes

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1 Middle school textbooks with underpinning suggestions for social education mentioned in Mgr Frans Bonnici's publication are the following: *Racconti* by Christoph Schmidt (1768-1854) with hints on preparations for piety and solidarity; *Trenta Novelle* by Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), which suggests how dissolute and immoral life can be amended by the wisdom of people of good character; *Gerusalemme Liberata* by Torquato Tasso (1544-1599), which emphasised the need of conversion to a moral way of life through continuous struggle against evil.

2 The British Government, on 16 September 1863, had appointed John Austin (1790-1859) and George Cornewell Lewis (1806-1863) as Royal Commissioners, to "investigate into the situation". Austin's and Lewis's task had a specific aim, not without Britain's colonial interests: "the diffusion of sound knowledge amongst the people would tend to improve their condition and to strengthen their attachment to the British Crown." (cfr. Bonnici, 2019a, p.113).

3 Among other educational matters, the *Annual Report of the Royal University of Malta*, 1887-1888 refers to Pope Leo XIII Encyclical Letter, *Etsi Nos,* dated 15 February 1882, to highlight the common mentality of the dichotomy between culture and theology. It seems that this was the main reason for the resistance to the new qualifications required by the University of Malta for admission to the professional courses.

4 Following visits to each school of the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, Commissioner Patrick Keenan reported on the number of students present on the day of the visit, the number of registered students, the incidence of truancy, and the subjects studied as well as subjects not being offered by the Faculty. He commented on teachers' pedagogical ability and the general impression on the impact of the kind of instruction on students' "holistic cultural education" (Keenan Report, 1880) (cfr. Bonnici, 2019a, ftnt 108, p. 135).

5 In a beautiful calligraphy, Dun Mikiel Xerri declares the salary he received in four instalments in January, April, July, and October, 1783, from the Malta University Bursar as payment for teaching duties at the same University: *"A 20 8bre 1783// Ricevo dall'Illmo. Sgn.re Com.re Lorenzo Fontana/Economo dell'Università scudi quarantacinque/per onorario della Cattedra d'Economia e. . . ./nella s.sa Università per il mese di Agosto, 7bre, ed 8bre/corrente ----- 45.//D. Michelangelo Scerri*

6 A history of the introduction of Social Studies in Malta has already been given by Fr Dionysius Mintoff, the first officially appointed Education Officer for Social Studies, in a chapter in an MUT publication *Innovators in Maltese Education*, co-edited by Joe Magro and Joseph Sammut (n.d.). The present writer and Fr Mintoff have also fielded an interview with three Gozitan students who had presented a long essay on the history of Social Studies in Malta as part-fulfilment of their PGCE course (2010). This project was supervised by the present writer. This long essay is another in the series of B.Ed. (Hons.) and PGCE students' projects

on various aspects of Social Studies, from assessment and evaluation to the introduction of a coursework component, from teachers', parents', and students' attitudes to Social Studies to the environmental component, mixed ability teaching and learning to streaming, Democracy and Citizenship Education to cultural aspects, from traditional teacher-centred approaches to constructivist learner-centred autonomous learning, from paper-and-pencil learning to the use of ICTs as instructional tools. The MUT Publication includes also a chapter on the origin and introduction of European Studies as an option subject in Forms 3 to 5 in Maltese secondary schools and this is being expanded in the historical outline under review. Much of the historical development of Social Studies is an extension of what Fr Mintoff has already written. The original work of Fr Mintoff deserves to be considered an important milestone and a basis for further historical research.

7 Through a personal and written communication, Mr Charles Galea Scannura, former Education Officer for Social Subjects, and later Assistant Director for Adult and Media Education and Director in the Department of Examinations, gave a detailed account of the beginnings of Civics Education in Malta which in the early 1960s developed into what is at present Social Studies. Mr Galea Scannura was one of the first members in the Social Subjects team led by Fr Dionysius Mintoff, the first officially appointed Education Officer for History, Geography and Civics (that is, Social Studies). Mr Galea Scannura was often involved in designing the syllabus, setting of examination papers, developing teachers' curriculum guidance notes, and part-time lecturing in teachers' in-service courses, and diploma courses in Education at the University of Malta, and recruitment of teachers with the Education Department. His vast experience includes Council of Europe courses, seminars and conferences on Social Studies and related areas. Between 1992 and 2014, the present writer was a member of the Social Subjects Unit as the Education Officer for Social Studies, together with Dr Joe Mangani, E.O. for Geography and the late Mr George Calleja E.O. for History. Up to the time of his promotion to assistant director and later director, Mr Galea Scannura was responsible for the coordination of curriculum development projects carried out by the Social Subjects Unit.

8 Mr Charles Galea Scannura succeeded Fr D. Mintoff as Education Officer for Social Subjects, with Dr Joe Mangani (Geography), the late Mr George Calleja (History) and the present writer (Social Studies) being appointed as Education Assistants at Mr Galea Scannura's office at The Mall, Floriana, at what was then known as Education Division Annexe – later named The Curriculum Centre. This greatly helped to co-ordinate and organise the teaching of Social Studies, History and Geography. Following a reorganisation of the Education Division, Mr Galea Scannura was promoted to the post of Assistant Director, Adult Education, Media Education and Broadcasting, in the Department of Further Studies and Adult Education, while Dr Mangani, Mr Calleja and Mr Philip Said were promoted to the post of Education Officer for their respective subjects. The present writer was, consequently, the first Education Officer appointed exclusively for Social Studies within the Social Subjects Unit.

9 There is also a discussion forum, *Studji Socjali - Nifhmu l-Genn tas-Socjeta'*, which is a Social Studies Facebook page available for teachers, students, parents and all those interested in the subject. It became available in 2010 and can be found at https://www.facebook.com/groups/studjisocjali/

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How the Economy and Social Status influence children's attainment

Victoria Mallia & Christabel Micallef

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Introduction

It can be argued that one way how the number of unemployed people can be reduced is by having schools shape the students for working life. Piscopo, McKay & Bonello (2016) indicated that six years prior to their study, the Maltese Government had aimed to reduce the amount of individuals at risk-of-poverty or social exclusion by 6,560. Their study took place in 2016 when reforms to help reach the target were being implemented. These reforms included monetary aid, along with actions and changes being implemented to the childcare, schooling and employment sectors.

In reviewing the literature Piscopo, McKay & Bonnello (2016) cited the *2014 Survey on Income and Living Conditions* (National Statistics Office, 2015a & b). The latter survey found that 65,987 individuals had an income below the monetary at-risk-of-poverty threshold placed at an annual €7,672. This study concluded that people coming from single-parent families, young people and senior citizens were the ones mostly at risk-of-poverty.

This paper aims to look into whether, according to the literature, this financial deficiency, and hence social status, influences children's attainment in school and later educational development. Through a study sponsored by the World Bank it was argued that family background characteristics explain the substantial variations in education (Lockhead et al., 1988). Phillips and Crowell (1994) recognize that social class affects students' experiences by means of how the children's initial literacy and number knowledge are assimilated. This is because such skills are influenced by whether the parent(s) present their children with books and how much they encourage them to count. Phillips and Crowell also show that cultural and social backgrounds can influence how much children are provided with learning during everyday activities, such as introducing numerical concepts through a cooking activity.

