COUNTRY REPORT

Malta

Ministry for Education and Employment

2014

Language in Education Policy Profile

Table of Contents

Glossary of Abbreviations

NSO   National Statistics Office

DQSE   Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education

DES   Directorate General for Educational Services

NCF   National Curriculum Framework

MCAST   Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology

ITS   Institute of Tourism Studies

SEC   Secondary Education Certificate

MATSEC   Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate

MQF   Malta Qualifications Framework

IEN   Individual Education Needs

FLAP   Foreign Language Awareness Programme

NMC   National Minimum Curriculum

EFL   English as a Foreign Language

Introduction

The Council of Europe recommends that language education should be guided by a plurilingual philosophy and that education systems are responsible for making all citizens aware of the value of plurilingualism. In the light of the Council of Europe's recommendations on the teaching and learning of languages, Malta faces two interlinked challenges, which are the tenets guiding this Language in Education Policy Profile. The first challenge deals with promoting bilingualism as an integral part of linguistic identity and the second challenge revolves around the promotion of plurilingualism as part of a wider European and global community.

Such challenges require initiatives which ultimately lead to a final aim: that of developing plurilingual competences which can contribute to a plural linguistic identity rooted in education for democratic citizenship. The present work on a Language in Education Policy Profile, in cooperation with the Council of Europe, is therefore a clear marker of political willingness to endorse both plurilingualism and bilingualism in Malta, and to develop a Language in Education policy on the basis of a coherent approach, by clarifying principles and defining goals, analysing situations and identifying resources (Beacco & Byram, 2003, p.9).

This Country Report provides a wide overview of the issues that concern the teaching and learning of languages, by involving as many stakeholders as possible. Schools play a major role in the promotion of plurilingualism and the Council of Europe strongly recommends that the national education system, particularly compulsory schooling, be used as a basis for the creation of a culture of plurilingualism. This is because language curricula help create this feeling and developing linguistic repertoires will foster linguistic affiliation to a community, beyond the national one. However, language issues deal with social representations that have complex origins. These derive from history and traditions such as colonial relationships, political relationships and, geographical and cultural proximity. Therefore, the wider sociolinguistic context has to be acknowledged, as ideologies linked to languages, present in macro-contexts will inadvertently be present in micro-contexts such as schools and classrooms.

This report was drawn up by Lara Ann Vella under the direction of the Language Policy in Education Committee, set up by the Ministry for Education and Employment. The main objective of this committee is to determine which are the issues related to the language in education situation in Malta at the national, school and classroom levels through

consultation with the stakeholders, which will lead to the development of a Language in Education Policy document[1].

Following the guidelines set by the Council of Europe, this Country report is divided into three main parts:
- Part 1 provides an overview of the context in which language learning takes place, by describing the sociolinguistic context and the educational system in Malta, with specific emphasis on language learning;
- Part 2 focuses on the initiatives and reactions to the Council of Europe and the European Union, in the promotion of plurilingualism;
- Part 3 focuses on the areas which require further action.

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[1] Further information about the committee can be found in Appendix 1.

Part 1 : The Present Context

1.1 Demographic information and an insight into history

The Republic of Malta comprises an archipelago of five islands. The island of Malta is the largest, followed by Gozo, Comino, Cominotto and Filfla (the latter two are uninhabited islets). As shown in Figure 1, the islands are situated in the Central Mediterranean Sea, 93 kilometres south of Sicily and 290 kilometres north of Libya .

Official Name	Repubblika ta' Malta (Maltese) Republic of Malta (English)
Area	316 km^2, 122 square miles
Population	421,364
Population Density	1,333

Table 1: Demographic information at a glance (National Statics Office, 2013)

Figure 1: The Maltese Islands

Malta's location has given it strategic importance and thus a succession of powers, including the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Angevins, Aragonese,

Castilians, the Order of the Knights of St. John and the French conquered the island. The British were the final rulers (from 1800 to 1964), after which, Malta obtained its Independence, in 1964. Malta became a Republic in 1974 and a member of the European Union, in 2004. With its accession to the European Union, Maltese became an official language of the EU.

1.2 The Constitution

The Constitution of the Republic of Malta recognises Maltese as the National language and grants co-official status to English:

> *(1) The National language of Malta is the Maltese Language.*
> *(2) The Maltese and the English languages and such other language as may be prescribed by Parliament (by a law passed by not less than two-thirds of all the members of the House of Representatives) shall be the official languages of Malta and the Administration may for all official purposes use any of such languages[2].*

1.3 The sociolinguistic context

Malta's history and position have had an impact on its linguistic development. In fact, the Maltese language provides an intriguing example of fusion of elements from diverse linguistic sources. It has an Arabic base upon which various other borrowings from other languages such as from Romance languages and English have been introduced[3]. Due to its various dominations, the presence of more than one language in Malta, has been an integral part of its sociolinguistic context throughout the centuries. In fact, Brincat (2011) illustrates how this situation has existed ever since Arabic was introduced in Malta in around 870 AD.

With regard to the current sociolinguistic situation, Maltese is very widespread as a spoken variety. Sociolinguistic surveys by Sciriha & Vassallo (2001, 2006), indicate that Maltese is the mother tongue of around 98% of the population, with a minimal percentage of Maltese nationals also claiming that English is their mother tongue. When it comes to the written medium, these surveys[4] illustrate that the Maltese language is used to a lesser extent as a written medium, particularly in higher education, since most texts are in English.

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[2] Source: *Constitution of Malta*, http://www.constitution.org/cons/malta/chapt0.pdf.

[3] Brincat (2011) and Mifsud (1995).

[4] Sciriha & Vassallo (2001) & Sciriha & Vassallo (2006.)

Although the linguistic situation in Malta can be described as officially bilingual, in reality this takes place to varying degrees. Code-switching from Maltese to English and vice-versa is a common linguistic practice, and this often gives rise to complaints about language deterioration. Therefore, Vella (2013) argues that since the effects of regular use of English alongside Maltese clearly can been seen in daily interactions, rather than describing the linguistic situation as a dichotomy between English and Maltese, the notion of a continuum of use serves to successfully illustrate the complex linguistic behaviour of Maltese speakers, as illustrated in the following figure:

| Dialects of Maltese | Standard Maltese | Mixed Maltese English | Maltese English |
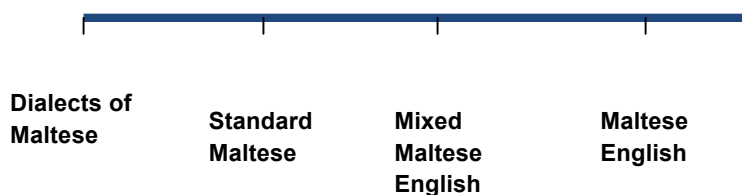
Figure 2: Continuum of language use by Maltese speakers.

The presence of English can be attributed to Malta's colonial heritage, as mentioned in Section 1.1. During the British colonial period, English was introduced in Malta, eventually replacing Italian as the country's official language, after a lengthy struggle known as the 'Language Question'[5]. This period was characterised by two important linguistic changes: the introduction of the English language as an official language and a legitimisation of the Maltese language. In fact, as time passed, the status of the Maltese improved, as following a period during which it was limited mostly to the spoken variety, the language acquired its standardised written form. While in the 1930s it was still defined as "*il-lingwa tal-kcina*" (the language to be used in kitchens), Maltese was finally declared an official language together with English, in 1934.

Although the Maltese language is spoken by the majority of citizens, this does not necessarily mean that it is used in all domains. While, Maltese is mainly used on most local television and radio stations, local television stations continue to transmit films and documentaries in English. Maltese is used regularly in most churches for religious services. In education, English is considered a language of instruction, and knowledge of the language is indispensable to benefit fully from the teaching and learning experiences and to pursue tertiary education. English also features dominantly, in many other spheres such as tourism, industry, entertainment, commerce, and the mass media.

English is traditionally associated with the written medium, as most textbooks and print material are readily available in English. A survey carried out by the National Statistics

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[5] This was a debated argument between pro-English and pro-Italian supporters as to which language should be used for administrative purposes.

Office[6] with 1,000 participants, on culture participation reveals that with regard to the written domain, English is preferred by 44.5 % of the population, against the use of written Maltese, at 43.1 %. When asked about their preferred language when reading, 46.3 % opt for English while 38.6 % prefer Maltese. As regards newspapers, readership of the sister papers *The Times of Malta* and *The Sunday Times,* which are in English, is higher than that of other papers (Vella, 2013). An increasing number of books are being written in Maltese and a considerable number of foreign classics are also being translated into Maltese. However, reading material in Maltese remains relatively limited when compared to the availability of English texts. Most textbooks used in schools are in English, with most textbooks in Maltese generally dealing with the actual teaching and learning of the Maltese language.

1.4 The role and status of Maltese and English in Malta

When two languages are present in society, certain attitudes are formed towards them, as languages are interlinked with cultural and economic ideologies. Moreover, language attitudes interact dynamically with the changes in time and sociopolitical environment. As illustrated in the previous section, in the early 1900s, the Maltese language was not considered in high esteem, but nowadays it is used regularly in most linguistic domains.

The knowledge of foreign languages is considered to be useful by the majority of the Maltese nationals (Sciriha & Vassallo, 2006) and is often linked to better working opportunities. Notwithstanding these favourable attitudes, the situation changes slightly with regard to the use of Maltese and English, by Maltese nationals. This is because in a bilingual situation languages are linked to ideology and power, which very often go beyond the linguistic varieties in question. Several small case studies have demonstrated that in Malta, while English is viewed positively as a key for socioeconomic advancement and instrumental factors, Maltese is viewed as a symbol of national identity and pride. Moreover, it is necessary to point out that these studies have demonstrated how regular use of English in Malta by Maltese nationals, especially as a spoken medium, is sometimes associated with families pertaining to a higher socioeconomic class (Camilleri, 1995, Caruana, 2007, Vella, 2013). At times Maltese nationals who speak English are linked to snobbery. On the other hand, those who find difficulty in expressing themselves in English are associated with lower socioeconomic groups and with low levels of education . These attitudes are vital as they form ideologies on which linguistic identities are formed, which in turn have important repercussions on how these languages are presented in educational contexts.

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[6] Culture participation survey , NSO (2011).

Finally, even those who claim to use exclusively Maltese or English at all times are likely to use forms of codeswitching. Malta is no exception to this (as illustrated in for example, Camilleri, (1995); Sciriha, (2004); Sciriha & Vassallo, (2006), Vella (2013)). Romaine (1994) states that in the majority of communities where codeswitching has been studied, some social stigma has been attached to it. In fact codeswitching is very often associated with a lack of command in any one of the languages, and with specific reference to the present situation, it is viewed negatively by most Maltese citizens and seen as a threat to the development of the Maltese language (Sciriha & Vassallo, 2006). Again, this will invariably have an impact on the languages used within educational contexts, particularly those used as a medium of instruction.

1.5 Languages other than Maltese and English

In general, as illustrated in several sociolinguistic surveys[7], the overwhelming majority of Maltese citizens consider foreign languages to be important due to economic reasons, and because of the presence of tourists on the islands. Such a positive attitude could also be explained in terms of Malta's geographic position where encounters between individuals of different cultural backgrounds have been extremely frequent throughout its history.

Italian has a significant role in Malta due to geographical and historical factors. In fact, Italian television channels, received in Malta via antennae or satellite, are quite popular amongst Maltese of all ages (Caruana, 2003, 2006). The presence of the Italian media in Malta was especially influential up to the early nineties. Traditionally, Italian channels have influenced the learning of Italian, where many Maltese nationals acquired the language by watching television (Caruana, 2003). However, the recent shift in television viewing patterns, where people are opting more for Maltese channels, together with American and British channels, has had an influence on the status and proficiency of Italian, especially among the younger generations (Caruana, 2006).

The Maltese population is also characterised by a number of foreigners. Of the total population, 4.8 %, are non-Maltese nationals. As shown in the following table, in 2011 Malta had a total of 20,000 foreign citizens:

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[7] For instance in Sciriha & Vassallo (2006), 62.8% of the participants state that foreign languages are very useful, 34.4% state that they are useful whereas only 2% declare that foreign languages are not useful.

		Maltese		Non-Maltese		Total	
		Number	% group	Number	% group	Number	% group
Males	Southern Harbour	38,594	9.7	961	4.8	39,555	9.5
	Northern Harbour	55,317	14.0	3,869	19.3	59,186	14.2
	South Eastern	30,453	7.7	2,064	10.3	32,517	7.8
	Western	28,116	7.1	646	3.2	28,762	6.9
	Northern	29,208	7.4	2,472	12.3	31,680	7.6
	Gozo and Comino	14,881	3.8	604	3.0	15,485	3.7
	Total	196,569	49.6	10,616	52.9	207,185	49.8
Females	Southern Harbour	39,006	9.9	642	3.2	39,648	9.5
	Northern Harbour	57,198	14.4	3,679	18.3	60,877	14.6
	South Eastern	30,447	7.7	1,157	5.8	31,604	7.6
	Western	28,525	7.2	641	3.2	29,166	7.0
	Northern	29,252	7.4	2,665	13.3	31,917	7.7
	Gozo and Comino	14,972	3.8	686	3.4	15,658	3.8
	Total	199,400	50.4	9,470	47.1	208,870	50.2
Total	Southern Harbour	77,600	19.6	1,603	8.0	79,203	19.0
	Northern Harbour	112,515	28.4	7,548	37.6	120,063	28.9
	South Eastern	60,900	15.4	3,221	16.0	64,121	15.4
	Western	56,641	14.3	1,287	6.4	57,928	13.9
	Northern	58,460	14.8	5,137	25.6	63,597	15.3
	Gozo and Comino	29,853	7.5	1,290	6.4	31,143	7.5
	Total	395,969	100.0	20,086	100.0	416,055	100.0

Table 2: Population by Nationality, Sex and Locality. Source NSO (2012).

In recent years, the arrival of foreign nationals, to seek work, as asylum seekers or refugees has vastly increased the number of languages spoken in Malta. The arrival of immigrants from North Africa to Southern Mediterranean countries is a well-known phenomenon and these migratory movements have affected Malta significantly given the geographical position of the Islands (as shown in Figure 1). Table 3 summarises the number of immigrants in Malta, who have applied for asylum in 2012. Most immigrants originate from the Sub-Saharan African Regions (91.1 %), while a further 5.5 % were of Asian descent (mainly of Syrian and Pakistani nationality[8]). Finally, another recent phenomenon is the arrival of young adults from Eastern European countries who are employed (legally or illegally) in various sectors of the local community.

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[8] National Statistics Office World Refugee Day: 2013

Country of citizenship	Total	Males	Females	Unspecified
Total	**2,080**	**1,620**	**456**	**4**
Europe	**7**	**2**	**5**	**-**
Serbia	6	1	5	-
Other European countries	1	1	-	-
Africa	**1,883**	**1,453**	**426**	**4**
Egypt	4	4	-	-
Eritrea	435	332	103	-
Ethiopia	38	33	5	-
Libya	59	50	5	4
Niger	7	7	0	-
Nigeria	70	57	13	-
Somalia	1,249	951	298	-
Sudan	7	7	-	-
Other African countries	14	12	2	-
America	**1**	**-**	**1**	**-**
Other American countries	1	-	1	-
Asia	**189**	**165**	**24**	**-**
India	5	5	-	-
Iraq	4	4	-	-
Pakistan	24	24	-	-
Syria	152	128	24	-
Other Asian countries	4	4	-	-
By age				
Total	**2,080**	**1,620**	**456**	**4**
0-17	241	186	55	-
18-34	1,663	1,286	377	-
35+	169	146	23	-
Unspecified	7	2	1	4

Table 3: Applications for asylum by citizenship and age (2012). Source: Office of the Refugee Commissioner.

