2020
No further developments

2019
Launching of a new policy on Inclusive Education in Schools

A new Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools [1] was launched in April 2019 in conjunction with a National Inclusive Education Framework.

The policy adopts a wide definition of inclusion which includes learners with disabilities, learners with different sexual orientation, learners from ethnic minorities and different religions, high ability learners to reflect the cohort of students at school.

The policy embraces the concept, values and principles of Inclusive Education into the realm of responding positively to all learners’ diversity. It is aiming to bring together all educators and practitioners, learners, families and community members who create colleges and schools that are conducive to learning, thereby giving all learners the education they are entitled to.

My Journey: Achieving Through Different Paths

The past years saw extensive preparatory work for the implementation of a reform in the secondary years cycle which is now being launched at the start of school year 2019/2020. Preparations included the building or refurbishing of laboratories and units in state secondary schools, information meetings given by officers from the Ministry for Education and Employment to all Year 8 students and their parents and the provision of professional guidance on an on-going basis to students when choosing their educational career path through My Journey.

This education reform being introduced in the secondary school cycle at the beginning of school year 2019/2020 is resulting in secondary school students being able to follow applied quality learning programmes that include Engineering, Science, Hospitality, Information Technology, Agribusiness and Gardening, Retail, Construction, Artisanship, Business and Creative Arts. As from this school year (2019/2020), Year 9 students will be following one of three educational paths: the academic path, the vocational one or the applied path. Students following any of the educational programmes will be able to achieve an MQF level 3 qualification at the end of Year 11.
Learning Outcomes Framework

Following the introduction in school year 2018/2019 of learning outcome programmes and syllabi for Year 3 and Year 7 students, the start of school year 2019/2020 will see the extending of this measure to Year 4 and Year 8 classes. For these year groups, teaching is now more student centred and all activities set in class are intended to achieve the learning outcomes for that particular year programme. Students are now being continually assessed even more so since mid-year exams for Years 4 to 9 have been discontinued. At the end of each term, parents of Year 3 and Year 4 students will receive feedback on their children’s achievement. On the other hand, Year 7 and Year 8 students will receive an assessment mark at the end of the second and third terms and an examination mark at the end of the school year.

New ICT subject

School year 2018/2019 saw the successful introduction in Year 7 of a subject called ICT C3 that replaced the ECDL subject. ICT C3 is now being progressively phased in until school year 2022-2023, when the first cohort of students reach Year 11. By following this ICT subject students are being exposed to 21st century challenges faced by people in today’s digital world. ICT C3 includes the teaching of important digital fundamentals such as coding, digital ethics, blockchain and digital safety amongst other topics. This change is necessary to work holistically with other digital subjects offered as optional subjects in secondary school. The Ministry for Education and Employment is providing support and training to the teachers teaching this subject.

Institute for Education - Education courses on offer

To reach the aim of the Framework for the Educational Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 [2], the Institute for Education offers a wide range of courses which educators at all levels can follow. The main objective of this initiative is to provide all educators within the educational sector with courses and sessions to acquire or improve their competences to prepare students for life.

The Prospectus [3] for academic year 2019/2020 also includes courses for parents which confirms the critical role which parents play in providing learning opportunities at home and in linking what children learn at school with other experiences. By facilitating and participating in diverse learning experiences and activities outside the school, parents become an important factor in children’s overall learning and education.

The Institute offers a variety of accredited courses from short ones of 1 ECTS to other more comprehensive programmes leading to a qualification having 30 ECTSs. The latter range from levels 4 to 7 of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF).

For accessibility reasons, the delivery of such courses takes place after school hours and includes online components, together with practical and hands-on sessions. The Institute is also offering educational degrees at Bachelor and Masters levels for those who want to pursue a career in teaching or are already teaching but want to improve their qualifications.

The Institute is also offering a Master Degree in Applied Educational Leadership for education practitioners who want to become Heads of School or leaders in the educational sector. The Institute has also developed an online platform to deliver online courses or blended learning ones. It offers the possibility to give synchronous and asynchronous sessions using Blackboard Collaborate. Moreover, the Institute provides access to ProQuest online Library together with Alexander Street video clips which can be accessed by lectures and course participants.