According to Piaget (Wadsworth, 1996) all the learning that takes place is based upon the environment in which the child grows; thus what the child is exposed to is very important. This also includes the economical factor since the family has to buy and provide the child with resources. In her book *Teaching Vocabulary with Hypermedia, 6-12*, Susan O'Hara (2009), expresses how toddlers coming from a difficult socio-economical background are introduced to as little as half the words of language of numeracy when compared to those who come from households where parents are professionals. The financial situation and social class of the parents, along with their culture, influences the child since it affects the chance the child gets for social interaction and to learn through exploration and discovery as well as the possibility of being exposed to a more stimulating environment.

Defining social economic status

A study conducted by scholars from UCL and King's College London, (cited by Taylor, 2006), argues that social class is a key feature in the child's educational development. It indicates that the overwhelming factor in how well children do is not what type of school they attend but their social class. McLoyd (1998) agrees with this argument since, through his research it emerged that children who experience poverty find it harder to develop holistically when compared to never-poor students. One of the reasons why difficulties arise is because children coming from poor families experience higher rates of pre-birth complications (Larson, 2007). These complications are usually left untreated due to the lack of resources and sometimes lack of knowledge. Linking with this, Larson (2007) describes poverty as a key contributor to poor school performance as well as a hindered intellectual development.

Measures of socioeconomic status

Dissimilarities in socioeconomic status are an undeniable reality of life in different societies across cultures – access to jobs, wages, possessions and control. These are also related to the status of each family. According to Mueller & Parcel (1981) sociologists acknowledged the importance of social stratification as it helps in understanding social phenomena. As Hauser (1994) puts it, detailed occupation codes may be charted into typical socioeconomic measures, and occupational status is related to additional variables in the same way as repeated or long term measures of income. The measurement of socioeconomic status can be improved by establishing the occupation of one or both parents. Although maternal education as well as paternal education should be established, one should also be aware that the race-ethnicity and socioeconomic status do not capture all of the effects of family background (Hauser, 1994).

Socioeconomic status and child development

Socioeconomic status includes the quantification of family income, parental education and occupational status. Research shows that socioeconomic status is related to a wide array of health, cognitive and socioemotional outcomes in children and such effects begin before birth and continue into adulthood. There are mechanisms which are linked to socioeconomic status which involve differences in access to material and social resources. Thus for instance, children from a low income family will be exposed to less stimulating toys and activities which would help in their holistic development in the early years (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002).

In a study completed by Khatun et al. (2017) on whether children born to a teenage mother have lower adult intelligence, it was found that early life socioeconomic status, specifically educational status, salary support and breastfeeding, are significant aspects that might influence the link between

young parental age and cognitive development of the young child. The factors mentioned here have an impact on the holistic development of the child as the latter might lack both emotional and financial support from the mother, which in turn affect their learning. In fact the study shows that when children of teenage mothers are compared to children born to parents who are degree-educated, the latter are eighteen months in advance on language and thirteen months forward on the capability of solving problems. The study also found that mothers who breastfeed their babies, have a higher chance of having children with better educational attainment and higher IQ by young adulthood. Teenage mothers are often socially underprivileged with low levels of educational accomplishment and earnings. This may be because they have left school earlier and have no partner. Teenage mothers breastfeed their children for a shorter time and engage less in mother-child interaction. The home environment, social support and family interactions, rather than just the biological age of the young mother, may also influence the IQ of the child.

Intellectual differences in children born from teenage parents may be more evident as the child develops. In studies done on this aspect by Khatun, et al., (2017), small differences are seen in the early years, while in the elementary years the difference becomes more obvious. In another study done in Baltimore, and in the National Survey of Children, it emerged that about half of the African American ethnic adolescents born to teenage mothers had failed a grade (ibid.). By contrast, only 20 per cent of adolescents born to later child bearers had repeated a grade. As a result of such educational challenges in adolescence there is a risk of early sexual activity and therefore early pregnancy, thus continuing the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage in life course consequences which comprises poor health with consequent augmented mortality and inferior social, economic and environmental circumstances (ibid.).

Socioeconomic status and child conduct problems

According to a number of researchers (Farrington, 1978, 1991; Patterson, Kupersmidt and Vaden, 1990; Rutter, 1981, in Dodge, Pettit & Bates, 1994), there is a relationship between low socioeconomic status and the early-onset of behaviour difficulties in early childhood. Economic poverty and social disadvantage impact on how a child socialises with peers and also effect behavioural problems. In a study by Dodge, Pettit & Bates (1994), there was a correlation between the socioeconomic status and difficult behaviour in the children studied (Dodge, Pettit & Bates, 1994). While agreeing with this, Rolnick and Grunewald (2003) continue that children who do not receive support from their family due to stress within the family linked to low income, have a higher chance of committing crime when they grow older. Furthermore, they found eight types of behaviour shown by the parents towards their children which negatively impacted the children. These included harsh discipline; lack of maternal warmth; exposure to aggressive

adult models; maternal aggressive values; family life stressors; mother's lack of social support; peer group instability; and lack of cognitive stimulation (Dodge, Pettit & Bates, 1994, p.649).

Socioeconomic status and vocabulary development

Family socioeconomic status is an influential analyst of many aspects of child development. Hoff (2003) notes that children from a lower socioeconomic status possess less vocabulary and they build their vocabulary at slower rates when compared to children from families with a high economic status. This is due to several factors which include biologically-based differences in children's abilities caused by genes or health circumstances, global effects of differences in family functioning and home environments, and specific effects of differences in language-learning experiences (p.1368). Hoff continues that the environment where a child lives plays an important role in the development of the child. A supportive environment will be of benefit to all aspects of their development and therefore, children living in an unsupportive environment will suffer in their holistic development.

Social economic status and attainment

Barry Sugarman (1970) associated some traits of middle and working-class subcultures more directly with distinction in learning attainment. This sociologist furthermore argued that the alterations in outlook and approaches amongst both classes was a product of the characteristics of non-manual and labour work. Sugarman saw that dissimilar approaches and orientations were a conventional part of working-class subculture. Students with working-class roots would hence be socialized in terms of them. He thus identified this behaviour as what possibly accounted for their low level of educational attainment.

Values, class and educational attainment

According to Herbert Hyman (1967) the value system of the lower classes creates a self-imposed barrier to an improved position. Through data collected from opinion polls and surveys, Hyman concludes that working class students give less importance to learning. Not as much importance is placed on formal education and they do not view education as a way to achieve individual accomplishment. These are the reasons why particular pupils do not portray education beyond the minimum leaving age as essential. Ali, McWhirter and Chronister (2005) agree with this statement as from their study it emerged that students coming from a working class background did not usually aspire as much for career-related attainment as they did for vocational objectives. In an article published in *Times of Malta,* Wain blames society for those students from the working-class who place lower value on education. According to him this is because in Malta parental influence is a crucial aspect towards fruitful schooling in whichever system. Statistics demonstrated that the state

system did not support many pupils coming from the working class since the majority of these pupils were being castigated by its selection policies. Wain also comments on how children in Malta were labelled according to their social class mostly in state schools of localities that were frowned upon. The places sometimes included children who were penalised for lacking parental support (Wain, 2008).

The second reason why students from the working class do not show educational attainment, according to Hyman (1967), is that people coming from this class do not give importance to joining a profession which gives the individual a higher occupational status. This is because when looking for a job, members from the working class look for stability, security and immediate economic benefits and are more likely to refuse taking the risks tied to involving themselves in the investments required when targeting high-status roles. Greenbank and Hepworth (2008) agreed with this statement since in their study they pointed out that pupils coming from the working class did not usually have a vision of a future with a professional job and had a resigned and unenthusiastic attitude towards life. Employment prospects are therefore usually narrowed down to a good trade (Hyman, 1967).