2.1 The Educational System

2.1.1 *The structure of formal education system*

The Ministry of Education and Employment is responsible for the provision of education in Malta. The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) is specifically responsible to regulate, evaluate, and report on the various sections of the compulsory education system, with the aim of assuring quality education for all. The following figure summarises the structure organisation of the entities responsible for the educational system in Malta:
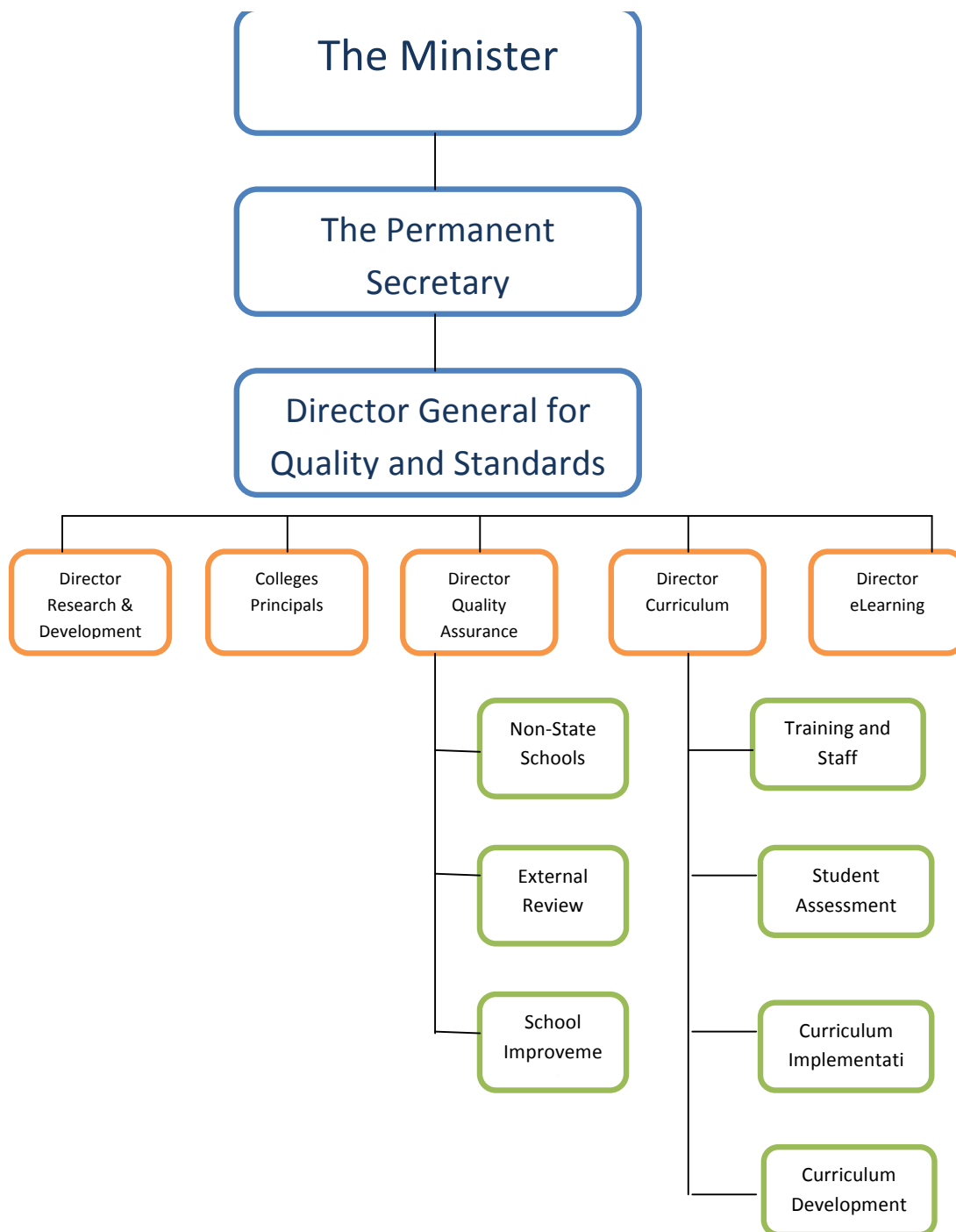
Figure 3: Structure of Organisational system (Source: DQSE)

The education policy in Malta is characterised by two main premises; equity and quality. This commitment is evident by an inclusive policy at all levels of education and the provision of free education to all from kindergarten to tertiary education.

Education in Malta is offered through three different providers: the state, the church, and the private sector, the latter type of school being perceived to be generally English medium schools[9]. The Government subsidises Church schools which do not charge tuition fees and gives tax rebates to parents sending their children to private schools. Table 4 presents the number of schools in Malta.

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[9] Farrugia (2009).

State Schools	101
Church Schools	55
Independent Schools	24

Table 4: Number of Schools. Source DQSE.

Compulsory education is sub-divided into a six year primary cycle (5 to 10+ years) and five years of secondary education (11 to 16 years). As highlighted in the *National Curriculum Framework* (2012)[10], throughout the whole educational cycle the government is committed to a policy of inclusive education, where children with special needs are integrated into the mainstream.

The following diagram provides a synopsis of the Cycles of education and the benchmarking or monitoring exercises carried out.
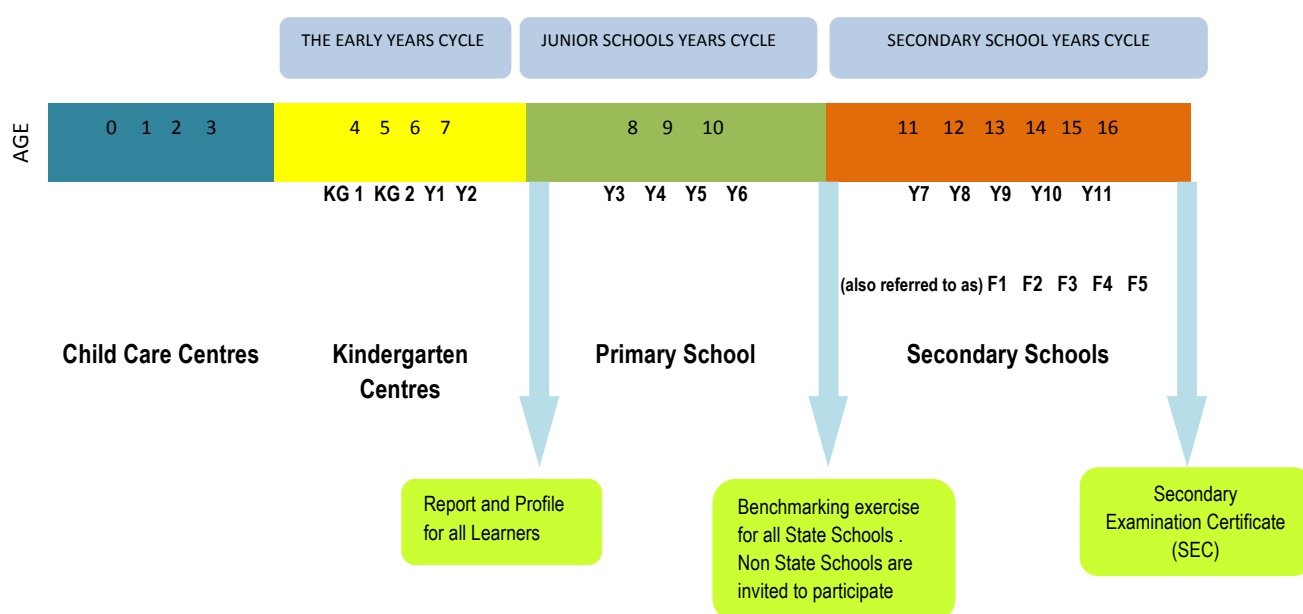
Figure 4: The Structure of the Maltese Educational System

Prior to compulsory schooling, childcare services are offered to children aged between 3 months and 3 years, as shown in Figure 4. Activities for children are focused on all the areas of child development including social, emotional, physical, intellectual, communication and creativity. The daily programme provided includes a wide variety of play activities that stimulate learning in a modern, safe and fully equipped environment[11].

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[10] Henceforth NCF.

[11] http://education.gov.mt/en/education/Pages/Early-Years.aspx.

Pre-Primary education caters for children aged between 3 and 5 years. This is provided in kindergarten centres that are attached to primary schools and fall under the responsibility of the Head of the primary school. At this level no formal teaching takes place. Educational activity is aimed at developing the children's social attitudes, language and communication skills in preparation for primary education. Although not compulsory, around 98% of 4 year olds attend kindergarten classes[12].

Primary education is co-educational in State and Independent Schools and covers the ages 5 to 10-11. Secondary education is available to all students who successfully complete primary education. As from 2013, State Secondary schools have become coeducational. Church Secondary schools are single sex schools[13]. The following table provides an overview of the number of students attending different schools and sectors:

	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary	Total
State	11371	7537	11782	30690
Church	1029	7741	7560	16330
Independent	1562	7741	7560	16330
Total	**13962**	**18228**	**21635**	**53825**

Table 5: Number of Students in 2013 (by type of school). Source DQSE.

At the end of formal schooling, students are awarded a *Secondary School Certificate and Profile,* where all types of formal and non-formal learning that takes place during the secondary years is accredited. The main aim of this document is to validate and document all learning in order to give a holistic picture of the individual student and show the development that has occurred during the years.

2.1.2 Post-Secondary Education

Several pathways are available to all students, after completing compulsory schooling, leading to academic and to vocational routes. Entry to most post-secondary institutions is normally gained on the basis of completed secondary education and passes in Secondary Education Certificate exams (SEC)[14]. It should be noted that the vocational route, also enables students to pursue an academic route at a later stage, as illustrated in Appendix 1.

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[12] https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Malta:Overview#

[13] In 2010 the 11+ exam was abolished for a more inclusive educational system. Prior to 2010, at the age of 11, students would generally sit for a qualifying examination. Those who passed were admitted into Junior Lyceums, which were schools for higher achievers, while the other students attended General Secondary Schools.

[14] Discussed in the following section.

Students can follow academic courses at post-secondary schools (also known as Sixth Forms) in a variety of subjects. On completion of these courses they sit for their Advanced Level Examination and they are awarded their Matriculation Certificate. With the exception of some private schools (such as, De La Salle College, St Aloysius' College, St. Edward's College and St. Martin's College Sixth Form), all are state-run but have academic and administrative autonomy. The state sixth form section is presently made up of the G.F. Abela Junior College, which is administered by the University of Malta, the Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School and Sir M.A. Refalo Centre for Further Studies, in Gozo.

Other institutions are available. The Malta College for Science and Technology (MCAST) offers various courses at certificate levels, MCAST-BTEC Diploma and first degree Levels. Appendix 2 offers an example of a course progression route. Since its establishment in 2001, over 18,200 students have successfully completed full-time courses at MCAST. Many others acquire new skills and qualifications through part-time courses every year. Currently, MCAST offers over 170 full-time and 300 part-time courses in 10 different industry sectors. This institution also offers students with the opportunity to merge vocational and academic routes. Students who obtain a Higher National Diploma and who satisfy the general requirements from the various institutes can also pursue a degree course at a later stage.

The Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) is aimed at meeting the changing needs of the Hospitality and Tourism Industry. Its main responsibility is to furnish the Tourism Sector with professional personnel who can guarantee an excellent standard of products and services within the Hospitality Industry. The Institute offers programmes of study at Certificate and Diploma level for careers in Hospitality and Tourism Management, Hotel Operations, Accommodation Operations, Travel Agency Operations, Travel and Tourism, and Tour Guiding[15].

2.1.3 Assessment and Entry to Post-Secondary Education Institutions

Entry to most post-secondary institutions is mostly determined by the number of qualifications obtained by the Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) Examinations Board. This was established in 1991 by the Senate and the Council of the University of Malta, to develop an examination system in lieu of the GCE Ordinary and Advanced level examinations set by UK examination boards.

Registration for the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examinations is restricted to students in their final year of compulsory schooling and other students aged sixteen years and over. These exams are intended as an external form of certification for the subjects

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[15] Refer to http://www.its.edu.mt/courses-admission/full-time-courses.html for more information about courses.

studied at school[16]. These are high-stakes examinations, as passes in the Core Subjects form part of the prerequisites to access most post-secondary institutions.

The Matriculation Certificate is based on the International Baccalaureate model that maintains that students develop into more mature individuals if their studies encompass both the areas of the Humanities and the Sciences. This system ensures that candidates study subjects from both the Humanities and the Sciences areas. In addition, all students are obliged to sit for Systems of Knowledge[17]. As from September 2012, all candidates can obtain the Matriculation Certificate within a period of five years. Two sessions take place, in May and in September. In this system of examinations, students study two subjects at Advanced level and another four at Intermediate level, including Systems of Knowledge[18]. The Matriculation Certificate is the obligatory entry requirement into the University of Malta. Certain Faculties have special course requirements in terms of the subjects needed for admission and the grades that are acceptable for further studies in particular areas. Each post-secondary institution has its own rules and regulations with regard to the qualifications needed to access such institutions.

With regard to the number of students following post-secondary courses, current statistics clearly show that more effort needs to be done to encourage students to pursue education after compulsory schooling. This is further evident in the rate of early-school-leavers which, at 22%, is nearly double the EU average of 12.8%. . Table 6 illustrates the percentage of early school leavers over three years.

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[16] Candidates opt for a Paper II A or a Paper II B. Paper A is more challenging than Paper II B. Candidates sitting for Paper I and Paper IIA may qualify for a grade within the range 1 to 5 (i.e. grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5), the results of candidates who do not obtain a grade 5 shall remain Unclassified (U). Candidates sitting for Paper I and Paper IIB may qualify for a grade not higher than 4 (i.e. grades 4, 5, 6, 7), the results of candidates who do not obtain at least a grade 7 shall remain Unclassified (U).

[17] Systems of Knowledge is a subject which enables students to develop critical thinking skills, for higher education by serving as stimulus for a critical appreciation of culture within an interdisciplinary programme premised on the breaking down of departmental borders and specialisation. For more information visit http://www.jc.um.edu.mt/sok.

[18] https://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/152428/mcstat11.pdf

Year	Sex		Total
	Males	Females	
2009	32.0	23.5	28.0
2010	32.6	18.5	25.9
2011	29.6	17.1	23.6
2012	27.5	17.6	22.7

Note: The term 'Early school-leavers' refers to persons between 18-24 years of age who have achieved lower secondary school level or less and who are not in further education. Students on holiday are considered as persons in education. This indicator has been calculated as a percentage of the total population in the same age bracket.

Table 6: Number of early school leavers . Source NSO (2013, p.12).

Statistics on the number of passes in SEC exams illustrate that 44% of fifth-formers obtained the required 6 exams to take up post-secondary studies and around 50% got less than five subjects or did not even sit for the exams. To deal with these concerns the *National Commission for Higher Education* will be carrying out a skills analysis exercise in the labour market and work to introduce vocational subjects in secondary schools. The project, in collaboration with the European Commission, is aimed to reduce early school leaving.