These courses represent a direct investment in the development of teachers within all grades of the
education sector and aim to give all the necessary tools to educators to act as reflective practitioners.

The subjects addressed in the courses may be classified in three main areas: (i) educational leadership, (ii) inclusion and multiculturalism in education, and (iii) parents’ engagement and involvement in school and classroom management. Throughout these courses, the Institute provides initial teacher training and continuous professional development opportunities to all educators and other individuals outside the sector who might be interested in contributing or joining.

**Continuous assessment instead of mid-year exams**

Following the discontinuation of mid-year exams for students in Years 4 to 8 in school year 2018/2019, this measure will now be extended to Year 9 students during school year 2019/2020. The mid-year exams have now been replaced by continuous formative assessments. The discontinuation of mid-year exam has resulted in secondary school students benefiting from an extra 50 hours of teaching time.

**Partnership agreement signed between the Ministry for Education and agribusiness organisations**

The Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) has entered into a partnership agreement with different sectors within the agribusiness industry aimed at combining learning in schools with out-of-school practical training for students in secondary schools thus providing hands-on learning experiences.

This initiative follows the introduction at the beginning of school year 2015-2016 of five vocational subject areas, including agribusiness, as elective subjects that students may opt to study in the last three years of compulsory education. In September 2019, another four vocational subjects were added bringing the total to nine VET subjects that students can choose to student in grade 9.

These vocational subjects are accredited at Level 3 on Malta’s Qualifications Framework (MQF) and recognized by the MATSEC Board of the University of Malta as on a par with all academic subjects thus ensuring parity of esteem between all subjects and that all programmes will be inclusive and equitable and consolidates the Ministry’s plan to provide value to the learning experience in a lifelong context. Furthermore, this initiative will be providing additional resources to the educational system while the hands-on learning process in industry will assist students to develop skills required within this sector.

Owners and employers in the agribusiness sector have committed to support students attending state and non-state schools offering Agribusiness as either a Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) or a Secondary Education Applied Certificate (SEAC) subject. Each school will partner with one or more establishments with students in grades 9 to 11 studying SEC and SEAC Agribusiness being invited to carry out the practical tasks of the agribusiness syllabus at the field/farm premises. This Partnership Agreement between the Ministry for Education and agribusiness owners/employers will be put in place at the beginning of school year 2019/2020.

**Tiny Teen Science Café in Primary Schools**

The Directorate for Learning and Assessment (DLAP) within the Ministry for Education and Employment is
organising the Tiny Teen Science Café across a number of primary schools. This initiative is intended to engage young primary students and their parents in informal discussions on STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) that are moderated by professionals from various sectors. The hands-on activities include electrical engineering, computer coding using tablets, healthcare and astronomy through virtual reality.

New courses at post-secondary level

On 19 June 2018, the Ministry for Education and Employment announced the introduction of new foreign language proficiency courses at post-secondary institutions. These courses are offering an alternative way to obtaining a certification in foreign language proficiency at MQF levels 3 or 4. The focus of these courses is on communicative competences. An accredited certification will be offered in each of the four basic language skills. As from the start of the 2018/2019 school year courses at MQF level 3 are being offered at Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary, Sir M.A Refalo Sixth Form and the Lifelong Learning Centre. Furthermore, as from 2019, these institutions are also offering new foreign language proficiency courses at MQF level 4.

Career guidance platform

As part of the implementation of My Journey [4], a new career guidance platform [5] was launched in December 2018. This interactive platform aims to facilitate career choices for secondary school students. During their secondary education, students need to choose a number of subjects to focus their studies on and which will pave the way for their professional choices later on in life. The information is presented in an interactive way so that students interact with the information. Language which is age appropriate is in Maltese and English.