In 2010, it was established that poverty was always present due to the lack of promotion towards high levels of employment. This is why the European Union decided to work with the member countries towards the adoption of diverse methods which could decrease poverty and social exclusion by 2020 (European Commission, 2014). Malta, being one of the EU states, started working in 2010 on methods and changes which when implemented would help towards reducing the cycle from repeating itself. Such reforms included the introduction of free childcare education for all. Agencies such as Caritas are working on empowering vulnerable people to depend less on social welfare and encouraging those who might have been deprived from entering and remaining in the labour market, or to take up education and training (Piscopo, McKay & Bonello, 2016). Even though such measures are taking place, a 2017 European Commission staff working document (Country report – Malta) found that:

> Malta is still away from its 2020 poverty reduction target. The risk of poverty and social exclusion increased from 2008 to 2013, most notably for children and the low skilled…New measures have been introduced in recent years to correct these trends (European Commission, 2017, p.2).

The last element discussed by Hyman was that when compared to middle class colleagues, people coming from the working class consider that they had fewer prospects for individual development (probably referring to education and high status jobs). Hyman claims that even though this belief is constructed on realistic valuation, the assumption itself diminishes this prospect remarkably (Hyman, 1967).

The research conducted by the Government Accountability Office (U.S.) (Nilsen, 2007) has proven that people coming from the working class, and are living in poverty, are confronted with a larger threat of hostile outcomes. As illustrated by the study conducted by Caritas, *A Minimum Essential Budget for a Decent Living* (Piscopo, McKay & Bonello, 2016), poverty is often linked to an inferior health status as well as being in a financial crisis, which may result in living an unhealthy lifestyle. This would hence mean that the mentioned members of this social group would more likely be abusers of tobacco and alcohol, with an inactive lifestyle. This study indicated that poor people are usually more involved in illegal activities which may lead to lower opportunities in the labour market hence leading to more economic anxiety.

Social class in relation to educational attainment

After highlighting the values and class in relation to education attainment, the paper will now delve more into the link between social class and educational attainment. The first report conducted by the Government in relation to issues which influence the academic accomplishments of British ethnic minorities was the Swann Report (1985), titled *Education for All*. The title of this report was aimed at evading concentration on any race or culture, while highlighting the importance of schooling for every pupil, regardless of ethnicity (Rollock, 2009)

The data collected by the Swann Committee showed that West Indian children who were not doing so well at school were hindered significantly by 'socio-economic factors' (Swann, 1985, cited by Haralambos and Holborn, 2004). Though this was not the only obstacle to these children's progress.

Gillborn and Mirza (2000) in their research, used data from the Youth Cohort Study to survey the connection among class, race and schooling achievement from 1988 to 1997. Figure 1 shows that students coming from non-manual ethnic groups are more likely to be prosperous than pupils from the same ethnicity group but coming from manual backgrounds. This leads to the conclusion that social class factors do not override the influence of ethnicity inequality: when comparing pupils with similar class backgrounds there are still marked inequalities of attainment between different ethnic groups (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000, as cited by Browne, 2006 p.288).

The effect of academic features on pupil accomplishment, when compared to the results of learner's household background, seems to be larger in Third World countries than in developed countries (Lockheed et al., 1988). Heyneman and Loxley (1983) present the case that 27% of the inconsistency in scholastic success amongst students in India was traceable to school factors, and as little as 3% was attributable to background characteristics. On the other hand, accomplishment ranks of pupils coming from developed countries were determined mainly by family background. Though this may be contradicting research that has been referred to above, yet one may

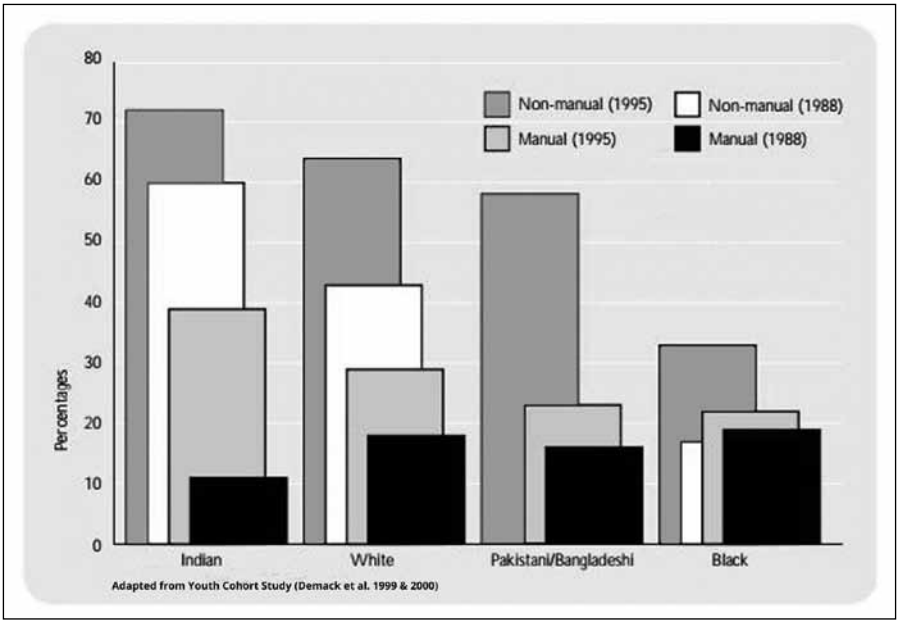

Fig. 1 GCSE attainment in England & Wales, 1988 and 1995:
Girls by social class and origin – five or more higher grade (A* - C) passes

also argue that the school chosen may be a relevant factor in the family's background, hence making this an indirect factor.

Smith and Choung (1986, as cited by Lockheed et al., 1988) conducted a study on pupils from the Philippines, through which they concluded that the social status and educational level of the parents moulded students' school attainment since the early twentieth century. Similarly Chernichovsky and Meesook (1985) concluded that parents' and even grandparents' social class was a significant factor in the children's educational attainment in Indonesia. Haralambos and Holborn (2004) hold that social class is associated to scholastic accomplishment, with pupils coming from the working class attaining less educational qualifications and are school dropouts at a younger age than students coming from a higher social class (p.779).

Resources provided

Social class can be one factor which determines whether the child acquires educational skills from home. Parents with high education are in a better position to expose their children to certain activities related to their holistic development that will help them when they start school. Parents with high education or parents coming from high upper class families will have a different frame of mind, may be more open to expose their children to skills and also be in a better position to buy them games and books. This will consequently

help their children to obtain different outcomes from those obtained by students of parents with a lower education (Phillips and Crowell, 1994). As Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, (1992), as well as Phillips & Crowell (1994), argue, parents play an important role in shaping children's learning opportunities and experiences from home as they are the first persons that the child has contact with and therefore the way they are brought up will influence the way they learn, and consequently their performance at school. Through the way children manipulate toys and ICT resources it becomes clear whether they are exposed to such resources at home. On the other hand, a child that was not allowed to play with certain toys or to use a laptop at home will be more timid and will find it difficult to play and explore the mentioned resources. This shows that children's social, cultural and economic background will leave an impact on how they will learn different subjects and this in relation to the exposure they have had at home (Murnane et al. 1981; Marmot and Wilkinson, 2006).

