

TOWARDS A QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

The National Curriculum Framework 2011

Consultation Document 3
The Three Cycles:
the Early Years
the Primary Years
the Secondary Years



**Towards A
Quality Education
For All**

**The National Curriculum Framework
2011**

Consultation Document 3

The Three Cycles:

The Early Years

The Primary Years

The Secondary Years

Curriculum Review Committee:

Grima Grace (Chairperson), Bezzina Christopher, Camilleri Raymond J. Caruana Horace, Fr Cilia David, Fr Mallia Charles, Micallef Joseph, Mizzi Bernie, Pace Paul, Sollars Valerie, Spiteri Sandro, Testa Mario and Ventura Frank

Ministry Representatives:

Birmingham Elaine (Phase I) and Bezzina Doriana (Phase II)

Consultation Strategy Group:

Grima Grace (Chairperson), Cachia Stephen, Fr Cilia David, Fr Mallia Charles, Pace Paul, Sciberras Micheline and Sollars Valerie

Design & Print: Salesian Press - www.salesianpress.com

www.meef.gov.mt

ISBN NO: 978-99957-0-034-8

The National Curriculum Framework

Consultation Document 3

The Three Cycles: The Early, Primary and Secondary Years

This third document presents details of how the NCF envisages the learning programme to be offered to children and young people in the Early Years, Primary and Secondary Cycles. This document focuses on the application of the NCF in schools. The learning areas and levels of achievement remain crucial throughout the Primary and the Secondary years as does a degree of flexibility in the delivery of the programmes as indicated in the timetable models presented for discussion in Appendix 1.

Early Years Cycle						Primary Cycle				Secondary Cycle				
Childcare	KG I	KG II	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	

It is crucial to note that the Early Years refer to children from birth to the age of seven. In real terms, this implies that early childhood education and care starts in the home, is experienced in non-compulsory and informal settings including child-care and kindergarten and is extended into the first two years of compulsory, primary school. Whilst the document presents three distinct cycles for ease of reference, teachers working with five to seven-year-olds are working with very young children and the emphasis of the curriculum should be on encouraging young learners to develop positive dispositions about themselves, their abilities and the world around them. Likewise, the pedagogy which ought to be adopted should respect the characteristics of young learners. The proposals for the Early Years presented in the NCF are the foundation upon which most of the learning experiences are developed at kindergarten and even in the first years of primary school with a gradual move towards more formal practices and learning organised through learning areas as children reach the middle and later years of Primary schooling.

In this document, the Primary Years Curriculum links the philosophical and educational principles proposed in the Early Years Curriculum to the later demands set by the curriculum for the Secondary School years. The transition from primary to secondary school should be smooth and offer progression in a way which supports children as they learn to take more responsibility. The secondary years are an important period for the learners' personal development and they should strive to have a strong platform for further and higher education.

Contents

Section 1: The Early Years	11
Purposes and general objectives	12
Leadership of key practitioners	13
Learning Processes and Effective Pedagogies	14
Learning environments	15
Assessment	16
Transitions	16
Parental involvement	17
Quality assurance	18
Learning Outcomes for the Early Years	18
Recommendations for successful experiences: Putting the Early Years framework into practice	23
Section 2: The Primary Years (Years 1-6)	29
Purposes and general objectives	29
Aims of Primary Education	30
Learning Areas	33
Leadership of key practitioners	40
Implementing the NCF in the Primary Years	41
Assessment	43
Transitions	44
Section 3: The Secondary Years (Years 7-11)	45
Purposes and general objectives	45
Aims for Secondary Education	46
Learning Areas	49
Leadership of key practitioners	56
Implementing the NCF in the Secondary Years	57
Assessment Issues in the Secondary Curriculum	63
Transitions	66
References	67
Appendix I: Model timetables for primary schools according to suggested distribution of learning time in Tables 2 and 3	68
Appendix II: Curriculum Framework timetable models for secondary schools	71
Appendix III: Number of Hours per Scholastic Year for secondary schools	82

Message

Hon. Dolores Cristina

Minister

Ministry of Education,
Employment and the Family



The concept of a National Curriculum that guaranteed a minimum level of education provision for all learners in Malta was first introduced in the 1988 Education Act. In 1999 a new national curriculum *Creating the Future Together (1999)* was published. It presented a series of aims and objectives which still guide education decisions to the present day. The underlying philosophy focused on the holistic development of all learners, by encouraging and supporting the professional decisions of educators in schools and thus providing quality education with a long-term vision.

In effect, following the publication of the 1999 curriculum, a series of in-depth analysis and discussion on key areas took place, each presenting challenges to be addressed in this review of the national curriculum framework. These areas included *Inclusive and Special Education (2005)*, *Absenteeism (2005)*, *Early Childhood Education and Care (2006)*, *Career Guidance (2007)*, *Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools in Malta (2007)*, *Smart Learning: Malta's National eLearning Strategy 2008-2010* and *Physical Education (NAO, 2010)*.

After a decade of experience, it is now time to appreciate what we have achieved and, in the light of the increasing changes within and around our society, review our educational thinking and practice to ensure that all children succeed. Moreover, this will be the first curriculum framework to be adopted since Malta joined the EU in 2004 and hence it has also considered policy-related documents issued by the European Commission.

Employability, quality of life and lifelong learning are at the heart of the new draft National Curriculum Framework that aims at equipping young people with the key competences needed to meet the challenges of Malta's future labour market.

At a time when together with other Member States of the European Union, Malta is overcoming the economic crisis in the context of demographic changes and social cohesion, this curriculum framework will ensure that present and future generations acquire skills that will enrich their lives and secure economic growth, sustainability and the foundations of a knowledge society.