Moreover, *Alternative Learning Programmes* have also been introduced in schools. These programmes are intended for secondary school students who require additional support and for school leavers who do not aspire to sit for the Secondary Education Certificate examinations. Students are also provided with an alternative educational programme which features Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) Level 1[19] training courses in vocational subjects. Courses in Basic Skills in Maltese, English and Mathematics are also offered to these students.

2.1.4 Tertiary Education

The University of Malta is the highest teaching institution in Malta. It is a publicly funded institution and is open to all those who have the requisite qualifications. Over the past few years, the University has reviewed its structures in order to be in line with the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area. About 11,000 students including over 600 international students from 80 different countries, follow full-time or part-time degree and diploma courses. A basic Foundation Studies Course enables international high school students who have completed their secondary or high school education overseas but who do not have the necessary entry requirements, to qualify for admission to an undergraduate degree course at the University of Malta. Over 3,000 students graduate in various disciplines annually. Moreover, there are a further 2,600 pre-tertiary students at the Junior College

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[19] Refer to Appendix 3.

which is also managed by the University[20]. The university offers courses at diploma level, and at Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral levels.

Figure 5 illustrates that throughout the years, the humanities courses have maintained their popularity, closely followed by the course in business and administration, when compared to other courses, with a slight increase since 2008.
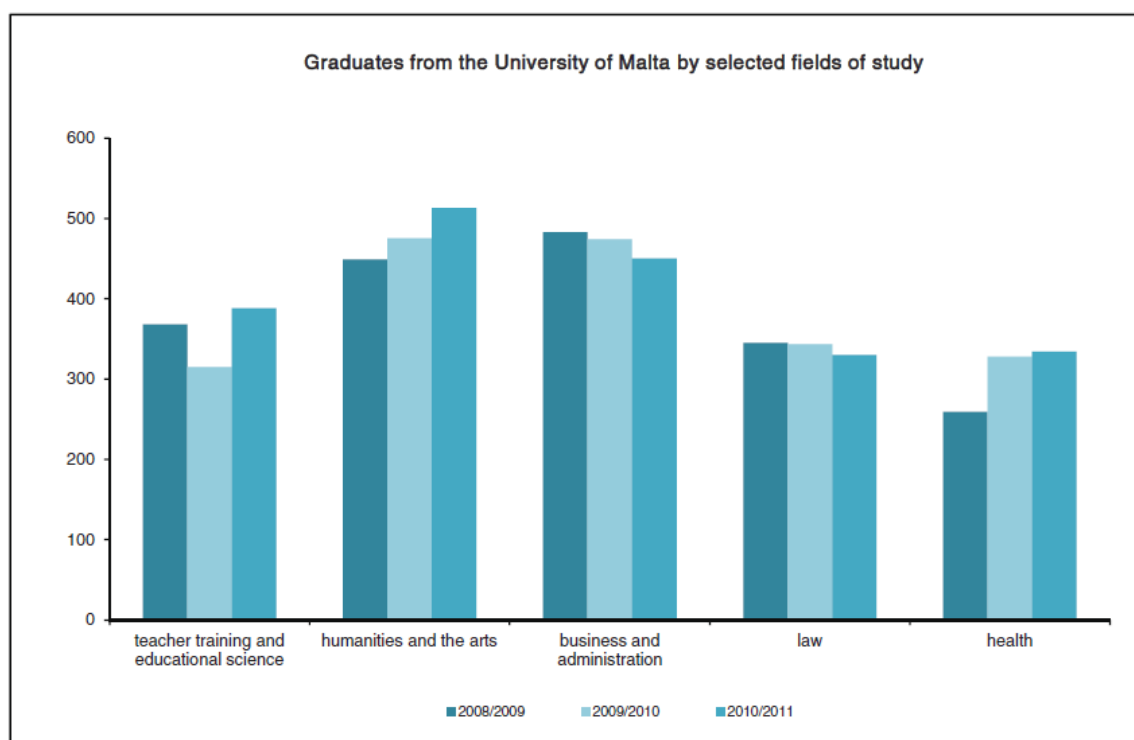
Figure 5: Graduates from the University of Malta by selected fields of study. Source: NSO (2013 p. 12)

2.1.5 The Aims of Education

The common objectives and principles for teaching in the three compulsory educational cycles are laid down in the National Curriculum Framework NCF, the official document which governs educational policies in Malta. Primarily, the aim of education is to provide all your people with access for meaningful certification at the end of compulsory education

In the Early Years, the emphasis is on the development of skills, knowledge and competences, values and positive dispositions towards learning which will be developed and

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[20]Further information can be obtained on http://www.um.edu.mt/about/uom.

extended in later years. Pedagogies which incorporate play and experiential learning are adopted in classrooms, where children acquire social, communicative and intellectual competences.

In the Primary Years, the subject curricula propose a common learning content for all students, Students are given the opportunity to master Maltese and English, Mathematics, a Science subject and Digital Literacy. Learning areas are introduced in the Junior Years and extended into the Secondary Years, where learners also choose a number of optional subjects according to their interests. The development of the learning areas for the Junior and Secondary Years were guided by the *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning: European Reference Framework* (2006/962/EC). The following diagram illustrates the Learning Areas and the Cross-Curricular Themes presented in the NCF:
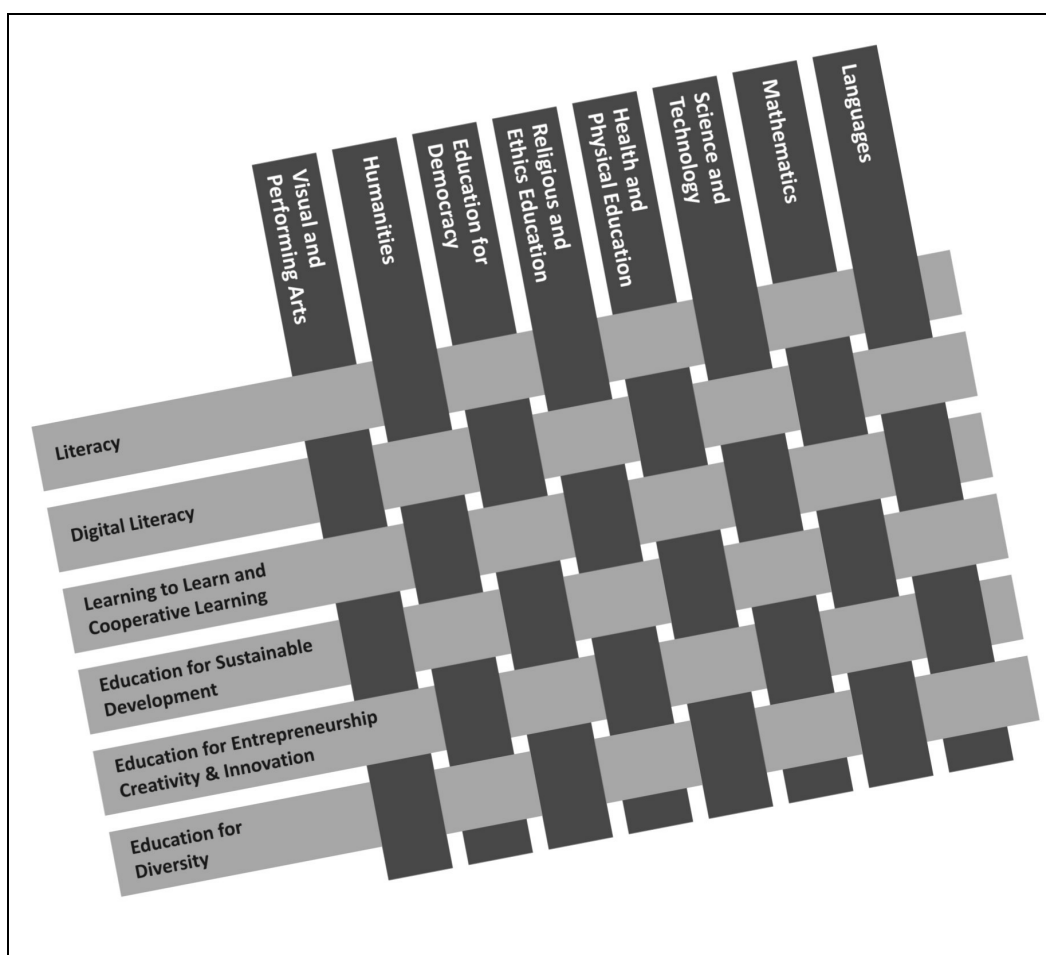

Figure 6: The Learning and the Cross-Curricular Themes in the National Curriculum Framework NCF (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012, p.39).

The Junior Years Curriculum is divided into the following learning main areas:

- Languages: Maltese and English and awareness of a foreign language (school- based decision)
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology : Science and Design and Technology
- Religious and Ethical Education
- Humanities: Geography and History
- Education for Democracy
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Health and Physical Education

The Secondary Years Curriculum embraces all subjects that will lead students to completing compulsory schooling. It is divided into these main learning areas:

- Languages: Maltese and English
- Mathematics
- Religious and Ethical Education
- Humanities Education: History and Geography
- Education for Democracy: Social Studies
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Home Economics, Personal and Social Development (PSD) and Physical Education (PE)

During the first year of the secondary cycle, the students generally study one foreign language which may include:
- Arabic
- French
- German
- Italian
- Russian
- Spanish

The choice of subjects generally depends on the availability in schools. There are also schools who might give students the opportunity to student two foreign languages.

During the final three years of the secondary cycle, students make further choices in their subject options. The following list presents the range of subjects normally offered by schools:

- Accounts
- Art

- History
- Home Economics

- Business Studies

- Computing
- Design and Technology
- Drama
- Economics
- Graphical Communication
- Environmental Studies
- European Studies
- Geography

- Foreign Languages: Arabic/ French/ German/ Italian/ Russian/ Spanish
- Life Sciences (Biology)
- Materials Sciences (Chemistry)
- Music
- Physical Education
- Social Studies
- Textiles Studies
- Vocational Subjects[21]

2.1.6 Resource Centres for students with special needs

Over the past 35 years major advancements have taken place in the area of education for students' with special needs. In 1995 an Inclusion policy was introduced in mainstream state schools. This saw an increase in students with IEN attending mainstream schools with their peers and with the support of a Learning Support Assistant. Currently there are 1725 Learning Support Assistants employed in State Schools.

Moreover, in 2005, *The Inclusive and Special Education Review* placed emphasis on the links between mainstream schools and Resource Centres by having the same transition structures, by putting particular emphasis on curricular development and implementation, as well as, better quality services for students[22]. Table 7 illustrates the number of students attending the Resource Centres for students with special needs.

Maria Regina College, Dun Manwel Attard School	78
St Benedict College, Helen Keller School	31
St Clare College, San Miguel School	11
St Gorg Preca College, Guardian Angel School	44
St Gorg Preca College, Mater Dei School	10

Table 7: Number of students attending resource centres for students with special needs

The ages of the students attending these schools span between the ages of 4 to 22 years. Recently, the number of new entrants into these schools at primary level has diminished as most students with individual needs are attending mainstream schools. The 2005 report

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[21] Leading to certification (Foreign and Local) recognised on the Malta Qualifications Framework.

[22] Directorate for Educational Services . (2009). *Special Schools Reform*, available online, http://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents/Special_Schools_Reform_ENG.pdf

states that the majority of students fall within the post secondary cohort that is 16 years and over. Teaching staff at the four schools are all qualified teachers and some of them have additional qualifications, specialising in the teaching of students with IEN.

2.1.7 Adult Education

Lifelong learning and educational opportunities are considered important principles of the Maltese educational policy, as this forms an important base for an enterprising society. In line with this stance, the Directorate for Lifelong Learning offers courses for adults, to sustain a knowledge-based economy, and to encourage learning as a key to success. It also seeks to lift the barriers for participation in adult learning so that the overall participation is increased and to adopt the *Action Plan on Adult Education* as set out by the European Commission. The Directorate offers adult learning classes in several areas of knowledge. Some courses are also aimed at individuals who need to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills in order to be in a better position to gain employment. A number of evening classes also include courses specifically in English and Maltese for foreigners. The Directorate is also responsible for scholarships in several priority sectors of the knowledge-based economy[23]. Adults can also follow courses at the Malta College of Arts and Science, both on a full-time and on a part-time basis.

Adults have the opportunity to study a variety of languages. The Directorate for Lifelong Learning offers courses which take place both in the morning and in the evening, where adults can follow courses at different levels, for example basic conversation classes and also courses which lead to SEC and MATSEC certification. A total of 3787 individuals are taking language related courses of which 526 are attending literacy courses.[24]

2.2 Language Education in Maltese Schools

The importance attached to the teaching and learning of languages is highlighted in the NCF document, where one of the main outcomes of this Framework is to enable students to communicate effectively in at least three languages including Maltese and English, once they finish compulsory education. The primary aim of learning languages is to enable learners:

> *"to develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning, of literature and literature learning, as well as widening their personal, social and cultural understanding"* (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012, p. 34).

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[23] http://lifelonglearning.gov.mt/articles/About%20Us/Directorate_for_Lifelong_Learning.aspx

[24] Source DQSE.

Moreover, the NCF states that the chief objective of language education should be for students to develop fluency and competence in the mother tongue, and the second language, which in the Maltese context general refer to Maltese and English respectively. Language teaching and learning is vital as it will help students to:

- *use questioning, information, critical thinking, decision-making and memory to organise thoughts, ideas, feelings, and knowledge;*

- *communicate with others and respond to how others communicate;*

- *formulate, express and present their arguments, feelings and ideas in a persuasive manner;*

- *appreciate and enjoy the literary heritage of the languages they learn.* (Ministry for Education, 2012, p. 34).

The NCF also states that the main aim of teaching the English language in schools is to *"provides access to near-universal knowledge and culture"* (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012, p. 34), since English is considered to be an international language. The NCF recommends that 30 % of the time during the Junior Years Cycle, the Lower Secondary Years Cycle and the Senior Secondary Years Cycle should be dedicated to the teaching of languages. This can be translated to the number of lessons per week in Secondary Schools which have been proposed for the 2014-2015 scholastic year, as illustrated in the following table:

40-Lesson Curriculum
Effective as from 2014/15
New subject weightings come into force in phased-in manner starting with Year 7

Subject	College Middle and Secondary Schools				
	Number of Lessons				
	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11
Maltese	5	5	3	4	4
English (First foreign language)	6	6	6	5	5
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5
Religion/Ethics	2	2	2	2	2
Social Studies	1	1	1	1	1
Integrated Science	4	4			
Physics			4	4	4
History	2	2	1	1	1
Geography	1	1	1	1	1
Information and Communication Technology	1	1	1	1	1
PHE	5 *	5 *	3 **	3 **	3 **
Expressive Art	2	2			
PSCD	2	2	2	2	2
Second foreign language	4	4	3	3	3
Elective subjects offered during the final three years of secondary education (Option 1)			4	4	4
Elective subjects offered during the final three years of secondary education (Option 2)			4	4	4
Total	40	40	40	40	40

* 3 PE and 2 HE/DT(RM&E) on alternate weeks
** 2 PE and 1 HE

Table 8: The 40-lesson curriculum, effective from 2014-2015. Each lesson lasts 40 minutes. Source: DQSE .

The table shows that in the first year of secondary school, prominence is given to the teaching of English, with 6 lessons per week, closely followed by Maltese which is allotted 5 lessons per week. All foreign languages in Year 7 will be assigned 4 lessons per week, which will be reduced to 3 lessons per week in the final three years.

The curriculum also encourages the teaching of a foreign language in the light of the political, geographical and historical context of the Maltese. The teaching and learning of foreign languages at secondary level caters for the acquisition of further communication tools that are useful to appreciate cultural diversity and to facilitate interaction within the European and international contexts.

