The Alternative is not necessarily inferior

Re-thinking education pathways

19 April 2018

Francis Fabri
Permanent Secretary
Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta
Preamble

First Dilemma:
Is equitable provision of quality education to all our students a reality?
We can and we must, given the present state of affairs, inquire into the profound meaning of education or the contemporary world and reassess its responsibilities towards the present generations which it must prepare for tomorrow’s world. We must inquire into its powers and its myths, its prospects and its aim. ... Is not this the time to call for something quite different in education systems?.
Second Dilemma:

We need to talk about the future of work. Do we ask enough (uncomfortable) questions? Are our schools future-proof, or are we resigned to schools as artefacts of backward-looking systems?
My Moral Purpose
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I am morally bound, as Permanent Secretary, teacher by profession, and parent of an 11 year old daughter, to declare upfront my beliefs and values before sharing with you the milestones of the Maltese journey in education.

- the development of curricula and syllabi
- the vision of education
- education that supports the individual and social development, then the economy
- education systems that remain selective and built around a one-size-fits-all model
Prevailing Policy Discourse
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- The EU framework for policy cooperation on education and training (ET2020)

- The Education for All 2015 Regional Review (UNESCO, 2015)

- The Education 2030 Agenda (UNESCO)

- The New Skills Agenda for Europe (EU, 2016)

- The Framework on Competences for Democratic Culture CoE, 2016)
PHASE 1:
Globalized Discourse in Local Policy
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…and in reality...

X'izzumbaba qed jigiři!!!

Teachers’ message 2011/2012
...and in reality...

Teachers’ message 2011/2012

XBAJNA
MIT-TELF
TA’ LEZZJONIJIET
What does BIG DATA show?
Year 3 Literacy Assessments (October 2013)

-12% and 19% were not able to respectively **read** and **spell** more than 5 words out of 30 frequently used **English** words

-24% and 63% could not respectively **read** and **spell** more than 15 words out of 30 frequently used **English** words

-58% and 97% could not **read** and **spell** more than 25 words out of 30 frequently used **English** words
- 7% were not able to **read** and **spell** more than 5 words out of 30 frequently used **Maltese** words

- 16% and 34% could not respectively **read** and **spell** more than 15 words out of 30 frequently used **Maltese** words

- 46% and 93% could not respectively **read** and **spell** more than 25 words out of 30 frequently used **Maltese** words
PISA 2013: Reading Literacy

Figure 5.2: EU countries ranked by attainment in reading literacy
PISA 2013: Mathematical Literacy

Figure 3.2: EU countries ranked by attainment in mathematical literacy
PISA 2013: Scientific Literacy

Figure 4.2: EU countries ranked by attainment in scientific literacy
PHASE 2: Research-based Policies
MEDE’s Mission and Vision

The objective of the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) is to provide present and future generations with the necessary skills and talents for citizenship and employability, in the 21st century and beyond.

Our children need to develop their personal and social potential and acquire the appropriate knowledge, key skills, competences and attitudes through a value-oriented formation including equity, social justice, diversity and inclusivity.
challenges

- value of **small data**, and not only big data
- need for **data management systems**
- value of learning, assessment as learning and relevant quality learning programmes
- higher order thinking skills and **employability skills** transversally in the curriculum
- alignment of strategies, policies, research and practices
- **key targets** systemically .... instead of sustaining a silo mentality and promoting sporadic practices
Current Secondary Schooling System

SEC 2015 results:

- **48.6%** of cohort obtained grades 1-5 in Maltese
- **50%** of cohort obtained grades 1-5 in English
- **38.3%** of cohort obtained grades 1-5 in Math
- **37.8%** of cohort obtained grades 1-5 in Physics
PHASE 2: Research-based Policies
(Contextual planning and design)
4 measurable targets

1. reduce the gaps, decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in students’ achievement

2. support educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status, and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers

3. increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning

4. raise levels of student retention and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training
4 measurable targets

1. Reading: 36.3% against 15% (ET 2020 Benchmark)
   Math: 33.7% against 15% (ET 2020 Benchmark)
   Science: 32.5% against 15% (ET 2020 Benchmark)