Through focused research, all available information will be channelled to one platform and will include a series of job profiles, videos portraying ‘a day in the life of’, giving students a better idea of what the job they are aspiring for is all about and a quiz to help students explore their preferred learning path and preferred subject choices. One of the major aspects of the web-portal is the up-keeping and constant updating of new courses and information. In fact, the Ministry for Education and Employment has committed itself to strengthening further the web-portal by continuously updating information and incorporating more career profiles and videos to widen students’ career exploration.

2018

My Journey: Achieving through different paths

In preparation for the implementation of a reform in the secondary years cycle in September 2019, officers from the Ministry for Education and Employment have individually met two thousand Year 8 students and their parents in the beginning of the current school year. Professional guidance is being provided on an ongoing basis to students in choosing their educational career path through My Journey. As a result of this education reform being introduced in the secondary school cycle at the beginning of school year 2019/2020, secondary school students will be able to follow applied quality learning programmes that may include Engineering, Science, Hospitality, Information Technology, Agribusiness and Gardening, Retail,
Construction, Artisanship, Business and Creative Arts.

Learning Outcomes Framework

As from the beginning of school year 2018/2019, new learning outcome programmes and syllabi have been introduced. Teaching will be more student-centred and all activities set in class will help to achieve the learning outcomes for that particular year programme. Students will now be continually assessed since mid-year exams for Years 4 to 8 have been discontinued. At the end of each term, parents of Year 3 students will receive feedback on their children’s achievement. On the other hand, Year 7 students will receive an assessment mark and an examination mark at the end of the year.

MCAST and Malta Union of Teachers Agreement

On 27 July 2018, the Malta Union of Teachers and MCAST signed a collective agreement to primarily ensure MCAST academic staff benefit from better working conditions and a substantial increase in salaries. Through this agreement, academic staff will also be provided with the necessary resources and opportunities to further develop their professional career. This development should aid MCAST students in gaining the necessary knowledge, skills and competences required by today’s and tomorrow’s workforce.

New website launched

The Ministry for Education and Employment has launched a [website](#) to assist students, parents and teachers when preparing for the current school year and whenever up-to-date information is required. There is a section for every year from Kindergarten to Year 11 and each section includes the following sub-sections:

- A video, in which an educator provides a general overview of what to expect in this school year;

- Information about the curriculum, parental involvement, academic choices and what has changed from the previous school year;

- A section with Frequently Asked Questions;

- A section where users can put forward suggestions or submit enquiries;

- A section with the contact details of the Heads of College Network and School Support Services of the school chosen in the search section.

Collective Agreement between the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) and the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) agreement

On 29 June 2018, ITS and MUT signed a collective agreement through which ITS academics will, for the first time, benefit from conditions similar to their counterparts in other higher education institutions in Malta. As a result of this new collective agreement, academics are benefiting from new and flexible work practices that will assist ITS in developing as an international tourism and hospitality education hub. This agreement will allow students already in employment to achieve higher qualifications by furthering their studies at their own pace.

GO4 Industry teachers internship programme
On 26 June 2018, the Ministry for Education and Employment together with the Manufacturing Economic Group within the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry launched the GO4Industry Teacher Internship Programme pilot project. The main objective of this programme is to expose secondary school teachers who teach science subjects to the opportunities and cutting-edge technologies in Malta’s manufacturing industry. Through this programme, teachers will gain new insights about the subject they teach. As a result, they would be able to better assist their students when considering their future career. This project will also act as a bridge to close the gap between education and employment and provide the industry with long-term solutions.

New courses at post-secondary level

On 19 June 2018, the Ministry for Education and Employment announced that new foreign language proficiency courses will be introduced at post-secondary institutions. These courses will be an alternative way to obtain a certification in foreign language proficiency courses at MQF levels 3 or 4. The focus of these courses will be communicative competences. An accredited certification will be offered in each of the four basic language skills individually. As from the start of the 2018/2019 school year courses at MQF level 3 are being offered at Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary, Sir M.A Refalo Sixth Form and the Lifelong Learning Centre. Furthermore, these institutions will offer these new foreign language proficiency courses at MQF level 4 as from 2019.