According to the European Survey on Language Competences (2011)[25], Malta has achieved relatively high competency levels in foreign levels in foreign language teaching and learning developed by young people in Malta during the compulsory schooling. Malta ranks in the top half of the ranking (together with the Netherlands and Estonia) for both first target language and second target language (Netherlands, Malta, Estonia).

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[25] http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/strategic-framework/documents/language-survey-final-report_en.pdf

2.2.1 The teaching of Maltese

One of the main outcomes of education is for young people to be able to acquire a sense of Maltese identity, while recognising and respecting others within a Mediterranean, European and globalised context. Therefore, the teaching of Maltese language and literature is primarily aimed at developing a sense of identity.

The Early Years

The NCF states that the overall objectives of language learning in the Early Years should predominantly focus on helping children increase their awareness of the functions and purposes of language skills. From a young age, children can gain flexibility and control over language through correct and appropriate choice of words, by extending their vocabulary, learning how to assert themselves and becoming aware of the subtle influence which language has on society.

Young children will also become aware that they can use listening, speaking, reading and writing skills as tools which are used constantly in order for different purposes and functions. Children are exposed to languages in meaningful ways using songs, stories and other activities, which would serve to promote learning and understanding of the world which goes beyond language learning itself. In State Schools, children are first introduced to Maltese literacy and then English literacy is introduced in the second term of that academic year. Speaking and listening activities take place in both English and Maltese. Students are not formally assessed, although teachers are encouraged to write profiles to track the progress of each child.

The Junior Years

An engagement with the Maltese language throughout the period of primary education extends the child's linguistic experiences and deepens cultural awareness. It also helps to instil a local identity in relation to the global and European perspective. The principles guiding the teaching of Maltese in Primary schools are for students to:

- develop skills and linguistic knowledge to be use the Maltese language in different contexts;
- promote personal and identity development;
- promote positive attitudes towards the Maltese language and towards other languages.

In the Junior Cycle Years, from Years 3 to 6 the NCF recommends school-based assessment, incorporating the assessment of oral/aural skills. The assessment process provides parents,

teachers and the school administration with an overview of each child's development in terms of levels of achievement. In the State sector the process becomes more formalised with the introduction of examinations in conjunction with other forms of assessment in Year 4. At the end of the Junior Cycle, the four language skills, (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are assessed in the national end-of-Primary benchmark examination, introduced in 2011.

The Secondary Years

The Maltese curriculum is based on attainment levels (ranging from 1 to 10) [26], which are observable statements of learning outcomes that students can attain. There are approximately eight of these statements in each attainment level descriptor. Once a student has attained the majority of the learning outcome statements in an attainment level descriptor, they are assumed to be working within the next level[27].

The teaching and learning of Maltese at secondary level strengthens the learners' sense of identity and conceptual development. The main aims guiding the curriculum are:

- To provide students with opportunities to become proficient in the Maltese language and to be able to use this language in all contexts;

- To develop proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing and to be able to use the language in traditional and less traditional contexts, such as digital ones;

- To consolidate grammatical and lexical knowledge that will enhance communicative competence in the language;

- To examine the intricate link between culture and language, and how language has evolved, and to appreciate the fact that language is in contrast evolution (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education ,(2012a)).

Traditionally, the teaching of Maltese as a first language has been associated with a grammar-translation pedagogy. However, a more communicative approach is being

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[26] There are ten levels of attainment level descriptors. Level Four is equivalent for Year One and Two in Primary school and each level then progresses at two yearly intervals. Each strand of learning has a set of attainment levels which describe the progression in student learning. Each level represents the range of attainment that an average student can be expected to achieve every two year years. Attainment level ten is for those students who significantly exceed the expected level of attainment at Form Five.

[27] It should be noted that that the syllabi mentioned here apply to state schools. Private and Church run schools need to adhere strictly to the syllabi, but they are to follow that principles outline in the National Curriculum Framework Document. Moreover, most schools follow the syllabi set by the MATSEC board, in the last two years of Secondary Years, to enable their students to sit for these exams at the end of Secondary School.

promoted in more recent editions of syllabi, where there is a focus on the four language skills, together with reference to cultural aspects pertaining to Maltese society. The syllabi contain a list of grammatical and lexical items that teachers should cover in class, accompanied by a description of attainment levels. Students also study aspects related to idiomatic expressions and proverbs, and there is also an emphasis on the fact that bilingual identity is an important facet of Maltese identity.

Summative assessment takes place at the end of each year. Formative assessment is also encouraged together with ongoing assessment of students' work throughout the academic year. In Secondary school, summative assessment at the end of the fifth year is a significant exam, as the final marks are featured in the *Secondary School Certificate and Profile*. It is a final written examination that also contains an aural and oral component. Students are required to demonstrate proficiency in receptive skills and deal with a variety of texts of differing levels of formality. With regard to the productive skills, students are required to demonstrate that they are able to use spoken language in various contexts, and that they are able to write texts of various lengths and genres, such as a short newspaper report or a formal letter. During their oral examination, candidates are also expected to discuss a topic related to traditions and cultural heritage. Furthermore, students are assessed for their knowledge of literary texts that have been covered in class.

As discussed in Section 2.1.3, at the end of their fifth secondary school year, students can also sit for their Secondary Education Certificate Examination. The Maltese exam is a high-stakes exam as it is considered to be a prerequisite for most post-secondary courses and also for employment purposes. Currently language and literature lead to one exam. The aims guiding the syllabus leading to this certification are similar to the ones guiding the teaching of Maltese in the secondary school years:

- to assess the candidate's proficiency in terms of linguistic accuracy, productive skills, receptive skills and interaction;
- to assess the candidate's ability to use the appropriate style and register, depending on context of use;
- to assess the candidate's knowledge and appreciation of different literary texts (MATSEC examinations board, (2011a)).

The examination is made up of two main Papers. Paper 1 (50 % of the global mark) comprises an oral component, where candidates are also asked questions about topics related to Maltese culture. Paper 1 is also made up of a language use component, where reading skills, knowledge of grammar and writing skills are assessed. Paper 2 (50 % of the global mark) focuses on literature, and students write essays about a variety of themes, characters and literary devices. Students study the set texts that are set by the examination board.

2.2. The Teaching of English

The aims guiding the teaching of English in schools are defined by Malta's sociolinguistic situation, together with the acknowledgement that English is a global language, and thus important for communication and economical purposes. The general aims of the teaching and learning of English as a second language in primary and secondary schools are to enable students:

- *to develop their knowledge of the conventions, structures, patterns and vocabulary of the English language so that they can understand the way the English language works, and develop skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing that are vital to learning in other curriculum subjects, and the ability to communicate confidently, appropriately and effectively for different purposes and in different contexts, and become creative by using their imagination and mastery of language to express thoughts, ideas, experiences and feelings;*

- *to benefit from the use of the World Wide Web, react creatively to new technology and take responsibility for their own learning by becoming autonomous learners, enhance their lifelong language development, and prepare themselves for the world of work and further education in Malta and abroad;*

- *to appreciate literature as a source of enjoyment, knowledge of the world and as artistic accomplishment, engage critically and creatively with a variety of literary, non-literary and media texts and appreciate how writers and speakers use the linguistic and literary features of the English language to convey meaning and to create desired effects, and develop an awareness and understanding of and respect for the culture/s of the people who speak the target language*

(Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, 2012b, p. 8).

The Early Years

The philosophy underlying the teaching of English in the Early Years is similar to the one underpinning the teaching of Maltese. Language awareness takes place through listening to stories and rhymes and children are encouraged to participate in story telling activities. Children are also exposed to books. They are also given as opportunities to practise and consolidate their fine motor skills. The NCF states that second-language teaching can be successful if lessons are learnt from mother tongue acquisition and the pedagogies used in the more formal school settings should be driven by principles which are appropriate for the age group. No formal assessment takes place, although teachers are encouraged to create profiles to illustrate the progress of each child.

The teaching of English at Primary Level

The principles guiding the teaching of English in the Primary school are to enable the learners to:

- use appropriate language for different purposes;
- master linguistic competence - vocabulary and grammatical structures;
- interact effectively using language;
- become investigative and constructivist learners by making use of printed and electronic text;
- develop creative and imaginative skills
- to develop a positive attitude to language learning and a sensitivity to and awareness of foreign languages and cultures[28].

The Primary Syllabi of various years outline the skills that the students should acquire, starting with letter recognition and appreciation of both languages and moving on to specific linguistic functions that the students should become familiar with and to be able to produce.

Formal assessment of English starts at the end of the fourth year. It is in the form of a written examination, with a listening comprehension component, a reading comprehension, testing of grammar and vocabulary items and a writing task. Assessment of the Junior Years is by a final benchmarking examination at the end of the sixth year. The exam comprises of a written, an aural and an oral component.

The teaching of English at Secondary Level

One of the main tenets guiding the teaching of English at Secondary level is that the acquisition of proficiency in English is essential for learners to function effectively in a local and a global context. Similarly to the Maltese syllabus for State Schools, the English language syllabus, is placed within a broader unitised curriculum[29] which covers all of the content that can be taught within each year of schooling.

The English curriculum is based on a communicative, task-based approach to language learning, based on 10 attainment levels. According to the *English Language Syllabus for Secondary Schools*[30], successful completion of the five year course would mean that

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[28] *English, Syllabus for Primary Schools*, p. ii

[29] Where the similar functions, topics and outcomes are covered in most subjects throughout the year.

[30] https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Curriculum/Form-3-to-5/Pages/default.aspx

students should have mastered a B2 level of competence, according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*.

The English language syllabi present a list of grammatical and lexical items, together with language functions that students should be able to master. Topics are based on the children's own interests and needs and teachers are encouraged to devise activities that involve language being used in real-life situations. Students are also exposed to a range of literary texts, which they read and analyse for an appreciation of literature.

Summative assessment takes place once a year. Teachers are encouraged to engage in formative and ongoing assessment of unit-based work. At the end of the Secondary years, summative assessment is by a final written examination that also contains an aural and oral component. Students are required to demonstrate proficiency in receptive skills ranging from basic retrieval of facts to higher order skills, such as inference. With regard to the productive skills, students are required to demonstrate that they have mastered certain sub-skills that range in complexity and demand, such as presenting facts and opinions, and producing several text types such as articles, film reviews, reports and narratives. In the fourth and fifth year, students can also sit for an English Literature Examination, at the end of the year, while in Form 1, 2 and 3, students answer questions about unseen literary texts.

At the end of their fifth secondary school year, students can sit for their Secondary Education Certificate SEC Examination. This certification is also considered to be compulsory for most post-secondary courses and also for employment purposes. The aims guiding the syllabus leading to this certification are similar to the ones guiding the teaching of English in the secondary school years:

- *To promote competence in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing; competence in this context should be interpreted as referring to the ability of using the language fluently, accurately and appropriately;*

- *To ensure that candidates achieve a level of competence which reflects the position English occupies in the Maltese educational system;*

- *To foster the development of English in the national and wider context ;*

- *To foster the development of language skills needed for further study, work and leisure;*

- *To encourage methods of learning and teaching which help learners build up the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to become more independent in thought and action* (MATSEC examinations board (2011b), p. 2).

The examination comprises two main Papers. Paper 1 is made up of an aural, an oral and a language use component, which add up to 50 % of the marks. Paper 2 is made up of a variety of tasks such as reading comprehensions, short writing tasks and a longer writing task. This paper also comprises 50% of the global mark. Students may also sit for an optional exam in English Literature.

2.2.3 The teaching of foreign languages

Foreign language study has been an intrinsic aspect of Malta's educational system for many years. The importance attached to foreign languages is also explained by the fact that as a country Malta is highly dependent on foreign language skills for interaction with other European and global nations and cultures. In fact, the NCF emphasises the need for learning foreign languages as *"foreign language learning is a strength in our local system which needs to be sustained"* (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012, p. 58).

The teaching of foreign languages in Primary Schools

In Primary schools, in addition to the simultaneous development of Maltese and English, in the later years of the Junior Years cycle, children also participate in a foreign language awareness programme. The *Foreign Language Awareness Programme* (FLAP), started in 2007 first by teaching the Italian language, followed by French. Currently Italian, French and German are being taught in all state schools (with some exceptions in Gozo). Presently the programme includes the teaching of Italian in Year 5 and the teaching of French and German in Year 6. The aim of this initiative is to enable primary school pupils to "*gain an awareness of foreign languages with the aim of becoming open to other languages and cultures with a positive disposition towards mobility and new experiences*" (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p.33). Some Church schools have followed suit and have introduced French and Italian to Year 5 students. All schools have a minimum of 8 sessions to a maximum of 10 sessions of 30-45 minutes each.

The programme is for students aged between 9-11 years and promotes awareness of other languages through play. The main focus is on oral and aural components where students are encouraged to listen and speak the languages they are being exposed to. Videos and songs are used in classes to increase listening exposure.

The call for applications for FLAP teachers in state schools is an internal call (FLAP teachers are language graduates, who have followed the B.Ed (Hons) or the PGCE course at the University of Malta, and are secondary school teachers. The Department has also extended the call for applications to Spanish, however, human resources are limited.

The teaching of foreign languages at Secondary School

All students attending secondary schools must study at least one foreign language. The following figure indicates the number of students studying foreign languages in state schools in 2013-2014[31]. The diagram clearly shows that Italian remains the most popular language being learnt at school, but over the past few years there has been an increase in interest in other languages, particularly in Spanish and German. It should also be noted, that with regard to the choice of subjects in the third year of Secondary School, a few students choose languages, particularly German, Russian and Spanish, especially when compared to other subjects.
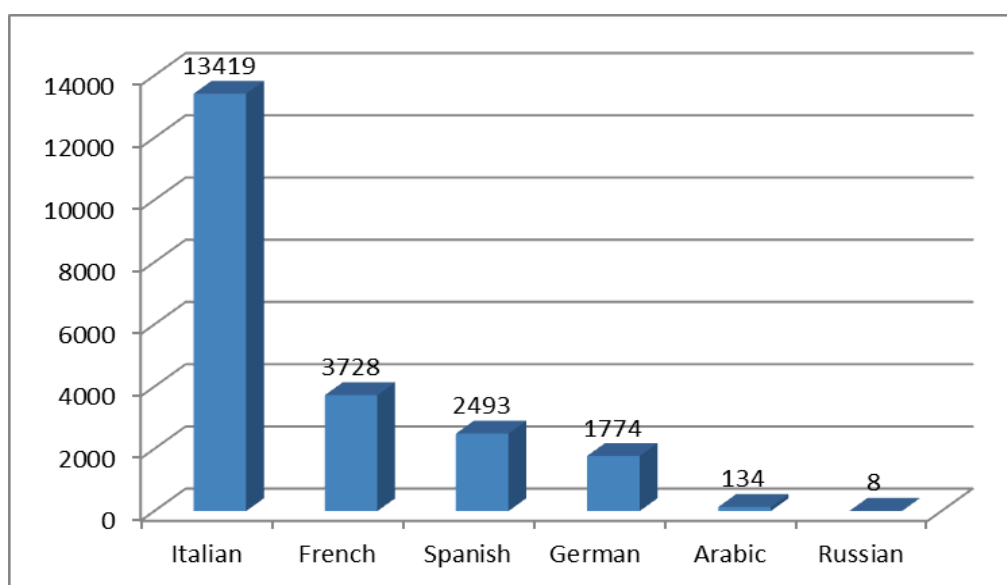
Figure 7: Number of students stuyding languages in state secondary schools. Source: DQSE.