A child-centred approach would encourage students to be more active learners thus increasing their engagement and motivation. This would help to make children independent and creative (Bruner, 1961).

Social class and resources

In the UK, education researchers, policy makers and practitioners discussed the question of what and how much schools contributed to mitigate the effects of parental background on educational outcomes over the last half century. In order to break the connection between socioeconomic disadvantaged family background and low educational outcomes, a variety of programmes, approaches and interventions have been executed. However educational inequalities have persisted (Shain, 2015). Linked to this, prejudice from educators and a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the child are factors which impact the level of educational achievement (McLoyd, 1998).

In another study done by Stocké (2007), social class has been found to use considerable, but differently strong effects on children's educational attainment. It has been established that the influence of social background differs across associates as well. For Australia, Germany, Italy, and Sweden, educational outcomes of younger birth cohorts are found to be less dependent on the parents' class position (Shavit and Westerbeek, 1998; Jonsson and Erikson, 2000; Marks and McMillan, 2003, in Stocké, 2007). According to Boudon (1974, in Stocké 2007), social source affects children's educational attainment in two ways. These concern the unequal availability of family resources, which are useful for learning, and the changes in academic competencies, which strongly affect educational attainment (see also Esping-Anderson, 2004 in Stocké, 2007). Lastly, social class has a direct impact on educational choices, even if children have the same capabilities (Alexander & Entwisle, 2001 in Stocké, 2007).

Resources provided by the schools

The children's holistic development, as previously mentioned, depends on the resources which the children are presented with. After discussing the resources provided by the family, this part of the paper will look into the resources offered by the school, as these are another important factor. From an interview carried out with teachers and learning support assistants in relation to resources provided by the school, it emerged that while the school equipped the classroom with interactive whiteboards and all-in-one computers, other resources such as books, stationery and photocopies were less available (Caruana, 2017).

Confirming this outcome, Carabott (2015) had indicated that teachers and educators spent an average of €200 on printouts, flashcards and other resources which were needed in class but were not provided by the school itself. Indeed, some teachers spent over €1,000 on the mentioned resources. Apart from spending money on resources, certain teachers also bought lunches for students, sponsored educational outings, paid for an internet connection in the classroom and also bought books for the class library.

A study done by the Malta Union of Teachers has shown that primary school teachers carried most of the burden as these spent an average of €270 (Carabott, 2015) on such resources. Speaking during a press conference in 2015, Gilbert Zahra, MUT Youth Section Chairperson at the time, argued that this study revealed considerable deficiencies in the Maltese educational system. Educators should not be expected to pool out personal money to make up for these shortages. Employees need to be given adequate resources to work with and to further their professional development. Society owes this, more than to the educators themselves, to future generations. Everyone deserved a quality education (Zahra as cited by Carabott, 2015).

In another study, Dimech (2012) revealed that Maltese Church schools recognized the significance of allocating a budget in order to purchase efficient and effective resources. A contrast, in relation to the budget disclosure, also emerged between Church schools managed by qualified persons and other whose administration was run by religious persons or were under an established foundation (Dimech, 2012).

Resources provided by the government

Schultz (1971) argues that sociodemocratic perspectives offer an advantage to legislative democracies. Through the establishing of more meritocratic societies where opportunities are offered to all students to develop their full potential, these will later be able to give back their knowhow to the community. He referred to this as 'the forms of capital'.

Chubb and Moe (1997) have argued that, in order to win the elections, politicians need to work to gain the approval of the majority. In order for this to be accomplished they try to link their efforts to the wishes of the community, such as investing in the educational systems, as this will not cost them as much as if they had to start a new academic foundation, while at the same time society would see that its money is being invested in schooling.

Nowadays, technology is an asset in teaching as it helps to make children's learning more enjoyable and interesting. In fact the Maltese Government has in recent years invested millions of euros in the education sector in order to ensure that classes are equipped with centralized state-of-the-art systems that can help educators to do interactive lessons; these include interactive whiteboards and 3D printers (Caruana, 2017).

Across the world, as Friedman (1955) notes, education is largely paid for and is administered by governmental organizations or non-profit institutions. Thus government gives parents vouchers which are redeemable for a specified maximum sum per child per year if spent on 'approved' educational services. Parents are free to spend the given sum on educational services from an approved institution of their choice. The role of the government in this is that of ensuring that the school meets basic standards such as the inclusion of a minimum common content in their programmes. In Great Britain, the local authorities pay the dues of some of the children that go to public schools, which are non-state schools. Similar to Great Britain, the state of France pays part of the charges for students who attend non-state schools or public schools (Friedman, 1995).

Conclusion

It is evident that social class does effect the educational attainment of children. From the studies discussed it emerges that students coming from low social classes have a higher chance of obtaining less qualifications than children coming from a higher social status. As McClelland (1973) has concluded, social class might be a third variable accounting for affirmative associations between test marks and work-related success, and between the level of education attained and occupational success.

As Rolnick and Grunewald (2003) put it, the quality of life for a child and the contributions the child makes to society as an adult can be traced back to the first few years of life. From birth till the age of five children go through remarkable changes. If in these early years the child has support from their family, than success in school is more likely and this leads to contributing their abilities to society later on in life. In contrast, Rolnick and Grunewald continue, a child who is not supported in their early years is more prone to drop out from school, receive welfare and commit crime.

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Understanding the past with visual images: Developing a framework for analysing moving-image sources in the history classroom

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Introduction

In the history classroom, the visual evidence yielded by scrutinising visual images contributes to students' understanding of the past. Hartley (1992) has argued that "no picture is pure image; all of them, still and moving, graphic and photographic are 'talking pictures', either literally or in association with contextual speech, writing or discourse" (p.28). Despite the fact that developing students' awareness of the constructed and evolving character of historical knowledge constitutes a key educational goal in history education (van Niewenhuyse, et al., 2015), concerns have been raised about students' propensity to treat historical sources as uncontested information (Ashby, 2017). At a time when digital technologies are transforming the ways people interact with each other on a daily basis (Robinson & Aronica, 2015) and, in the classroom context, students are keen to deploy their savviness of evaluating visuals (Card, 2011), it is profitable to gain knowledge of how visual images can return the best educational value for supporting students' historical understanding.

The development of students' historical understanding is at the heart of history education. In this paper, it will be argued that visual images in the form of broadcast media content of historical events, seen as contemporary history sources, are important for developing students' knowledge of twentieth and twenty-first century history and for understanding how that knowledge came about. The present author contends that Peter Lee's (2005) characterisation of historical understanding offers an appropriate framework for analysing moving-image sources. Having broad pedagogical implications, this article draws on data from the author's research involving a Year 11 history option classroom (Cutajar, 2017) to illustrate possibilities and limitations of applying such framework to the local context. In a constructivist setting, questioning and whole-class dialogues are seen to constitute key features for supporting students' historical understanding.