2. ESL: 20.6% against 10% (EU 2020 target)

3. LLL: 7% against 15% (ET 2020 Benchmark)

4. 30-35 year olds completing tertiary or equivalent education (MQF Level 6):
   21.1% against 40% (EU 2020 target)
   Share of students in VET at ISCED 3: 38.0%
PHASE 3:
Equitable Provision of Quality Learning Opportunities
Current Secondary School System

- is a **single structure system** mainly inclined towards the general academic route

- **sets students** in the core subjects (Maltese, English and Mathematics) either in different learning levels or tracks (eventually to converge to *levels*)

- requires students to study **fourteen (14) examinable subjects**

- provides alternative learning programmes, typically offered as **remedial programmes** and some of which are unaccredited, which reach MQF Level 1 / 2

- provides a **selection from four VET subjects** at MQF 3 to selected high-achieving students
PHASE 3: Equitable Provision of Quality Learning Opportunities (Implementation)

- ‘My Journey’ builds on past and present educational aspirations, policies and reforms which promoted learning that is relevant to personal, social and economic development.

- ‘My Journey’ equitably promotes core values and strives to achieve the targets highlighted in the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024.

- It contributes towards the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework (2012), Respect for All Framework (2014), Learning Outcomes Framework (2015), the forthcoming legal Education and Regulatory Acts, and the new Sectoral Agreement with the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT)

- ‘My Journey’ supports a comprehensive and inclusive secondary school system that provides equitable quality learning programmes with parity of esteem and no dead-ends.
Equitable Quality Alternatives

We need to depart from a one-size-fits-all system where alternatives are considered as inferior to the so called ‘mainstream’, and move towards different learning paths:

- equitably provide quality learning programmes with parity of esteem leading to qualifications up to MQF level 3

- retain the seamless transition from middle to secondary schools and facilitate progression to upper secondary general education and vocational learning, and to the world of work

- remain committed to high standards of learning which is relevant, effective and timely

- ensure that all children develop into young people and adults equipped with the necessary skills and attitudes to be fulfilled, active citizens and to give valuable contributions in society and at work
# Features of ‘My Journey’

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<tr>
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<th>CURRENT</th>
<th>PROPOSED</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Principle</strong></td>
<td>Academic education as mainstream</td>
<td>Academic, vocational and applied learning programmes with parity of esteem</td>
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<td><strong>Vocational subjects</strong></td>
<td>At EQF levels 2-3 for high-achievers in academic subjects</td>
<td>Leading up to EQF level 3 available for option to all students</td>
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<td><strong>Applied learning</strong></td>
<td>For low achievers leading to EQF level 1</td>
<td>Available for all learners leading up to EQF level 3</td>
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<td><strong>Teaching/learning</strong></td>
<td>Prescriptive syllabi and summative testing</td>
<td>Learning outcomes/learning the right skills</td>
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<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td>High stakes centralised exams</td>
<td>A variety of assessment modes</td>
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<td><strong>Progression</strong></td>
<td>Dead ends in alternative/applied learning</td>
<td>No dead-ends with real opportunities for progression to all learners</td>
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<td><strong>Schools</strong></td>
<td>Silo mentality</td>
<td>Partner with E&amp;T providers and industry</td>
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<td><strong>Class size</strong></td>
<td>Standardisation</td>
<td>In line with programme and learner needs</td>
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<td><strong>Teacher training</strong></td>
<td>Focused on general academic education</td>
<td>For academic, vocational and applied learning</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learning outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Mainly with a general academic education approach</td>
<td>Available for all the academic, vocational and applied learning programmes</td>
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<td><strong>Guidance</strong></td>
<td>Promoting academic route and professions</td>
<td>Promoting progression; focus on needs</td>
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<td><strong>School facilities</strong></td>
<td>Traditional classrooms for academic subjects</td>
<td>Tailored to all forms of learning</td>
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Translating MEDE’s Vision into Practice

- Enhancing Educational Services
- Nurturing a more relevant and equitable Curricular Experience
- Enhancing decentralisation and the level of State Schools’ autonomy
- Providing supporting resources in State Education and beyond
- Improving Governance
Conclusion

Providing equitable quality learning programmes that extend the classroom into the real world and provide our students with a realistic chance of becoming:
- lifelong learners,
- active citizens, and
- employable contributors

in a world of work that is truly dynamic.
THANK YOU!