As argued in Section 2.1.5, individual schools have considerable autonomy and flexibility with regard to curriculum options, taking into account the resources available and the needs of the students.

With regard to the teaching approaches that are advocated in syllabi, emphasis is laid on communication, where students are encouraged to discover the language by participating in a number of tasks and activities. Students also explore aspects related to culture of the target language as emphasis is placed not only on developing multilingualism but multiculturalism. Assessment takes place via a formal examination at the end of every year. The format of the exam depends on the language being assessed, but in the majority of the cases, aural, oral and written skills are assessed.

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[31] Refer to Appendix 4 for a breakdown of language choices by class.

At the end of the fifth year in Secondary school, students can sit for the SEC exams in the languages that are being taught in schools. The main aims guiding the SEC syllabus for the teaching of languages are:

- To develop the ability to use the language effectively for purposes of communication;

- To develop the ability of learning to learn and to evaluate one's own learning;

- To offer insights into culture and civilization, intercultural awareness and notions of human universal values;

- To contribute to the cognitive and affective development of the student.

The MATSEC Examinations Board defines communicative competence as the acquisition of linguistic competence, where the student learns to handle the lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonological and orthographic elements of the language. This is also coupled by pragmatic competence, which refers to an awareness of the way in which messages and meanings are structured and realised, including a sociolinguistic component where the student learns to use the language according to socially accepted norms in a given situation (MATSEC Examinations Board, (2011c), p. 5).

2.3 Language Teaching at Post-Secondary and Tertiary Levels

It is beyond the scope of this report to provide a detailed description of language education at post-secondary level, other than that pertaining to teacher education. Nevertheless, language teaching at post-secondary levels is intricately linked to language learning which takes place at school and vice versa. Therefore a brief description is warranted:

- **The Sixth Forms:** All sixth forms provide courses in a number of languages, which lead students to sit for their Advanced Level or Intermediate Level exams. The languages that these schools offer vary, depending on availability of resources. The languages commonly offered are: English, Maltese, Italian, French, Spanish, German, Arabic, Russian, Classical Languages. The courses are comprised of a linguistic and also of a literary component.

- **The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology:** Students following courses at MQF levels 1 and 2 receive support in literacy. Courses in Maltese and English are organised for these students to ensure that they receive basic academic skills. Students who are following courses at other levels also receive training in academic writing and support in relation to the field they are specialising in.

- **The Institute of Tourism Studies:** The Institute offers language courses in related to the field of Hospitality and Tourism. Due to the importance of the knowledge of

languages in tourism students, the language component is an integral part of each course.

- **The University of Malta:** The University offers a number of courses in languages, at diploma, first degree and post-graduate levels. Support in academic writing is also provided by the *Centre for English Language Proficiency*, for students who are not following language courses. The following table illustrates the number of students studying languages, who graduated from the University of Malta in 2012-2013. When comparing graduates in 2009 to those in 2013, there has been a slight increase in students taking up languages at first degree levels (B.A (General) and B.A. (Hons)), with the most popular European languages being English, Maltese, Italian, and French. German is the least popular option and Spanish is slightly gaining ground.

Faculty of Arts: (Total Number of Students: 1757)

Course	Number of Students	Total Number of Students
Bachelor of Arts (General)	204	385
Bachelor of Arts (Honours)	160	329
Master of Arts	68	235
Master of Philosophy	3	12
Doctor of Philosophy	2	6

Institute for European Studies (Total Number of Students: 146)

Course	Number of Students	Total Number of Students
Bachelor of European Studies (Hons) with language speciality	17	98

Institute of Maltese Studies – 10 students

Table 9: Statistics for student graduates in 2012-2013. Source:
http://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/206502/completedawards2012-3.pdf

2.4 Local and International assessment of languages

As outlined in Section 2.1.3, students sit for their SEC, Ordinary Level exams at the end of their fifth year at Secondary school and for their Intermediate or Advanced level exams at a later state. These exams can be translated to the following *Common European Framework Reference Threshold Levels*:

	SEC
Maltese	Students obtaining a Grade 1-2 – Level B2
English	Students obtaining a Grade 1-2 – Level B2
Foreign Languages (Italian, French, Spanish, German, Arabic, Russian)	Students obtaining a Grade 1-2 – Level B1
	Intermediate Level
Maltese	Students obtaining Grade A-B- Level C1
English	Students obtaining Grade A-B- Level C1
Foreign Languages	Students obtaining Grade A-B- Level B2
	Advanced Level
All languages	Students obtaining Grade A-B -C2 (other grades could range from C1 to C2, on the lower scale)

Source: Personal communication with Ms Carole Mizzi, Principal Subject Area Officer, MATSEC unit.

The General Entry Requirements for Tertiary Education consist of the Matriculation Certificate and a pass at grade 5 or better in the Secondary Education Certificate examinations in English Language, Maltese and Mathematics[32]. This applies to most post-secondary institutions, although certain establishments offer courses for students to enable them to re-sit their SEC exams, to obtain the minimum qualifications.

Appendix 5 also provides more information about the grades obtained in languages at ordinary, intermediate and advanced levels. The results for SEC exams are summarised in the following diagram[33]:

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[32] http://www.um.edu.mt/registrar/prospective/faqs#Entry Requirements

[33] Minimum qualification that is a perquisite for most post-secondary institutions.
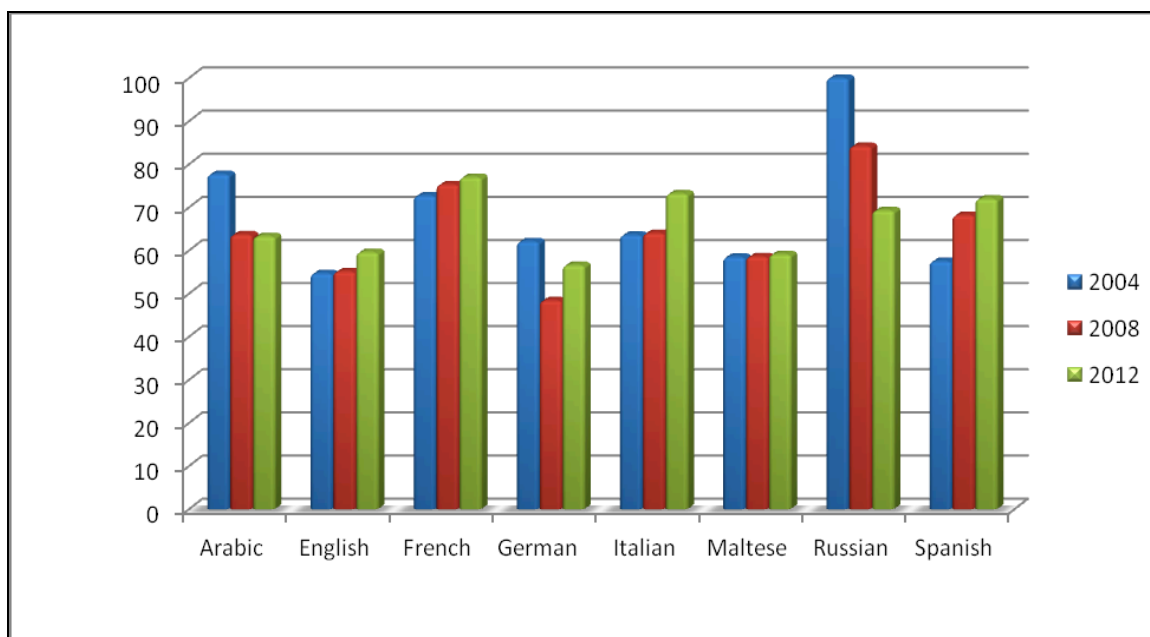
Figure 8: Number of passes (Grade 1-5) in languages in 2004, 2008 and 2012. Source: DQSE.

The diagram and tables in Appendix 5 show that the differences in the number of students passing their English and Maltese exams over three years, have not been wholly significant. However, there is a general consensus that, over the past few years, there has been a decline in standards with regard to proficiency in both written and spoken Maltese and English. It should be noted that the number of students not passing their SEC exams in Maltese and English (and also in all languages) ties in to the concerns that have been discussed in Section 2.1.3, where a significant percentage of students are not obtaining minimum qualifications in both Maltese and English (among other subjects). In response to these needs, The *National Literacy Strategy for All* has been launched to promote and enhance lifelong and lifewide, high quality literacy practices among children, youths, adults, third country nationals and persons with learning difficulties. This initiative strives also to improve literacy outcomes, resulting in inclusive practices, higher educational qualifications, and better job prospects.

With regard to international assessment, when compared to international counterparts, Maltese 10 year-olds obtained a mean reading score of 477 which was significantly lower than the international average (500) in the *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS, 2011)[34] . In the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA 2009+)[35] the

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[34] *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2011), Malta Report*, Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta.

[35] *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2009+) (2013), Malta Report,* Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta.

percentage (36.3) of 15 year-olds who were low achievers in reading literacy was significantly higher than the EU average (19.7). From the PIRLS (2011) students scored higher in tasks that required retrieving information and making straight forward inferences than in tasks that required interpreting, integrating and evaluating information.

With reference to more general aspects of language learning and literacy, the language instructional time in a school year in Malta as reported by teachers is 51 hours less than the international average. The time spent reading as part of language instruction in a school year in Malta is the lowest in all countries and is 34 hours less than the international average. The time spent reading across the curriculum, including time spent on reading instruction in a school year in Malta is 42 hours less than the international average. From the PISA (2009+) results, it emerged that students attending Area Secondary schools and boys attending Junior Lyceums scored more than 100 points less on the reading literacy scale than their counterparts.

2.5 Teaching Maltese as a foreign language

As illustrated in Section 1.5, in the past decades there has been an influx of foreigners arriving on the islands. Malta has become a sought-after destination for many foreigners, including tourists, tertiary level students and professionals who visit the island for work-related purposes. Alongside this influx there has also been a considerable increase in the number of individuals, mostly from Africa, who enter the country illegally. Therefore, one consequence of this evolution has been that are increasing numbers of students in Maltese schools whose first language is neither Maltese nor English. Therefore courses are organised to teach Maltese as a foreign language, to enable such groups to integrate in society.

The *Directorate for Lifelong Learning* offers such courses for foreigners. Other stakeholders in the area include various non-governmental organisations which also offer adult education literacy programmes. For instance, one may include the *Foundation for Educational Services*[36], the *Fondazzjoni Guzè Ellul Mercer* which organises basic literacy courses in Maltese, the *Maltese Paulo Freire Institute*, the Integra Foundation, which offers courses in Maltese and English to refugees, and the Jesuit Refugee Service[37]. The Malta University Language School[38] offers a course for beginners. MCAST also offers a course to all students who feel the need to grasp basic oral skills which will equip them with the day-to-day communicative aspects in Maltese.

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[36] www.fes.org.mt.

[37] http://www.jrsmalta.org/

[38] http://universitylanguageschool.com/updates/next-maltese-course-register-now/

Online resources have also been developed. Examples include:

- *The Lingu@Net* project, which provides resources for learning Maltese as a foreign language[39],

- *Europodians*, which is an EU-wide project in which Maltese language courses by mobile devices like phones, iPods and PDAs are created. The project involves work with universities to create and distribute a series of language training courses to be used in mobile devices. It offers resources for learning Maltese at CEFR A1 level;[40]

- The *Tool for Online and Offline Language Learning* which offers a blended learning course at CEFR A2 Level.

The NCF recognises that Malta has become a multi-cultural society and that all schools should be in a position to provide children and their parents with language support in Maltese and English so that they achieve a basic working knowledge of these languages at the earliest possible in order to allow them to integrate quickly. The provisions for students attending local schools will be discussed in the following section.

Although the Maltese language has been historically linked mainly to the Maltese islands, and spoken by relatively few people, there have been several initiatives to promote the language on a European and an International Level, especially by migrants. Malta has had a long tradition of international migration which, for many years, has been regarded as a necessary to ease population pressure. The 1950's and 1960's were characterised by thousands of Maltese leaving the islands to settle in Australia, Canada, the USA and the UK. There are a good number of Maltese communities abroad, the major ones are found in Australia and Canada, USA and the UK, and these serve as communities that promote the teaching of Maltese as a foreign language. The first time Maltese was formally taught outside the Maltese archipelago was in 1968, in Australia. One such initiative is the Maltese Community Council in New South Wales, that conducts a Maltese Language School which currently operates from two campuses in two locations in Sydney. The Council regards the School as a vital means of maintaining the Maltese language and culture in Australia.

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[39] http://www.linguanet-worldwide.org/lnetww/en/resources/DocMng?event=VIEW&file=00013709

[40] http://www.europodians.com/

2.6 Foreign Students in Schools

The number of foreign students attending local schools is presented in Table 10:

State Schools	1109
Church Schools	39
Independent Schools	1778

Table 10: Number of foreign students attending schools. Source DQSE[41].

The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) set up a working group, in September 2011, made up of representatives from the DQSE and the Directorate for Educational Services (DES), Colleges and the non-State sector to work on a National Strategy addressing the different needs of immigrant children[42]. Particular emphasis was made on language learning, in line with the recommendations in 'Immigrant Youth, Education and the Labour Market' (2010).

The Working Group identified certain realities experienced by these students. There are those who have communication problems due to lack of proficiency in either Maltese or English. This limitation is exacerbated as certain textbooks are in Maltese, and in some cases, these students cannot follow lessons in English. Therefore, these needs create a number of challenges for schools which include finding ways to integrate the students (especially through sports activities and clubs), offering differentiated teaching, dealing with behaviour problems, and teaching Maltese and English.

2.6.1 Provisions for Migrant Students in Schools

The Department of Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE), offers language support for migrant children. This support takes the form of a six-week intervention programme that consists of partial or full withdrawal from schools, so that students can follow basic language courses in Maltese and English. The courses, which are based on the tenets guiding the CEFR, are tailor-made for students and focus mainly on spoken interaction. The emphasis is on survival English and Maltese, so that these students can initiate their integration process within schools. Therefore, activities which involve real-life use of language in various situations, where students are actively engaged in the learning process, are employed. This also helps to contribute to a more holistic development of these students, where knowledge related to norms of behaviour in certain contexts need also to be acquired. The students undergo an initial linguistic assessment, based on a description of a picture at the start of the course. They are assessed on basic vocabulary items, phrasal

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[41] More information about nationalities can be found in Appendix 6.

[42] Vassallo (2013).

production and more continuous speech. This is accompanied by a final assessment at the end of the course. Moreover, currently, an online assessment tool is being developed.

The students are first introduced to either Maltese or English, depending on their own mother-tongue. The majority of students attending these courses come from Primary state schools. This service is also accompanied by further support offered in schools, depending on the needs of each locality. In most state primary schools, complementary education and literacy support teachers are asked to support the language acquisition of such learners so as to facilitate their social, cultural and educational integration. In the secondary sector some of these learners are provided with Maltese as a second or additional language programme or assigned to a Core Competences Support Programme. A number of schools have taken the initiative to provide support and services to integrate migrant children.

Some schools organise activities aimed to promote multiculturalism to make foreign children feel at home and also to help their parents to integrate, where foreign children talk about their culture during assembly and all school children work on a multicultural project which is then exhibited to parents. These activities motivate children to research about traditions, religions, lifestyle, clothing and cuisine from different cultures.