Historical understanding

Understanding constitutes an important aspect of the learning process. Historical understanding comprises the simultaneous development of substantive knowledge (what history is about) and procedural knowledge (how that knowledge came about). Substantive knowledge consists of concepts, particulars, people and context. Knowledge of what happened in the past is balanced with disciplinary concepts such as evidence, change and continuity, interpretation and chronology, whose aim is to problematise content knowledge (Counsell, 2011). It is generally accepted that the more sophisticated pupils' understanding of procedural concepts vis-à-vis historical content is, the greater is the depth of their historical understanding (Haydn et al., 2015). As Lee (1994) argues, it is absurd to say that "…school children know any history if they have no understanding of how historical knowledge is attained, its relationship to evidence, and the way in which

historians arbitrate between competing or contradictory claims" (p.45). Furthermore, concerns about students leaving secondary school without a big-picture understanding of the past (Haydn, 2011; Howson, 2007) have underscored the need to place both forms of historical knowledge in a wider historical framework (Haydn, 2017; Lee, 2005).

Various aspects of historical understanding have been explored by means of multiple visual images (such as, Barton, 1997; Epstein, 1994; Foster et al., 1999; Lynn, 1993). This research has yielded rich insights about how understanding can be developed and supported. These will now be reviewed.

Visual images in the history classroom

Visual imagery is collectively referred to in literature in different ways: visual images, visual sources, visual media or pictorial historical sources. These include cartoons, drawings, paintings, photographs, films and television programmes, as well as maps, field patterns, and plans. With an educational value extending beyond the immediate illustrative role, Haworth (1976) argues that for students the picture is more easily comprehensible than several pages of difficult wordage. Elements of motivation and engagement have also been factored in, with Card (2011) stating that "pictures are powerful conveyors of messages, designed to attract and maintain attention" while providing "access to complex ideas, sometimes supported by an immediate emotional punch" (p.15). Vella (2002) makes the point that pictures can be used as sources in their own right. A number of research studies have dealt with pictures in this way. This section will consider historical photographs, films and moving images with a view to gaining knowledge of different aspects of historical understanding.

Historical photographs

Studies about historical photographs have shed light about important age-related developments. While young students may demonstrate progressive patterns of thought (Harnett, 1993) they struggle with making logical inferences (Foster, et al., 1999). There is agreement that specific dates mean little for children prior to the third grade, and it is when students are in their fifth grade that they can connect particular dates with specific background knowledge (Barton & Levstik, 1996; Foster et al., 1999). Thus, the older students become, the more they are capable of showing sophisticated examples of historical thinking (Foster et al., 1999). Students' ability to date historical photographs and make inferences from visual primary evidence also progresses with maturity (Barton & Levstik, 1996; Foster et al. 1999; Harnett, 1993). When analysing photographs, young students are capable of showing different levels of understanding. Lynn (1993) demonstrates how nine-year-olds displayed an understanding of abstract concepts (such as power and evidence) but six- and seven-year-olds held misconceptions about the past, even though they showed an increasingly sophisticated historical understanding. This notwithstanding, from evidence put forward

by Wineburg (1991) it emerges that sixteen-year-old students do not verify pictures with written documents; "for them, the picture evaluation task rarely entailed shifting through the written documents, puzzling about the intentions or goals of the artist, or reflecting back on what they had read" (p.83), as did historians in the same study.

A recurring feature of research into historical photographs is that students are not able to associate photographs with their historical context (Foster et al., 1999; Harnett, 1993). While young children can offer detailed description of photographic content, they are unable to consider its context (Foster et al., 1999). This supports research showing that young students are unable to interpret photographs in their wider historical context (Harnett, 1993). Subsequently, Harnett (1993) argues that children are more able to view pictures in their broad historical context after the age of eleven.

Further research stresses the role of visual primary sources as a means of encouraging pupil talk (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Harnett, 1993; 1998; Vella, 2004; 2011). A key element in children's use of pictorial sources is that talk produces learning (Harnett, 1993; 1998; Vella, 2004; 2005). In the primary school context, Vella (2004) notices that the actual talk produces the learning that further scaffolds understanding. Harnett (1993) highlights that in having children discussing in a group, opportunities are provided for recognising that pictorial evidence can be interpreted in different ways. Crucially, through talk, students develop an awareness of the nature of historical enquiry. For example, the use of phrases such as 'probably', 'might have', or 'could have' by seven- and eight-year-old students when analysing a picture of a Roman kitchen, shows a recognition on their part of how knowledge is constructed (Harnett, 1993). Barton and Levstik (2004) also confirm that pupils speak comfortably and willingly about pictures which they are presented with as a stimulus for their thinking. In line with this, peer interaction alongside adult support, encourages children's attention and produces better and more frequent responses (Vella, 2004). Clearly, teacher interventions are crucial in promoting talk in the history classroom: they encourage children to focus on particular features in a picture or suggest alternative ways of looking at pictures; they can intervene with additional information and sources. Further, children's talk enables teachers to assess children's knowledge and use it as a platform for extending learning (Harnett, 1998).

At secondary level, research has also focused on the link between visual images and classroom dialogue (Card, 2004; 2011; 2012; Curtis & Bardwell, 1994). Essentially, this dialogue is initiated and maintained by means of the teacher's questions. Card (2004; 2011; 2012) emphasises the importance of a 'chain of reasoning' simple-worded questions which help students follow a sequence of inferences, focusing on a particular historical enquiry. Also, questioning allows the teacher to be responsive to pupils. The resulting talk is referred to as exploratory talk because it facilitates learning: it enables students to come to grips with new knowledge and shape their ideas and modify them (Curtis & Bardwell, 1994).

Films

The term 'film' is commonly used in literature in its broadest sense to encompass fiction film, documentary film, television documentaries and newsreels (Smith, 1976). In the history classroom the use of historical feature film (*Gallipoli* [1981], etc.) has been widely advocated. 'Historically themed media' (Woelders, 2007) convey historical experiences and influence one's historical knowledge (Weinstein, 2001; Woelders, 2007). It is suggested that "teacher practices with film may influence how students make use of and conceive of the past" (Marcus & Stoddard, 2007, p.305). This is in line with Wineburg's (2001) proposition to use films in order to shape historical consciousness. Lang (2002) has argued that films determine popular conceptions of even the distant past. For Donnelly (2016), feature films offer an opportunity to explore the problematic and contested nature of historical knowledge.

Films have been used in history classrooms to develop disciplinary ways of thinking, like empathy (Marcus, 2005; Marcus et al., 2006; Marcus & Stoddard, 2007; Metzger & Suh, 2008), historical interpretation (Banham & Hall, 2003; Lang, 2002; Morgan, 2010; Seixas, 1994), and bias (Mitchell Cates, 1990). A common thread is the accent on viewing films with a critical eye in order to develop a sense of 'critical visual literacy' (Weinstein, 2001). This stands in stark contrast to widespread practices of non-optimal uses of film (e.g., showing a film as a reward or not pausing for discussion) (Hobbs, 2006). Findings by Metzger and Suh (2008) and Marcus (2005) that teachers do not engage students in critical analyses when using films, lend support to this view. Instances of classroom practices involving documentaries that shun dealing with the issues of trustworthiness and accuracy (Marcus & Stoddard, 2009) have given rise to the term 'the History Channel Effect' (Stoddard, 2009), so called because documentaries are seen as objective and neutral sources of historical information. This can be countered through scaffolding; by purposefully comparing films with other sources students come to understand that the content, values and images in films are interpretative, not authoritative, accounts (Woelders, 2007). Donnelly (2013) reported that teachers relied on their 'trial and error' methods, experience and knowledge of students' learning styles when using film in the history classroom. It must be noted that most of these studies are limited to feature or entertainment films, like *Joan of Arc* (Woelders, 2007), and *The Patriot* (Metzger & Suh, 2008), and are considered in the sense of a Hollywood film as a blend of historical record, fiction, and the filmmaker's perspective (Marcus, 2005), whereas newsreels and documentaries have been relatively under-researched.