Microsoft pilot project

On 8 June 2018, St Benedict College Secondary School became the first school in Europe to experience the classroom of the future, as a result of a pilot project which Microsoft is conducting. Through this project, Microsoft is introducing virtual reality and other interactive technologies in state schools. Twelve- and thirteen-year-old students were able to use Minecraft to learn about the Maltese Neolithic structures known as Mnajdra Temples. On the other-hand, eleven-year-old students wore virtual reality headsets and “walked” around Rome and Peru while sitting in their classroom.

National homework policy

The National Homework Policy was launched in March 2018 and is in line with the values of the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024. This policy aims to balance out work and play for primary and secondary school students while also addressing the impact that too much homework has on young students. This policy encourages homework assignments that increase the effectiveness and quality of homework while also being meaningful to all students. It also emphasises the role and responsibilities of school administrators, educators and teachers, learning support educators, students and families in this regard. The policy does not aim to remove homework altogether, but rather to introduce a sense of balance which does not take away from students’ learning. The National Homework Policy proposes the following guidelines regarding time allocated for homework:

Kindergarten - No homework;

Primary Years 1 and 2 – A maximum of 20 minutes every day;

Primary Years 3 to 6 – A maximum of 30 minutes every day;

Secondary Years 7 and 8: A maximum of an hour a day;

Secondary Years 9, 10 and 11: A maximum of 8 hours a week.

The policy is being implemented as from the start of the present school year (2018/2019) and will be reviewed every five years.
New environmental teaching course

On 15 February 2018, the Institute for Education and Birdlife Malta launched a new environmental teaching course at MQF level 6 titled ‘Award in Teaching Outdoor Learning through Nature’. The target of this course is primary school teachers and includes fieldwork, lectures and self-study materials which are delivered by Birdlife Malta. Through this course, teachers will acquire competencies and skills which will help them to deliver curriculum-linked activities in an outdoor setting. By the end of this course, the teachers will be able to promote active citizenship and how learning through nature can be an important platform to obtain civic competences.

Institute for Education - first prospectus

To reach the aim of the Framework for the Educational Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 [2], the Institute for Education introduced its initial online prospectus [9]. The main objective of this initiative is to provide all educators within the educational sector with courses and sessions to acquire or improve their competences to prepare students for life. The Institute offers a variety of accredited courses from short ones of 1 ECTS to other more comprehensive programmes leading to a qualification having 30 ECTSs. The latter range from levels 4 to 7 of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). For accessibility reasons, the delivery of such courses will take place after school hours and include online components, practical and hands-on sessions.

These courses represent a direct investment in the development of teachers within all grades of the education sector and aim to give all the necessary tools to educators to act as reflective practitioners. The subjects addressed in the courses may be classified in three main areas: (i) educational leadership, (ii) inclusion and multiculturalism in education, and (iii) parents’ engagement and involvement in school and classroom management. Throughout these courses, the Institute will be providing an overview of Continuous Professional Development opportunities to all educators and to other individuals outside the sector who might be interested in contributing or joining.

Continuous assessment instead of mid-year exams

On 10 January 2018, the Ministry for Education and Employment announced that from school year 2018/2019, mid-year exams in both primary (Years 4 to 6) and secondary (Years 7 and 8) state schools will be replaced by continuous formative assessments. The discontinuation of mid-year exam means that secondary school students will benefit from an extra 50 hours of teaching time. For subjects like Religion and Social Studies, modular examinations will be introduced. The Ministry for Education and Employment also announced that new policies on inclusion are in the pipeline.

Reading Recovery Training Programme

The Reading Recovery (RR) training programme was launched on 25 September 2018. Fourteen complementary and literacy teachers are following the RR teacher training course and eight Heads of Department (HODs) and literacy support teachers are following the Masters RR leader course. Face-to-face sessions to the MARR course participants have been delivered, while similar sessions were also given to the RR teachers’ course. The RR rooms in the participating schools have nearly all been set up. When all the RR rooms are fully functional, the RR teachers and leaders will commence the RR intervention programme. Circa 88 low-ability Year 2 pupils will benefit from the Reading Recovery programme.