2.7 Language Education for learners with special needs

The resource centres for students with special needs cater for students' individual needs, by focusing mainly on communication skills and pre-literacy skills such as contingency responding and awareness and turn-taking strategies. The teachers work closely with Speech and Language Pathologists. Opti-music activities are also used which can vary from a sensory circuit to interactive story telling.

With regard to the teaching and learning of sign language, *Il-Lingwa Tas-Sinjali Maltija* or Maltese Sign Language (LSM) is the language of the Maltese Deaf Community. There are currently three routes to learn this language:

- The *Directorate for Lifelong Learning* offer Maltese Sign Language as evening courses at a number of locations across Malta;

- MCAST offers Maltese Sign Language short courses.

- The University of Malta's Institute of Linguistics also offers some Maltese Sign Language and Sign Linguistics courses to university students through the department's Maltese Sign Language Project[43].

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[43] http://www.deafmalta.com/maltese-sign-language-lsm.html

2.8 Teachers

The Number of regular teachers in Schools amounts to 5647, and the number of Kindergarten Assistants 474.

State Schools	2654
Church Schools	2082
Independent Schools	911
Total	5647

Table 11: Number of Teachers (by type of school). Source DQSE.

The following table illustrates the number of language teachers per type of school:

State Schools	743
Church Schools	283
Independent Schools	95

Table 12 : Number of Language Teachers. Source DQSE.

2.8.1 Teacher Training

The initial training of teachers from primary level up to secondary level takes place at the University of Malta. All students following a teaching course must also obtain passes in proficiency tests in English and Maltese, approved by the Faculty of Education. Intending teachers follow a course at the University of Malta depending on the cycle they are geared towards. Teachers who teach in special schools follow the same courses as primary and secondary school teachers and then specialise or follow in-service training courses in teaching students with special educational needs.

Prospective students must satisfy the General Entry Requirements for admission, namely, the Matriculation Certificate and Secondary Education Certificate passes at Grade 5 or better in Maltese, English Language and Mathematics. The two key components of all Bachelor of Education (B.Ed (Hons.)) programmes are the hands-on school experiences in every year of the programme and a dissertation in the final year of the programme. In 2013, there were 1084 students following a course in education. The following table divides the number of students by course:

Course	Number of Students
Education with Early Childhood Education and Care	78
Secondary Education	626
Language teaching (Secondary)	73
Master of Education (in languages)	10
Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Teaching of Languages)	43

Table 13: Students following a course at the Faculty of Education in 2013. Source: http://www.um.edu.mt/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/206502/completedawards2012-3.pdf.

Early Years Teacher Training

Teachers following the course in education in Early Years take a Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care course which is offered on a full-time (4 years) or on a part-time basis (five years). Students receive training in a theoretical understanding of how young children develop & learn and pedagogical knowledge. Qualifications in languages are encouraged.

The MCAST-BTEC National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development or the Certificate in Pre-School Education Learning and Development, offered by MCAST also enables students to work in a professional capacity with children in child care and kindergartens and would also be considered an entry requirement, followed by a 2 year course.

Junior Years Teacher Training

Primary teachers normally take a four year Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Primary Education. Apart from general areas of study, students are prepared for teaching the Primary curricular subjects, namely, Maltese, English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Religion and Ethics, Health and Physical Activity, Visual and Performing Arts, the Humanities (History, Geography and Citizenship). A Certificate in the Teaching of Primary School Learning Areas is also offered and this is a one year part-time evening course offered specifically for practitioners who are currently employed as supply teachers in primary schools and who hold a Secondary school teaching qualification.

Secondary Years Teacher Training

Two routes are available for Secondary teachers:

The Bachelor of Education (Honours) in Secondary Education is a four year full-time course. Applicants who choose Secondary Education as their area of specialisation shall also be

required to choose one or two teaching areas[44]. Students focus on general areas of study and are also prepared for teaching the subjects that they are going to specialise in. The main languages catered for are English, French, German, Italian, Maltese, and Spanish. All students will be required to hold passes at Advanced Level at Grade C or better in each of the two subjects chosen as teaching areas. Students follow courses offered by the Faculty of Arts, together with other courses which are more geared towards pedagogy, offered by the Faculty of Education.

The Postgraduate Certificate in Education course is a professional training course, consisting of instruction on educational issues and teaching methodology coupled with practical work in schools. The intention is to make the concerns of professional practice informed by insights from research and a critical theory of education. It is aimed for students who are already in possession of a degree in languages, such as the Bachelor of Arts (General or Honours).

Appendix 7 illustrates the number of students specialising the teaching of languages over 3 years. In 2012/3 there has been a decrease in the number of graduates when compared to the other two years. English and Maltese always take the lead as the most popular subjects, although Italian followed closely in 2010/11. Also, although the numbers of students specialising in German and Spanish were always relatively low, it should be noted that in 2012/3 there were no graduates, specialising in the teaching of these languages.

A number of Masters courses in the teaching of languages are made available on a part-time basis, depending on year of entry. In 2013 the Master of Education in Italian Education course was offered.

2.8.2 Continuing Professional Development for teachers

Teachers are highly encouraged to engage in continuous professional development initiatives. Ongoing in-service training to all teachers and support staff working in the Special Education Centre, in special schools and in mainstream schools is offered in various areas of special education. This includes courses and workshops in communication, ICT,

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[44] The teaching areas for the Secondary Education area of specialisation shall be chosen as follows: two teaching areas from Group A, or one teaching area from Group B, or one teaching area from Group C. The teaching areas in Group A are: Art, English, French, Geography, German, History, Italian, Maltese, Music Studies, Religious Education, and Spanish. The teaching areas in Group B are Science, with specialisation in either Biology, or Chemistry, or Physics. The teaching areas in Group C are Computing, Nutrition, Family and Consumer Studies, Mathematics, Personal and Social Development, Physical Education, and Technical Design and Technology.

curriculum development and planning, assessment and early intervention. All teachers are statutory required to attend one in-service course every year.

The *Training and Professional Development Unit* which falls under the *Department of Curriculum Management* organises in-Service Courses for teaching grades generally in July and September. Some courses are also organised during the scholastic year after school hours. The *Department of Curriculum Management* works with various bodies to ensure that a vast range of courses are held to satisfy the needs of the teaching grades.

In 2014, the courses (both compulsory and vocational) related to languages were:

- Emergent Literacy in Context
- The Communicative Approach in the teaching of Foreign Languages
- Reinforcing Teachers' Methodology through Language Awareness
- Literacy: A Hands-on Approach
- Effective Literacy and Language Teaching and Learning in the Early Years
- Oracy Across the Curriculum
- Developing Early Literacy Skills and the Core Competences Checklist
- Receptive skills in Italian
- DYSLEXIA? How to identify and support students with dyslexia
- Keyword Signing for Students with Learning Disabilities
- Film and English Literature

Teachers can also attend courses organised by private organisations that run a number of teacher training and development courses throughout the year, aimed at teachers and educators. The Government also provides financial incentives for exchange visits and stays abroad.

2.9. Private institutions offering language courses

In the past few years people have started to appreciate the value of learning foreign languages. One of the consequences of this phenomenon has been a tremendous development of out-of-school educational service sector in the scope of foreign language teaching. There are a number of private organisations that offer language courses to both children and adults. These languages include Italian, French, Arabic, Spanish, Russian, German and Chinese (among others). These centres are also important cultural hubs and promote diplomatic ties between Malta and other communities. These organisations offer foreign language courses for all age groups. They offer general language courses and courses preparing for international language proficiency qualifications.

2.10 Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Malta

A number of students visit Malta to learn English at one of the local EFL schools. According to the statistics issued by the NSO (2013) in 2013, 43 English Language Specialised Schools were operating in Malta, employing 1,469 teachers, working on a full-time and part-time basis. The minimum qualifications for all teachers who are under 25 years of age must be in possession of a pass in the *Test for English Language Teachers* or a minimum of a Grade C in Advanced Level Examination in English, together with a TEFL Induction Course certificate[45].

In 2013, 74,992 students visited Malta to study English. The absolute majority of students were Europeans (90.2 per cent). Of these, 49,804 were EU citizens, while 17,854 were from other European countries. The American and African markets experienced an increase over 2012 levels, while the number of Asian students declined. This forms a substantial part of tourists visiting Malta. In fact students studying English as a foreign language amounted to 4.6 per cent of total foreign nationals visiting Malta during 2013[46].

The schools and the EFL industry are monitored by the *English as a Foreign Language Monitoring Board*. Its main aim is to address EFL teachers and to monitor qualifications. It also strives to upgrade EFL to a regulated profession to maintain and operate accreditation and quality assurance systems in all aspects of English language stays that provide for periodic rigorous audits to assure compliance and given quality standards. Malta is the first country to enact legislation to regulate the EFL industry and is nowadays considered a top-quality destination by students wishing to improve their English language proficiency[47].

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[45] More information can be found on http://eflmalta.gov.mt/en/Pages/Requirements-for-an-EFL-Teaching-Permit.aspx

[46] https://eflmalta.gov.mt/en/Documents/Industry%20Statistics/2013stats.pdf

[47] http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20131117/education/Malta-highlighted-as-ELT-destination.495150

Part 2 Malta's Response to Principles and Recommendations of the Council of Europe

3 The Council of Europe

Over the years, Malta has shown readiness and commitment in taking up recommendations of the Council of Europe to support language teaching and learning in ratifying documents by the Council of Europe, concerning the teaching and learning of languages. As discussed in Part 1, the teaching of languages in Malta is guided by the premise that all citizens have the right to learn the national and foreign languages, so that:

> "*all sections of their populations have access to effective means of acquiring a knowledge of the languages of other member states"* (Recommendation No. R (82) 18).

Malta has ratified the recommendations in the European Cultural Convention (1954) where the teaching and learning of language and culture are promoted. Culture and civilisation is an integral part in the teaching of the Maltese language and other languages by focusing on an *"endeavour to promote the study of its language or languages, history and civilisation in the territory of the other Contracting Parties and grant facilities to the nationals of those Parties to pursue such studies in its territory"* (Article 2, European Cultural Convention).

Malta has also followed Recommendation No. R (98)6 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States, an emphasis has been placed on diversification of *"the languages on offer and setting objectives appropriate to each language"* (2.2) and *"encouraging teaching programmes at all levels that use a flexible approach …"* (2.3). Therefore, language education is Malta is based on the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of learners, where educators and curricula managers are highly encouraged to develop appropriate methods and materials and forms and instruments for the evaluation of learning programmes.

In keeping with the recommendations of the Council of Europe, a Language Policy in Education working group on was established in July, 2013. The main aim of this committee is to present recommendations for a Framework which will guide language policies in education in Malta.

3.1 Curricula

The language curricula are underpinned by the promotion of plurilingualism and the recognition of diversity. The development of the learning areas for the Junior and Secondary Years were guided by the *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning: European Reference Framework* (2006/962/EC). The NCF places emphasis on each child's individual needs, by

providing support through differentiated teaching methods, within an inclusive environment:

> *"The principles of diversity and inclusion which underpin the NCF imply that at all stages learners of all aptitudes and competences should experience success, challenge, and the necessary support to sustain their effort"*(Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 40).

This also means that in this inclusive environment, special attention is given to students with special needs, where provisions are made for all students.

The NCF follows the guidelines proposed in *The Common European Framework* (Council of Europe, 2001) where plurilingualism is promoted. Children should have the opportunity to study at least one other language in an informal and semi-formal manner during the final Primary years. The current trends in language learning at this level, point to an approach that is dialogic and interactive, wherein pupils are exposed to learn the language and the culture through carefully selected language activities (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012, p.34). This is followed by a more formal teaching and learning of languages in the Secondary Years, where students learn one foreign language and are also given the opportunity to learn a second language.

In keeping with the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe no. R (98) 6 (1998) regarding the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language*[48]*s*, these levels have been adopted at the secondary school stage in most language syllabi, to define language skills and levels that should be reached by learners.

3.2 The teaching of foreign languages

Malta has always recognised the importance of teaching English, both as a second language in society and also as a global language as English can be viewed as an important *"lingua franca …in the context of globalisation created by telecommunications, tourism and trade"*
(Point 4, Recommendation 1383 (1998)).

But a knowledge of English alone appears insufficient if Europe is to be placed within a wider international economic context and if cultural diversity is to be preserved. Hence, the fact that English is a global language does not mean that other languages should be given less importance, particularly since Malta forms part of a European and of a global community.

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[48] Henceforth CEFR

As a result, Malta has ratified the recommendations that: *"there should therefore be more variety in modern language teaching in the Council of Europe member states; this should result in the acquisition not only of English but also of other European and world languages by all European citizens, in parallel with the mastery of their own national and, where appropriate, regional language"* (Point 5, Recommendation 1383 (1998)).

As a result, the commitment to the teaching of foreign languages is clearly highlighted in the NCF's recommendations that a third language is taught in Secondary School. On the whole, the teaching methods of foreign languages which are outlined in syllabi align to the recommendations presented in the *Guide for the development of language education policies* to teach languages *"for communication in everyday transactions, for building social relations, to learn to understand and respect other cultures; ensuring pupils have the opportunity to study more than one other language; ensure all pupils in upper secondary continue to learn languages; assist the learning of further languages in upper secondary; encourage the fostering of learner autonomy in language learning as a basis for lifelong learning; sensitise learners to the role of languages in working life" (*Recommendation (98) 6). In fact, within recent years, there has been a shift from traditional grammar translation methods outlined in syllabi, to more communicative approaches, where the learners are encouraged to take part in real-life meaningful activities.

With regard to Primary Education, *"the promotion of awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe; opportunities to begin to learn a new language as early as possible; the enabling of smooth transition from one sector of an education system to another; evaluation of the success of early learning"* (Recommendation No. R (98) 6), is encouraged through the FLAP programme, which promotes the teaching of languages in a fun and meaningful way. However, as will be discussed in the following Section, one of the main challenges is to emphasise a culture of plurilingualism which also encompasses pluricultural and intercultural communication, and for a more unified vision of language teaching across Primary and Secondary years.

Adults also have the opportunity to follow courses in languages which are offered both by State and Private institutions, in line with the recommendations to: *"enable adults to maintain and further develop their language skills on a lifelong basis and encourage those with little or no previous language learning experience to acquire the ability to use a foreign language for communicative purposes"* (Recommendation No. R (98) 6).

3.3 The European Year of Languages

In the last 13 years, the European Year of Languages, has been a key effort to promote linguistic diversity both on a national and a European level. In Malta, this celebration (observed since 2001) has become an indispensable part of school event calendar, in its

effort to promote Europe's rich linguistic diversity. Several organisations such as the Ministry for Education, other education institutions, the media, towns and communities all unite under one aim. Such activities are normally publicised and receive media coverage and are aimed "*at achieving public recognition of the fact that each language has unique value, and that all languages are equally valid as modes of expression for those who use them*" (European Year of Languages, Recommendation 1539 (2001)).