Moving-image sources

For the purpose of this study, which involved a Year 11 Maltese secondary history option class, moving-image sources comprised broadcast media content in the form of footage shown on newsreels, news reportage and documentaries about twentieth- and twenty-first century historical events.

Newsreels – According to McKernan (2008), "a newsreel was a single film reel of topical news items, shown in cinemas across the world for much of the twentieth century" (p.3316). In their unprecedented reach to public audiences, newsreels (like British Pathé) constituted an extremely influential medium. Despite maintaining a cautious support for the contemporary political status quo, they exposed the public to the issues and personalities of the time, and introduced them to matters beyond their country (McKernan, 2008).

News broadcasts – Television news added the visual to the aural, altering the public's mode of cognitive attention (Dahlgren, 2008). News broadcasts are subjective because of journalistic selection (*what* to inform the public about) and presentation (*how* it should be done) (McKernan, 2008).

Documentaries – A documentary is an information medium featuring on mainstream television channels (Cassedy et al., 2011). Although a television documentary is a source of archival material of personalities and places (Pontecorvo, 1976), a documentary is always subject to the producer's point of view and therefore is not objective or a neutral source of information (Stoddard, 2009).

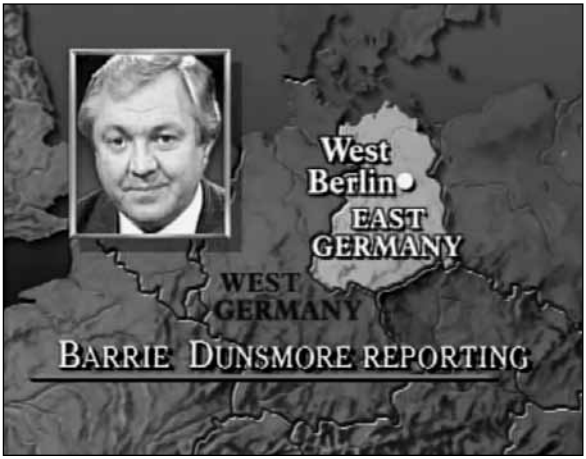
As hereby defined, moving images differ from feature films in that they are not 'cinematic portrayals of the past' (Woelders, 2007). Given that the term 'film' (Stoddard, 2012) may conjure up an idea of fictitious drama screened for particular audiences, the present author tends to prefer terms like 'moving-image extracts' (Haydn, 2011), 'moving image sources' (Walsh, 2005) or 'moving-image documents' (O'Connor, 1988). Morgan (2010) distinguishes between film as entertainment, archival film moving image and historical documentaries. In this sense, 'moving-image sources' and 'moving-image extracts' constitute here a more appropriate label. However, like feature films, moving-image sources are contemporary history sources (Donnelly, 2016) and, like any source, need to be interrogated.

Understanding the use of moving images as sources of evidence – on their own and in conjunction with other types of sources – is important for various reasons. Moving image of historical events constitutes an important record particularly when dealing with twentieth century history which, unless viewed and analysed, remains but dormant archival material. Given that the Maltese History Option syllabus (Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes [DLAP], 2012) for Year 11 comprises twentieth and twenty-first century history, sources in the form of moving images could lend themselves to help students develop historical understanding. Exploring the use of moving images in terms of motivation, engagement and understanding, helped the present writer to develop a sense of how these areas interact to contribute towards historical understanding.

A discussion of the findings related to each area follows.

Screenshot from a British Pathé newsreel showing supplies being unloaded from a convoy ship in Malta, c. 1942.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cS0xLGTtRR4



Screenshot from America's ABC News reporting on the opening of borders in Berlin, 1989.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnCPdLlUgvo

Screenshot from a documentary showing Lech Walesa, leader of Solidarność, announcing to Gdansk workers the right to strike.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=peT3-xSzj08

Regarding motivation, moving images supported students' interest, competence and relatedness. However, students failed to take autonomous actions through following up on topics discussed in class by looking for more moving images. In terms of engagement, analysis of whole-class dialogues showed students asking questions, making spontaneous observations and inserting comments, establishing associations and being responsive to peer contributions. Underlying this expressive engagement were the visual and auditory appeal and classroom talk (Cutajar, 2018). With regard to historical understanding, evidence showed that moving-image sources may be used in the history classroom as a tool to develop disciplinary thinking in relation to substantive knowledge. Concerning the substantive-procedural connection, which lies at the basis of historical understanding, evidence suggested that substantive knowledge features highly when analysing moving images and that both forms of knowledge came together mostly in writing tasks. In finding that students were mostly describing and explaining, that is, they were commenting about elements found in the moving images and bringing personal knowledge to the discussions, it was contended that observation and building on prior knowledge are key requisites for developing a platform of understanding (Cutajar, 2019a). The present writer has also argued for using moving images as a practical way of organising classroom talk in history lessons and, in this context, that assessing students through writing, although a steadfast tradition in mainstream education, should be balanced with other forms of assessment, particularly classroom talk (Cutajar, 2019b).

Developing historical understanding in a constructivist classroom

As Haydn et al. (2015) argue, "giving thought to moving pupils forward in history, to higher levels of understanding, increased knowledge of the past, and more expert levels of accomplishment in skills of analysis, synthesis, selection and evaluation," (p. 67) is key to a history education. In a constructivist classroom, as was that in the present author's study, teachers build on students' prior knowledge (Levstik & Barton, 2001) and co-construct knowledge (van Drie & van Boxtel, 2011). In this context, the role of questioning as a form of scaffolding learning is greatly highlighted (Husbands, 1996; Vansledright, 2014; van Boxtel & van Drie, 2013). The emphasis is on questions which aim at driving the discussion and at shaping and reshaping students' thinking (Deaney, et al., 2009). VanSledright (2014) outlines the interplay between questions, thinking and understanding thus: "Without questions there isn't much need for serious thinking. Without thinking there is little understanding. Therefore, developing deeper historical understanding begins with rich questions" (p. 32).

Deep and transferable understandings depend upon framing enquiries around questions aimed at eliciting interest and alternative views and sparking meaningful connections with what students bring to the classroom (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Since "primary sources do not 'speak' for themselves, it is the teacher who must guide the pupils to gain information from the source

by asking the correct questions" (Vella, 2009, p.14). Indeed, sources become evidence only in relation to historical questions (Dickinson et al., 1978).

In the domain of history, questions can have both first- and second-order dimensions (Deaney et al., 2009). A question with a first-order dimension aims at evaluating students' substantive knowledge. This is generally a closed question requiring a short, factual answer. A question having a second-order dimension challenges students with an open-ended answer about particular historical concepts in order to develop procedural understanding. Logtenberg et al. (2011) distinguish between higher-order questions, which bring about long answers and deep reasoning, and lower-order questions, which call for short answers in order to verify or quantify. Moreover, there are different types of historical questions: descriptive; causal; comparative; and evaluative questions (van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008). An evaluative question such as, 'Were the changes in the behaviour of Dutch youth revolutionary?' as opposed to the explanatory question, 'How can the changes in the behaviour of Dutch youth in the 1960s be explained?' triggers more historical reasoning both in talking and in writing (van Drie & van Boxtel, 2010). Therefore, by means of questions, students can build a historical context, describe processes of change and continuity, explain and compare historical phenomena, and evaluate events and actions (Logtenberg, et al., 2011).