The Education Directorate issues a circular to all schools in Malta urging them to celebrate the day. Various activities are held to raise awareness of the richness of linguistic diversity. The majority of schools involved, mark the occasion with a special whole school assembly during which several presentations are held. Songs, messages, poems, plays, quizzes and discussions in different languages, combined with different costumes and flags are also presented. On the 26th September of every year a prize for the Best Language Practice in schools of the year will be given. This is taking the form of a competition among all the schools in Malta. Moreover, a circular is sent to all Local Councils urging them to celebrate the day at local level. Apart from the general activities that are held each year in schools[49], Malta has organised the following specific activities:

- A French Immersion Project with students, where a centre was created, which simulates real life in a French Region (2001)

- Ilsna (Tongues), which was a cultural programme at the national theatre involving music and poetry in various languages (2001)

- Film Festivals, where each month three or four films were shown in a particular language (2001)

- The Language Teacher of the Year Competition (2003)

- Celebrating Literary Multilingualism at the National Library (2012)

- Stands were set up by English and foreign language schools, embassies and cultural centres in Malta to distribute information about the various different languages around the world (2013)

3.4 Applying The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to the Maltese language

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*' main aim is to provide:

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[49] For more information visit http://edl.ecml.at/Events/EventsDatabase/tabid/1772/language/en-GB/Default.aspx

" a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively"(Council of Europe, 2001, p.1).

In line with the belief that the Threshold Levels are a powerful tool to facilitate reflection, communication and networking in language education, these threshold levels have been applied to the Maltese language, in 1997, so that learners of Maltese's progress can also *"be measured at each stage of* learning and on a life-long basis" (Council of Europe, 2001, p.1). Such levels are underpinned by the tenet that the language learner is autonomous, and self-sufficient bearer of the demands of everyday communication. The document *Fuq l-Għatba tal-Malti* (Mifsud & Borg, 1997), presents the level descriptors that should guide the teaching and learning of Maltese as a foreign language. The main objective of this exercise was to adopt language activities, competences and proficiency markers that are appropriate to the local context, and yet can be related to a wider context and therefore communicated more easily to colleagues in other educational institutions and to other stakeholders like learners, parents and employers, within a European Community.

3.5 Teaching Migrant students

The legal provisions protecting minority groups comply with points in Article 8 of the *European Charter for Minority or Regional Languages* (1992). This ensures that education is accessible for all children, including their country nationals as illustrated in the following declarations:

Subsidiary Legislation 217.12 (Immigration Act) Common Standards and Procedures for Returning Illegally Staying Third-Country Nationals Regulations :

Regulation 10(3) *A minor in detention shall have access to leisure activities, including play and recreational activities appropriate to his age, and state education in Malta depending on the length of his stay.*

Regulation 11(7) *The Principal Immigration Officer, except in the case of detention as provided in regulations 9 and 10, during the period granted for voluntary departure in accordance with regulation 4 or the period during which removal is postponed in accordance with regulation 6, shall: (c) ensure that as far as possible a minor has access to state education in Malta depending on the length of his stay;*

Migrant Workers (Child Education) regulations – Legal notice 259/2002

This legislation which regulates the education of children of migrant workers became effective in October 2003. Migrant workers' children within the compulsory school age (5-16 years) will be provided with the school-based support for the learning of any of the official languages. It also provides for the teaching of the language and culture of the country of origin of immigrant children.

As has been previously elucidated, the NCF promotes the use of pedagogies that are inclusive in nature and cater for diversity. Therefore, it recognizes the heterogeneous nature of the community of learners, thereby acknowledging and respecting individual differences of beliefs, and ethnicity. The NCF aims to develop Learners who are engaged citizens in constantly changing local, regional and global realities. Therefore, students are taught to:

"• respect diversity and value difference

• respect and promote Maltese culture and heritage

• develop intercultural competence and appreciate their heritage within the Mediterranean, European and global contexts

• work towards strengthening social cohesion and ensuring social justice

• uphold social justice and democratic principles" (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012, p. 33).

The NCF recognises the needs of learners from diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds including children of refugees and asylum seekers for whom the curriculum should include access to an educational programme which is embedded within an emotional and psychologically supportive environment that respects their individual circumstances (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012, p. 41).

Moreover, there several initiatives have been carried out to ensure that multiculturalism is not only respected but also disseminated:

- The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Malta Outreach Programme in Schools : Since 2004 the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Malta has been carrying out a project in collaboration with the Humanities Section within the Curriculum Management and eLearning Department in schools entitled 'Strength in Diversity', 'Bridging Cultures', 'All Equal', 'Cultures and Colours'. It includes talks by refugees, artistic workshops about human rights, role plays to appreciate the needs and fears of individuals concerned and students visiting the local mosque;

- The INDIE project (2007- 2010) : Inclusion and Diversity in Education (INDIE) was run in collaboration with national and regional education authorities from nine EU Member States and aimed to promote social cohesion and raise educational

standards in culturally inclusive schools. The programme developed new projects and practices for managing inclusion and diversity in schools. These were based on a European Youth Charter drawn up by students to give them a voice and a stake in this critical issue. Through these activities, INDIE brought together pupils, head teachers and policymakers to respond to these challenges and build lasting networks;

- Staff members from the Departments of Arts & Languages within the Faculty of Education were involved in the creation of materials and skill-based activities for the SPICES (Social Promotion of Intercultural Communication, Expertise and Skills) project[50];

3.6 The National Literacy Strategy for All.

The *National Literacy Strategy for All,* launched in May 2013, is aimed at ensuring that all citizens in Malta are able to acquire literacy skills. This strategy considers literacy as an important element in the field of social inclusion. Therefore concrete measures are to be taken in order, to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to obtain the skills required for them to participate fully in society. Opportunities for learners will be provided to enable them to make sense of their experiences and to make connections with their histories, cultures and communities, through increased access to books and the language arts participatory democracy is strengthened. The strategy also emphasises the promotion of a policy of bilingualism and biliteracy. It involves all stakeholders and ensures that parents and the class teacher have a primary role in the literacy development of the child. Therefore, existing initiatives and programmes in the field of literacy are consolidated to ensure increased effectiveness and impact.

3.7 Other initiatives for educators

In line with the aims of the European Centre for Modern Languages, emphasis is also placed on the professional development of teachers. Teachers are encouraged to take part in seminars and courses focusing on the practice of the learning and teaching of languages, to promote dialogue and exchange among educators and[51].

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[50] (Klein et al. 2007).

[51] For further information please refer to
http://www.ecml.at/Malta/ExpertsinvolvedinECMLactivities/tabid/1375/language/en-GB/Default.aspx

4 The European Union

The European Union plays an important role in the field of language education policies, since languages have been on its agenda since the early days (for example, Resolution of the Education, Youth and Culture (EYC) Council of 9 February, 1976). *The Multilingualism Policy Unit* (Directorate-General for Education and Culture) has implemented an Action Plan 2004-2006 to promote language learning and linguistic diversity[52]. This text, which supplements the major programmes – *Erasmus, Leonardo de Vinci,* etc*.* – identifies a broad area in which Member States can take action, both in schools and in the wider society. With regard to initiatives in Malta, usually, they take form of inter-school exchanges, the participation in international projects. As part of the Erasmus component, each year, a significant number of Maltese students visit foreign countries to study at partner universities in order to continue their studies in a foreign language.

With specific reference to the integration of migrants, several projects have been organised. For instance, the Employment & Training Cooperation organised a course for Third Country Nationals in Malta entitled *Integrating TCNs in the Maltese society*. A language course and raising cultural awareness sessions were organised. This includes Maltese and English literacy courses, together with information about cultural aspects related to living in Malta[53]. EU border funds are being used for the development of courses for Third Country National Students, entitled *Language Learning and Parental Support for Integration*. This project aims at providing migrant learners in schools with further support thanks to a functional language learning programme, in conjunction with the support received in schools. This will enable students to integrate and participate in mainstream education. It is also aimed to provide parents or significant adults with the necessary awareness and support with regard to the schooling system and their role in their child's education[54]. Language support assistants[55] were also employed for this purpose to provide support in

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[52] Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: *Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity* (http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/doc/official/keydoc/actlang/act_lang_en.pdf)

[53] http://etc.gov.mt/Resources/file/Training%20Programmes/IF03-2012-Brochure.pdf

[54]

https://www.google.com.mt/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CD0QFjAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fsecure2.gov.mt%2Ffpd%2Ffile.aspx%3Ff%3D9351&ei=Ki1yU9_jBsai4gTg2YCADA&usg=AFQjCNEFWfr2-LJT0k9eUqQz2AJjBRf0eg&bvm=bv.66330100,d.bGE

[55] The call for applications was part-financed by the European Union European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals (EIF). Source http://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Vacancies/Language%20Support%20Assistant%20-%20LLAPSI%20-%202%20EN%20DQSE%20274-2013.pdf

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language learning to collaborate with teachers and the School Management to help students in their language acquisition and integration process.

5 Further considerations

The language situation in Malta features some typical characteristics that have been outlined by the Council of Europe in its *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*. The main goal for language education policies should be "to enhance the value of and develop the linguistic repertoires of social agents through plurilingual teaching (in the form of measures to facilitate language teaching and learning) and plurilingual and pluricultural education, as education for awareness of language diversity and intercultural communication (Beacco & Byram, 2003 p.35). In line with this statement, the main challenges that are present in Malta deal mainly with:

- How balanced bilingualism can be attained
- Raising awareness and developing positive attitudes towards languages
- Teacher education
- Languages of instruction in schools, textbooks and teaching materials
- Languages used in tests and examinations
- Parental education and involvement
- Foreign language teaching and learning
- Provisions for migrant students in schools

The following section will deal with these points in light of the present sociolinguistic situation and recommendations by the Council of Europe for the development of a language policy in education.

Part 3: Issues for discussion

As stated in the *Guide for the development of language education policies*, implementing a form of education directed by and towards plurilingualism requires a clearly stated political will by all stakeholders, developed within a democratic framework and based on principles requiring long-term explanation and dissemination. This does not entail starting from scratch and disregarding all the work that has been carried out throughout the years, but it is necessary to rethink teaching objectives, produce teaching materials appropriate to the new policy emphases, train teachers and education staff, and raise awareness in schools, universities and civil society.

It is strongly recommended that the national education system, particularly compulsory schooling, be used as a basis for the creation of a culture of plurilingualism. State educational establishments play a crucial role in fostering the feeling of belonging. Language curricula help create this feeling as increased attention to the plurality of linguistic repertoires and developing them will also help to foster linguistic affiliation to a community broader than the national one.

Furthermore, the establishment of principles for language education policies should take into account current developments taking place in society, on the one hand, internationalisation, the commercialisation of most human activities, the increasing role of multinational companies, the formative influence of the economy on society and the impact of television culture and, on the other, the re-emergence of feelings of identity and the resurgence of ethnocentrically based nationalism (Beacco & Byram, 2003, p.32).

6 Raising awareness and developing positive attitudes towards languages

When drawing up a language in education policy, the broader linguistic context, together with the attitudes towards languages in society need to be taken into consideration. This is because members of a speech community share a set of beliefs about appropriate language practices, sometimes forming a consensual ideology, while assigning values and prestige to various aspects of the language varieties used in it. These beliefs both derive from and influence the use of language in society. Therefore, designing language syllabuses and courses is not solely a pedagogical matter since languages are not a type of knowledge comparable to other subjects transmitted by education systems. Languages can be acquired outside formal schooling and are also used to construct individual and group identity (Beacco & Byram, 2003, p.13). As has been discussed in previous sections, with regard to

the linguistic situation in Malta, the above considerations indicate that it is a reflection of the historical and political permutations of the past, together with values associated with the use of Maltese and English.

Given the importance of such attitudes and language ideologies, important points to be taken into consideration are:

- Raising awareness about the cognitive, social and cultural benefits of bilingualism;

- Introducing early awareness-raising activities about human language and identity issues related to the use of language in Malta and in the world at the time when children are starting to learn to think about language;

- Directing public attention to the fact that monolingualism is being less economically sustainable and less competitive than bilingualism, especially in a society that relies heavily on the knowledge of languages, and within a wider European perspective that promotes plurilingualism. This entails respect the linguistic rights of individuals and groups in their relations with the state and linguistic majorities, and respect for freedom of expression (Beacco & Byram, 2003, p.36) ;

- Educating all stakeholders about the notion of additive bilingualism as opposed to subtractive bilingualism. This is particularly important for nationalistic beliefs accompanied by the fear that the knowledge of a second language would impinge upon the mastery of the first language, particularly with regard to fears that the Maltese language is threatened by the English language;

- The legitimisation of both Maltese and English in all domains and addressing the ideology of the unequal value of languages (where it exists);

- Encouraging schools to become institutions that make learners aware of the social norms of language use in society and encourage learners to become plurilingual European citizens;

- Viewing language learning as positive and the way forward, not only in terms of economic advancement, but also as a means of developing intercultural sensitivity and as an intrinsic component of democratic citizenship in Europe (Beacco & Byram, 2003, p.13) In this way language teaching can be adapted to changes in European society, which is increasingly multicultural and multilingual, as can be seen from the visible multilingualism of its major centres;

- The ways in which languages are represented in the media. The media can be used not only to promote a good model for language use, but also to disseminate positive attitudes towards Maltese, English and other languages. As a result, initiatives could be created to promote linguistic identity while at the same time addressing linguistic stereotypes and nationalistic fears. The basic tenet guiding these awareness raising initiatives should recognise that being a plurilingual individual is the way forward.

This illustrates that the teaching of languages in schools is merely the technical outcome of a collective examination of the role of languages in society and the role of education systems that involves ideologies that are held by civil society.

7 How balanced bilingualism can be attained

It is vital that the role of Maltese and English need to be maintained, supported and extended, keeping in mind also the role of linguistic ideologies. For this reason several points need to be addressed:

- The current concerns regarding the teaching and learning of Maltese and English need to be actively addressed, particularly in the light of concerns that have been brought up related to standards in both national and international assessment. This has to be applied to all skills in both languages;

- Ways in which individuals can obtain adequate proficiency in both languages in order to be considered balanced bilinguals;

- Further academic research to provide a review of the current situation, in line with recent advancements and policies;

- Ways in which schools can provide further support for the development of the second language.

8 Languages of instruction in schools, textbooks, teaching materials and assessment

Bilingualism in education was mentioned for the first time in The National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) a national curricular document in 1999 (Ministry for Education, 1999). This sparked the debate about which languages should be used for instruction and assessment purposes and whether it is feasible to have a strict English-only medium, as was

being proposed by the policy makers at that time. The National Minimum Curriculum[56] (1999) suggests that "teachers of Maltese, Social Studies, History, Religion and PSD (Personal and Social Development) teach these subjects in Maltese; teachers of foreign languages teach in the language in question; and teachers of the remaining subjects teach in English". Furthermore, the NMC (Ministry for Education, 1999, p.82) states that "only in those cases where this poses great pedagogical problems does the NMC accept codeswitching as a means of communication".

The NMC recommendation for a shift to an English-only medium has had negative repercussions as documented and researched by Farrugia (2009a, 2009b). She describes how most pupils felt uncomfortable and "held back from asking questions because they were afraid that they would make mistakes or because they were not sure how to ask the question in English" (Farrugia 2009a, p. 21). Furthermore, in spite of these declarations, the various studies conducted in a variety of schools have shown that despite the clear policy suggestions in the majority, the NMC of 1999 influenced very little what was actually happening in classes and teachers stuck to their preferred language of instruction with frequent instances of codeswitching[57] .

The NCF contains some recommendations which can also be taken into consideration. These include references to the issue of bilingualism and the importance of a high level of proficiency by all students in both Maltese and English. The NCF recommends that such a language in education policy should address:

- *"entitlement issues –students need to become proficient in Maltese and English and preferably in another language for their full social, cultural and economic integration;*

- *cultural issues – the rightful place of Maltese as an expression of our national identity; the preference for English as the first language of a minority of our population; the diverse nationalities of students in schools; overcoming prejudices or perceptions related to other languages and cultures;*

- *implementation issues – the use of language/s in different learning areas; language of assessment; the 1999 NMC recommendation that schools develop their own language policy according to their own needs;*

- *professional issues – teachers who are proficient in both English and Maltese; the development of resources in Maltese and in English as necessary; the development of Maltese for specific purposes; the need to heighten interest in and access resources for other languages;*

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[56] Henceforth NMC.

[57] For example Busuttil (2001); Camilleri Grima (2001), (2003); Farrugia (2009a).

- *economic issues – the need to have proficiency in English for competitiveness in a globalised economic environment; the importance of foreign languages for the fostering of international relations"* (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012, p. 41).

With regard to the language of assessment, only the Maltese language is examined exclusively in Maltese. National examination questions in Maltese History, Religious Knowledge and Social Studies can be answered in either Maltese or English. In state schools, these three subjects are taught through Maltese and the textbooks are in Maltese, but in church and private schools textbooks are provided in English for these subjects too.

Proficiency in English has been linked to achievement. For instance in Ventura's (1991) study students in different schools forming homogenous groups, who underwent instruction in science through English, sat for the same version of the test in either Maltese or English. The study concludes that "performance of the more able in science is independent of the language of the test, but the less able obtain far better results if they take the test in Maltese" (p.17).

Following the Common European framework of reference for languages (Council of Europe 2001, p. 168), plurilingual and pluricultural competence is defined as the ability "to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural action, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures". As argued by Camilleri Grima (2013) in Maltese classrooms, teachers and learners access the various linguistic resources available to them in order to render the text in English in linguistic ways that are appropriate for them so that they can assimilate the content according to their needs, pace and ways of learning.

Nevertheless, these points raise a number of issues that merit further consideration:

- The role of English and Maltese as languages of instruction, particularly with regard to specific learner characteristics;

- The question of which languages used in teaching materials such as handouts, in light of the fact that most textbooks are in English;

- The language of assessment, particularly where there are students who have problems with either English or Maltese, and as a result knowledge of language impinges upon performance.

9 Foreign language teaching and learning

Competence in foreign languages is an essential resource for the country and therefore a language in education policy should pay due regard to the teaching of foreign languages, within a bilingual society. In line with the recommendations of the Council of Europe, plurilingual education should go beyond the teaching of foreign languages as subjects. It refers to activities, whether carried out as a form of teaching or otherwise, which aim to raise awareness and positive acceptance of cultural, religious and linguistic differences, and the capacity to interact and build relationships with others (Beacco & Byram, 2003, p. 76). The ability to use several languages to varying degrees and for distinct purposes is defined in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (p.168) as the ability "to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural action, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures". In light of these recommendations, the themes to be discussed are:

- The use of the CEFR for the teaching and learning of all languages, to document language skills in a transparent manner, and to allow for comparisons with European states;

- How a culture of plurilingualism can be implemented in schools, where the teaching of foreign languages is not only encouraged, but viewed as an essential feature of learner development;

- How the teaching of foreign languages can become less fragmented and how it could be presented as explicitly interconnected and contribute to students' holistic repertoire of linguistic knowledge and allow plurilingual competence to come into play;

- Ways in which students are encouraged to study more languages in secondary school and at post-secondary levels;

- How language teaching can contribute to pluricultural competence among primary and secondary students.

10 Provisions for migrant students in schools

The increase in the number of migrant students whose first language is neither Maltese nor English has placed further demands upon the teaching of languages. The document *The Integration of Third Country Nationals in the Maltese Education System* makes several recommendations to deal with the fact that in the coming years, Malta's school population is likely to become more multinational and multilingual.

The document states that providing early language assistance to these children is an important part of improving their school readiness and allowing them to start on an equal footing with their peers.   At primary level a Language Support Teacher (LST) would be able to support the child's development of either Maltese or English proficiency so that the child can gradually gain full access to the curriculum. Moreover, it recommends individualised assessment programmes for children, teacher training programmes to enable teachers to deal with this phenomenon, systematic ongoing support on a needs basis for students, accompanied by the implementation of intercultural education.

Therefore this raises several issues which need to be addressed:

- Ways in which the teaching of Maltese and English as foreign languages can be standardised across the curriculum, and the resources and teachers needed to carry out these duties;

- Ways in which the linguistic capital represented by speakers' existing repertoires can be managed effectively, and developed, as language skills could prove key advantages for accessing foreign markets;

- Ways in which the integration of these students and the acknowledgement of their culture and language in schools can take place;

- Ways in which communication with parents can be maintained and the type of support that the school can provide them in order so that they will be a better position to sustain their children's education.

11 Teacher education

The concept of language attitudes and how these can contribute to ideology has already been dealt with. These attitudes are learnt and, therefore, teachers play a paramount role in their formation, to such an extent that attitudes formed under educator influence may be extremely difficult to change. With regard to the issue pertaining to the languages of instruction and assessment, teachers are the primary actors in this, as they are the ones who ultimately deliver lessons in classrooms. Therefore, the teachers' own home language backgrounds and their language experiences as pupils at school are two variables which would contribute to the current language choices in the classroom. In fact studies have established that a number of variables such as home language, age and training have influence choice of language in the classroom (Camilleri, 1995).

The teachers' own attitudes need to be acknowledged before they can deal with students' language attitudes. Caruana (2007) carried out a study on language attitudes with first-year students enrolled in the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts. The results illustrate that the use of Maltese is much more widespread than the use of English among intending teachers in the study, but the use of English gains ground in the education domain Furthermore, the number of subjects who claim to be highly proficient in Maltese is much higher than those who claim to be highly competent in English or in Italian. However, when they were asked to rate the importance they give to Maltese when carrying out a series of activities, 70% of them considered Maltese to be important even to write. The study concludes that certain prejudices towards English as the language of the 'snobbish' upper classes also emerged in the study, but these were rather few and far between. Most future teachers seem to be aware that these attitudes are not beneficial and while stressing their Maltese identity most subjects also expressed positive attitudes towards English.

This leads to several points for discussion which are directly linked to teachers and teacher training:

- Language teacher training should emphasise the European objective of plurilingual education and plurilingual competence, with specific focus on the development of democratic citizenship and intercultural education;

- Teacher education could take into consideration the notion of plurilingualism. Teachers should view themselves not only responsible for the teaching of languages as subjects but also for inculcating a plurilingual environment;

- Over the past years there has been a growing concern regarding the level of English and Maltese in Malta. Teacher training programmes should ensure that only students who have an adequate proficiency in the languages, can move on to becoming teachers,

especially when it comes to the teaching of both Maltese and English in Primary Schools;

- Teacher education should provide necessary support for students who are not specialising in the teaching of languages, who have difficulties in either Maltese or English, to ensure that teachers present themselves as bilingual and if possible plurilingual individuals;

- Teachers should be trained to deal with migrant students, particularly with those students whose first language is neither English nor Maltese.

12 Parental education and involvement

Parents play an important role in developing their children's language because they serve as significant language learning models for their children and they are involved in their children's early language socialisation. This will inevitably influence the way children view languages as they are being socialised in a particular language ideology. A language in education policy has to acknowledge the vital role of parents as major stakeholders in their children's plurilingual education. Therefore the main issues to be dealt with are:

- Ways in which schools, teachers and parents can work more collaboratively;

- Ways in which schools can inform parents about their children's progress and attainment in languages in a more comprehensive manner;

- Seminars and activities for parents about the role of languages in society and for raising awareness about the importance of language attitudes in society;

- Support offered to parents whose first language is neither English nor Maltese.

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Appendix 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

LANGUAGE POLICY IN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Language is important in the provision of quality education (Council of Europe, 2012[58]). Quality education should be inclusive and language should form the basis of successful learning in all subjects. It is not enough simply to claim that language education is adequately being addressed because it is being taught at a basic level in the formal curriculum. Policies and practices are to be formulated and coordinated to ensure not just minimum standards but high quality provision.

The Minister for Education has declared that priority should be given to the provision of quality education and language education in particular.   One of the mechanisms to ensure a quality language education is the setting up by the Minister of the National Language Policy in Education Committee, with the following terms of reference:

1) Determine which are the issues related to the language in education situation in Malta at the national, school and classroom levels through consultation with the stakeholders.

2) Engage in an informed reflection on the issues determined in point 1.

3) Map out what should be the main considerations of a language policy in education at the national, school and classroom levels.

4) Following wider consultation, draw up a national language policy in education for Malta.

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[58] Recommendation CM/R (2012)13 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States

5) Propose a number of measures for implementation based on the National Language Policy in Education.

6) Seek to raise public awareness of the importance of concerted efforts to raise standards in language in order to ensure quality education.

July 2013

Committee Members

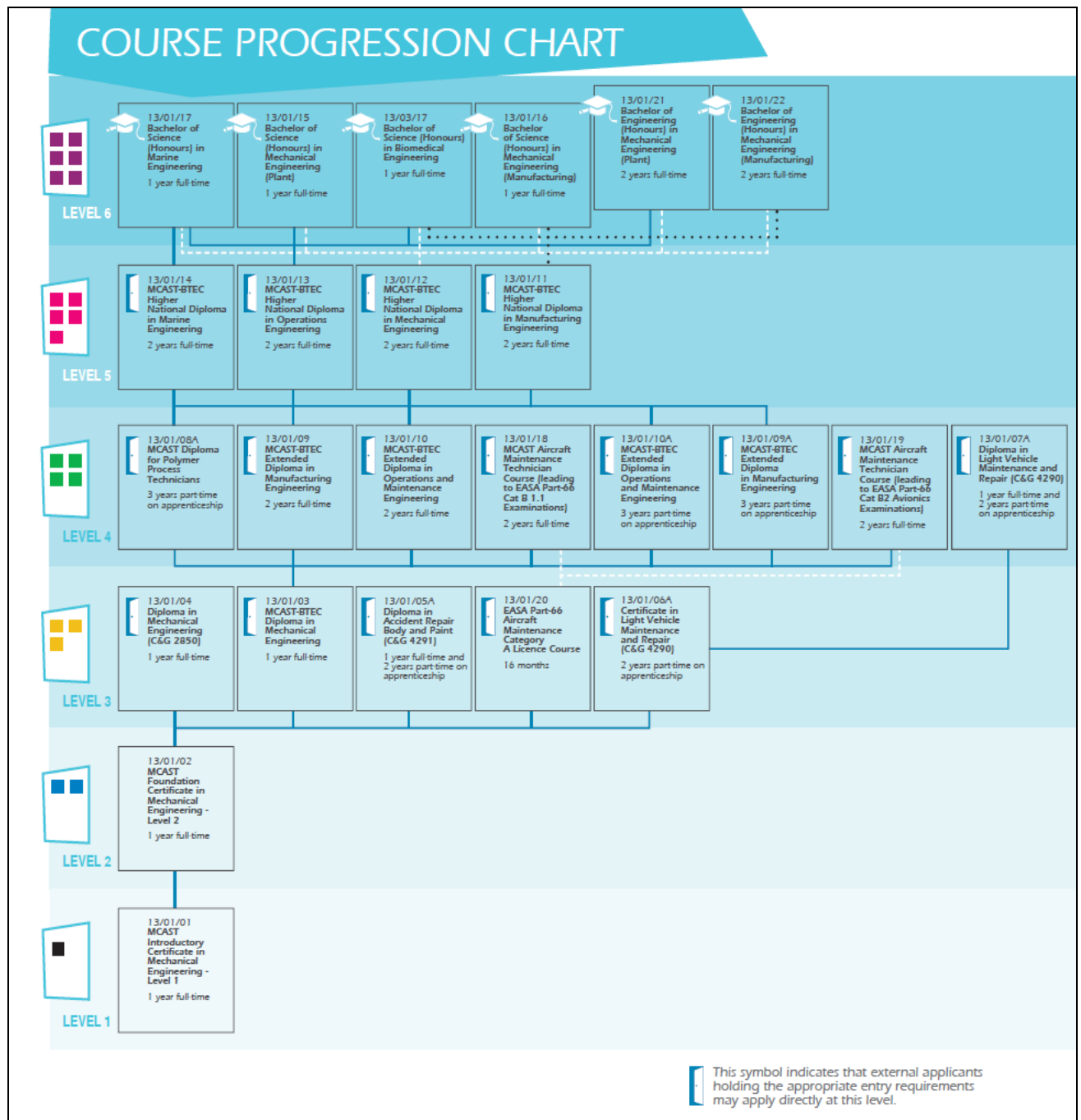|	
Chairperson	Prof essor Charles L. Mifsud
Deputy Chairperson	Mr David Muscat
	Ms Elizabeth A. Pisani
	Mr Ray Cassar
	Mr Joseph Fenech
	Dr Christine Firman
	Dr Anthony Licari
	Mr John Degiorgio
	Mr Joseph Cachia
	Professor Helen Grech
	Dr Bernard Micallef
	Ms Anita Seguna
	Ms Sonia Zammit
	Professor Ivan Callus
Secretary	Ms Sharon Mifsud

Appendix 2

Figure 9: Course progression route for courses offered by the Institute of Mechanical Engineering. Source: Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (2013), p.318

Appendix 3

Malta's National Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning*

8	DOCTORAL DEGREE		8
7	MASTER'S DEGREE POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE		7
6	BACHELOR'S DEGREE		6
5	UNDERGRADUATE DIPLOMA UNDERGRADUATE CERTIFICATE	VET HIGHER DIPLOMA	5
4	MATRICULATION CERTIFICATE ADVANCED LEVEL INTERMEDIATE LEVEL	VET DIPLOMA	4 (e)
3	GENERAL EDUCATION LEVEL 3 SEC GRADE 1-5	VET LEVEL 3	3 (d)
2	GENERAL EDUCATION LEVEL 2 SEC GRADE 6-7	VET LEVEL 2	2 (c)
1	GENERAL EDUCATION LEVEL 1 School Leaving Cerificate	VET LEVEL 1	1 (a/b)

VET stands for Vocational Education and Training

* The National Qualifications Framework is designed in such a way as to be able to include diverse forms of qualifications not as yet covered by this Framework.
(a) Attainment of the Basic Employment Passport together with either the Adult Skills Certificate or the MQC 8 Key Competences at Level 1 are also considered as a Full VET Level 1 qualification.
(b) The MQC recommends that a Full VET Level 1 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as a Full School Leaving Certificate.
(c) The Malta Qualifications Council recommends that a Full VET Level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 4 General Education Level 2 subjects.
(d) The Malta Qualification Council recommends that a Full VET Level 3 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 6 General Education Level 3 subjects.
(e) The Malta Qualification Council recommends that a Full VET Diploma should enjoy the same parity of esteem as 3 Advanced Level subjects.

Source: http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/content/home-malta-qualifications-framework/5963805/

Appendix 4

FORM 1					FORM 2					FORM 3										
Italian	French	German	Arabic	Spanish	Italian	French	German	Arabic	Spanish	Italian		French		German		Arabic		Russian	Spanish		Italian
										I	III	I	III	I	III	I	III		I	III	
2259	624	466	32	413	2234	646	336	24	407	2575	103	749	45	421	26	29	9		514	86	

Russian Spanish

FORM 4									FORM 5									
Italian		French		German		Arabic		Russian	Spanish		Italian		French		German		Arabic		Russian	Spanish	
I	III	I	III	I	III	I	III		I	III	I	III	I	III	I	III	I	III		I	III
2913	90	759	25	215	18	11	14	4	502	46	3106	139	834	46	288	4	5	10	4	451	74

Table 14: Choice of languages in State Secondary Schools by Class, in 2013-2014. Source: DQSE.