Different propositions have been forwarded as to how questions can deepen historical understanding. Husbands (1996) proposes a framework for questions which helps to develop four types of evidential thinking: accretion thinking is developed through questions which elicit information; judgemental thinking is brought about by questions which elicit reflection; and divergent and convergent thinking are the result of questions which elicit understanding. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) propose that 'essential questions' are doorways to understanding: they cause genuine and relevant enquiry into the big ideas; provoke deep thought, lively discussion, sustained enquiry, and new understanding as well as more questions; require students to consider alternatives, weigh evidence, support their ideas, and justify their answers; stimulate vital, ongoing rethinking of big ideas, assumptions, prior lessons; spark meaningful connections with prior learning and personal experiences; naturally recur, creating opportunities for transfer to other situations and subjects. In sum, the role of questions in eliciting interest, extending students' thinking and developing their historical understanding is of central importance to the teaching and learning process. Having a framework composed of different kinds of questions for analysing moving-image sources offers a structured way to maximise on their potential to learn history.

'Reading' moving-image sources

Lee (2005) proposes a framework of historical understanding that comprises both substantive and procedural knowledge set within a wider historical framework. In terms of substantive understandings, Lee places the need for

students to recognise nuances and complication within a particular topic and that however much one knows it is necessary to know more. Lee also argues for making connections not only between topics but also between past peoples' world view and their actions and policies. Further to the substantive strand, Lee argues for an understanding of history as a discipline, as seen in students' increasing understanding of second-order concepts such as cause and effect, and change and continuity. Significantly, Lee adds that for historical understandings to develop, not only must there be an in-depth study of a topic but it also must be set in a wider historical framework. In this way, students get to see large-scale patterns of change through in-depth studies and think increasingly in terms of long-run themes separately and in relation to each other.

This framework is useful in its thoroughness and in providing a sensible approach to developing a holistic understanding of historical events. Placing an emphasis on substantive knowledge is important because, until recently, this area was receiving less attention than was merited (Hammond, 2016). Given the widespread recognition for the importance of procedural concepts, it was reasonable for such a framework to include historical disciplinary understanding. Placing such understandings within the 'big picture' framework would contribute to addressing the concern that students end their secondary education without a coherent big picture of the past (Haydn, 2011; Howson, 2007; Lee & Howson, 2009). The present author also finds this framework applicable to the Maltese Year 11 history option syllabus where moving images can be used. In view of this, the discussion will now focus on what the findings from the author's study suggest about using this framework of historical understanding in the context of moving-image sources.

Regarding the substantive past, findings suggested that moving images help shape the way students perceive concepts. When using moving images students could recognise the concrete-abstract dimension of a concept (Berti & Vanni, 2000). That moving images provided students with concrete visual impressions with which they could make sense of substantive concepts was possible because of the visual, narration or commentary, interviews or speeches. Further, in discussing moving images, students gained an understanding of human experience. It was noticed that by analysing moving images, students would necessarily discuss human behaviour. Interview comments highlighted the social aspect present in moving images. This accords with Lee's (2005) view that,

> We must try to understand the situations in which people found themselves and the beliefs and values they brought to bear on their problems. If students fail to see that there is anything to understand or do not care whether they understand or not, history will appear a senseless parade of past incompetence and a catalogue of alien and unintelligible pictures (p.71).

Students were also found to create a context surrounding historical events which comprised location and time. Developing a spatial-temporal context is congruent with the act of contextualising knowledge (van Boxtel & van Drie, 2013; Wineburg, 1998). Amidst this knowledge, nuances and complications related to twentieth century events could also be perceived by some students. Simon (pseudonyms are used to maintain student anonymity) went beyond the view that what the Soviets were doing in East Europe was always negative, and the idea he kept holding on to was that the Americans were just as responsible as the Soviets for the situation in post-war Berlin, as some of his comments illustrate. When during the lesson 'The Iron Curtain' the present author paraphrased what Marshal Georgi Zhukov had said as cited by Konstantin Koval, of the Soviet military administration in Berlin, namely, that "We have the moral and legal right to take out as much as possible in reparations", Simon observed, "That's what the Americans did too". When discussing why the Allies were giving so much importance to the Berlin blockade, in response to Jean's suggestion of saving people, Simon countered, "But didn't the Allies kill as well? / I don't think they cared much for [people's] lives".

Moreover, students themselves recognised complicated scenarios. In the lesson 'Motives for the EU', Noel asked whether the EU would have accepted Russia in case it wanted to join, and why European countries kept producing arms when one of the ideas of the EU was to avoid war. Clearly, these thoughts were not coming from all students, nor did they represent a response pattern. This shows that not everyone is capable of accessing this kind of reasoning. Where this would be the case, it rests on the teacher to raise such issues. Particularly in the case of Simon, such nuances and complications may stand in stark contrast to students' *idée fixe*; his view of the Americans vis-à-vis the Soviets may have formed along the years through various sources of historical knowledge, and might be difficult to alter if wrong. Nevertheless, this and other similar situations may be taken as a positive factor in the learning process because students' previous understandings would be challenged by way of new knowledge encountered in the classroom, and would therefore be used to build upon new knowledge and understandings (Levstik & Barton, 2001).

In terms of the disciplinary aspect of history, findings revealed that at the basis of the analysis of moving-image sources there was evidential understanding. Analysis of moving images was further enhanced by other second-order concepts, such as causes and consequences, change and continuity, and empathy. Moving images provided opportunities for students to nurture their evidential thinking and, depending on the nature and content of the moving images used, it was possible to teach more than one concept in a lesson. Disciplinary understandings which students developed, comprised the need to corroborate sources, looking out for bias and how this influences their perceptions of a narrative, and recognising that behind every source lies a purpose. Disciplinary knowledge helped students understand that

historical events and people can be interpreted in different ways, that claims by historians or historical figures have to be checked by looking at sources, and that empathic reasoning is necessary to understand human action. Without these disciplinary understandings it is impossible for students to comprehend that in history "knowledge is contested, is provisional, and is subject to continuous change" (Lee, 2005, p.72).

The third component in Lee's (2005) framework places substantive and disciplinary understandings in a wider historical context. From the present author's study it was noted that although some students may attempt to do this on their own, it relies mainly on the teacher to help students reach this level of understanding. Two approaches were found useful in this regard. First, through such questions as, 'What have I understood? / How is the footage seen related to the spread of Soviet influence in East Europe? / Having seen and analysed these sources I can state with certainty that …', posed in relation to the 1956 Hungarian revolt, it was noted that students tended to take on a broader view in their thinking, as these typical answers illustrate:

Jean	The Soviets were very powerful, even if the Hungarians had seven days of freedom; the Soviets came back stronger.
Clive	Freedom from the Soviets was an illusion. They wanted to cement their power over East European countries lying behind the Iron Curtain.
Kelvin	Democracy is the best ideology based on equality, rule of law, liberty of the press, etc.

Second, through concept maps at the end of a topic it was noticed that students could bring together concepts and ideas dealt with in different lessons. Thinking about the 'Cold War', the concept map enabled students to connect substantive concepts, particulars, historical figures and events by explaining the links. Students took a wide view of the Cold War when they deployed terms like 'democracy vs communism', 'West vs East', 'freedom vs oppression' and 'fear'. These did not relate to a particular event but spanned the whole topic and the whole period. Evidence showed that such questions and concept maps constituted two valuable tools for helping students develop a topic-wide and century-wide historical picture.

It is opined that within the Maltese educational context the limitation to applying Lee's (2005) framework of understanding concerns the wider historical framework. Lee favours in-depth studies with the aim of concentrating on the big picture. Banham (2000) also had found that students grasp a wide historical overview by studying a topic in depth. While the history option programme allows for the studying of topics in an in-depth way through two eighty-minute lessons per week, it is difficult to teach the big picture framework spanning centuries, even millennia (Shemilt, 2009), because of time-related constraints in covering the Year 11 syllabus (which needs to be

covered from September till February). However, through such in-depth topics as 'Malta at War', 'the Cold War', 'Motives for the EU' and 'Terrorism', it was possible to concentrate on the wide historical framework within the twentieth and twenty-first century period. As shown, moving images can contribute towards enabling students to recognise a wide historical framework.

Finally, these reflections should include an awareness of the challenges that arose in the present author's classroom when using moving images. It was clear that moving images posed some logistical issues. As noted by students, some moving images might be difficult to follow because of the commentator's diction which is sometimes too fast to comprehend. Also, particular footage shown in the moving images might not be clear enough. Furthermore, with moving images not being still, like photographs, students have to adopt a keen eye for detail and be extremely careful throughout – they have to watch and listen at the same time (and read when the moving-image comes with sub-titles), as opposed to just analysing visual details when dealing with a photograph. It also means that they cannot refer back to it, like when re-reading parts of a written source or going back to re-examine a photograph as much as necessary. In fact, as pointed out by Carl, when watching a moving image certain details may go unnoticed. This view seems to indicate that by focusing on one element in a scene, other elements would be overlooked. This phenomenon, termed 'attentional blindness' or 'attentive inattention' (Konnikova, 2013), means that "we are capable of wiping out chunks of our visual field without knowingly doing so" (p.71).

From a pedagogical perspective, choosing the right moving image/s from an array of online material can be a demanding exercise. Bearing in mind that the value of moving images lies in what they offer to students, the appropriate moving image can be chosen following certain criteria, like the relevance to the topic at hand, the duration, and the appropriateness to students' age and abilities. It is worth noting that teachers can opt not to use moving-image sources in their history lessons. Choosing so for whatever reason or justification, however, they would be doing the discipline an injustice not least because teachers would be failing to expose students to the fullest range of sources one can use in learning history.

Developing a framework for analysing moving-image sources

Based on the above, a framework for analysing moving images in the history classroom can be proposed. In line with how knowledge is characterised in history education (Haydn et al., 2015), the framework consists of questions which concern both forms of historical knowledge and in which place is knowledge located in the context of a wider historical picture (Table 1). The aim of this framework is to scrutinise moving images in order to reveal the required evidence in relation to the topic or historical enquiry at hand and, significantly, to advance students' historical understanding. Table 1 comprises the questions used in the present author's study.

Substantive knowledge		Procedural knowledge	
Concepts	What does this moving image tell us about 'x'? What is there to show you this?	Evidence	What was the purpose of the newsreel showing 'x'? How useful are the images in providing a reliable picture of 'x'? What other sources would you consult to find out more about 'x'?
Particulars	What is being shown and commented upon about 'x'? What do these images tell us and/or suggest about 'x'?	Cause/consequence	What led 'x' to say that 'x'? What do you think did 'x' lead to? What could happen if …?
People [individuals/groups of people]	What are people seen to be doing? What is the message that 'x' is trying to get across? Is there any phrase of what 'x' said that captured your attention?	Change/continuity	What changed as a result of 'x'? Do you think that such speeches would have brought about any change? Why?
Context	What do these images tell us about life in 'x'?	Significance	Why was 'x' an important international event?
		Interpretation	How could people have interpreted 'x'? What is our interpretation of 'x' today?
		Empathy	How could people have felt living in 'x'? How do you think life was like in 'x'?
Wider historical picture			
How is this moving image connected to 'x'? What was happening in 'x' at the time of the event?			

Table 1. A framework for analysing moving image sources

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Questions concerning substantive knowledge can be framed around a knowledge of: concepts (e.g., What can we comment about the way communism is seen to be working?); particulars (e.g., Why was it important for Soldarność to have the right to strike?); people (e.g., Why was Churchill fearing 'an increasing measure of control from Moscow'?); and context (e.g., What does the documentary tell us about life in Berlin?). Disciplinary knowledge can be explored with questions regarding different second-order concepts: evidence (e.g., What is there in the documentary to show that Gorbachev was different from other Soviet leaders? Is there anything one has to be careful about when using these images?); cause and consequence (e.g., Why did the people of Hungary take to the streets?; 'To open the gate'. What could happen if the Berlin Wall fell?); change and continuity (e.g. What changed as a result of Solidarność?); significance (e.g. Why was the Cuban missile crisis an important international event?); interpretation (e.g., Why was Berlin important for the Americans and for the Soviets?); and empathy (e.g., How could have Berliners felt upon watching the Berlin Wall being built?). Positioning these within a broader historical picture would entail asking questions about the historical context surrounding the event or topic (e.g., How is this moving image related to the spread of Soviet influence over East European countries?). These questions should challenge students to go beyond what is immediately observable and adopt a wide-scale view of events.

These and other questions can be devised both for classroom discussions and writing tasks (in class/at home; in groups/independently). In so doing, two important pedagogical considerations, adapted from Ashby et al. (2005), can be considered: What do I want to find out about students' substantive understanding? What do I want students to reflect upon as a means of developing procedural understanding? In the main, all questions should be designed in a way that requires students to apply observation, reasoning and analytical skills. Preliminary questions (e.g., What do we see happening in this moving image?) maximise on students' attentional abilities; not only would these questions act as a warm up to the discussion but they would also help students place the event in the context of the topic being discussed. Subsequent open-ended questions encourage long answers, and of a higher-order nature (Logtenberg et al., 2011). There is also scope for having different types of historical questions, such as, descriptive, causal, comparative and evaluative questions (van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008; 2010).

Underlying this framework is classroom talk, which is considered to be a potential influence on the development of students' knowledge and understanding (Mercer, 2008). This is revealed in three core ideas: first, observation skills which are necessary to make out and mull over visual details in the moving images; second, calling on students' prior knowledge – which is a feature of a constructivist classroom – and use it as a starting point for further learning; third, whole-class dialogues which, in a constructivist setting are key for co-constructing knowledge.

Conclusion

This paper has foregrounded the use of moving-image sources to learn about twentieth and twenty-first century historical events. Seen as contemporary history sources, it has been argued that moving images help advance students' historical understanding. The analysis of moving images offers an opportunity for teachers to engage students in dialogue as part of historical enquiry. Lee's (2005) thinking about historical understanding has been developed into a workable framework for analysing moving images, which is driven by carefully-crafted questions. For a meaningful dialogue, teacher questions have to focus on both substantive and procedural knowledge. However, positioning this knowledge within a wider context is of paramount importance so as to widen students' attention to the fullest extent possible. With the appropriate restructuring, this framework could be applied to other visual images (e.g. historical photographs). Hopefully, this effort goes a long way towards eliminating habits of passive viewing and developing critical thinking – indeed important skills in becoming lifelong learners.

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