A primary goal of this Government is that all children will exit compulsory education with acquired skills and qualifications and that schools become attractive learning environments. Thanks to the heavy investment in information technology and student services in all colleges,

this curriculum framework review will transform the existing physical structures into opportunities for personal and social growth, reduce early school leavers, retain learners in formal education for as long as possible as well as give credit to informal and non-formal learning. With the development of a National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and its referencing to the European Qualifications Framework, this document will facilitate access to further and higher education, work-based learning, continuous professional development and adult learning.

I look forward to an intensive and comprehensive consultative process characterised by healthy debate from all stakeholders on where we want our compulsory educational provision to go, and what decisions we need to take to fulfil this vision, so as to ensure that all our children receive the quality education they deserve, so that they may all succeed.

Dolores Cristina

Message

Prof. Grace Grima

Director General

*Directorate for Quality
and Standards in Education*



This curriculum review stems from Part II of the Education (Amendments) Act, 2006 which puts the onus on the Directorate for Quality and Standards for updating the National Curriculum Framework, implementing it as well as reviewing the implementation process at regular intervals. The process of reviewing and updating the National Curriculum included representatives from the Directorates of Education, the Faculty of Education, the MATSEC Examinations Board, and Church and Independent schools. The draft document has been refined following feedback received by invitation from curriculum experts from the Ministry of Education in New Zealand and Learning and Teaching Scotland. This draft document is being presented for a national consultation process after which it will be refined, finalised and adopted as the national curriculum framework.

The draft curriculum framework is presented in a set of four consultation documents, namely:

Document 1: The Executive Summary

Document 2: The National Curriculum Framework - Rationale and Components

This document includes a detailed introduction to the theoretical background against which the proposals of the national curriculum framework were conceptualised.

Document 3: The National Curriculum Framework - The Three Cycles: The Early Years, The Primary Years and the Secondary Years

This document presents details of how the national curriculum framework envisages the learning programme to be offered to children and young people in the early years, the primary years and the secondary years. This document focuses on the application of the framework in schools and colleges.

Document 4: The National Curriculum Framework - The Way Forward

This document summarises the recommendations of the national curriculum framework and examines the implications of such recommendations. The document presents ideas about the management of change which underpin the consultation and implementation strategies the framework would like to promote. In turn, the consultation and implementation strategies presented are based on an understanding of a change management process.

In essence, the updated national curriculum framework promotes these key ideas:

- the development of lifelong learners who are engaged and responsible citizens, and active in the economy.
- the support for all learners to achieve and succeed, whatever their backgrounds, needs and aptitudes.

- a clear focus in colleges and schools on meeting the needs of all learners through increased curricular autonomy.
- the creation of active, inclusive learning communities which put learning and learners at the heart of all that they do and are accountable to their stakeholders.
- seamless progression through the early, primary and secondary years in the skills and competences required for lifelong learning.
- learning which is active, personalised, relevant, and purposeful.
- learning that emphasises the application of knowledge and skills in different contexts and settings as well as breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding.
- a curriculum framework that focuses on learning areas, creating links and synergies across traditional subjects.
- assessment and evaluation which use information and feedback formatively to inform planning for improvement.
- cycles of quality assurance and evaluation which recognise that continuous professional learning is an essential part of educational practice.

The process of consultation is crucial for the success of the updated national curriculum framework. The consultation strategy presented in Document 4 has been designed with the aim of enabling a wide-ranging and authentic discussion and debate which enables all stakeholders to engage with the draft document in a positive way and participate actively in the formulation of the final version.

The consultation process itself is divided into three phases:

- **Phase 1: Reflection for action May 2011 to August 2011**

This phase will serve to present the updated national curriculum framework and prepare the various stakeholders for the consultation process. The meetings with the stakeholders will serve to highlight (i) the main recommendations of the updated national curriculum framework; (ii) the implications arising for the various stakeholders as envisaged by the updated national curriculum framework; and (iii) the role of the stakeholders in the consultation process, in terms of both their personal contribution to the process and their role in bringing together the feedback and responses of the learning communities for which they are responsible. In addition, this phase allows all participants sufficient time to read through the documents and consider in some detail their content and implications.

- **Phase 2: Reflection in action from September 2011 to November 2011**

This phase will provide stakeholders opportunities to share and consolidate their ideas within and across different institutions. The aim of this phase is to invite and encourage stakeholders towards actively participating in generating a national, reflective professional discussion and debate about the updated national curriculum framework proposals, thus initiating a process of sharing critical and constructive feedback in preparation for the final version of the updated national curriculum framework.

- **Phase 3: Reflection on Action from November 2011 to December 2011**

This phase will bring together all the stakeholders and the feedback offered by the various institutions. The highlights of this phase include a two-day national conference and the submission of written feedback. Once the working group reviews the proposed NCF in light of the feedback received, the working group will submit a final NCF document to the Minister for approval.

I invite all educators, parents, students and society stakeholders to participate actively in this consultation process so that the final approved document will be a true expression of our hopes and aspirations to provide a relevant quality education for our children which meets the current and future needs of our country.

Grace Grima

Section 1

The Early Years

In the international literature, it is widely acknowledged and accepted that the Early Years refer to the period in a child's life which spans from birth through to the age of seven or eight (Wilks, Nyland, Chancellor & Elliot, 2008, Department of Education & Early Childhood Development & VCAA, 2009, Waddell & McBride, 2008). The myth that education starts when children start formal schooling has long been dispelled and the Early Years are indeed the most crucial phase in each individual's life - a child's learning and education in the Early Years are inextricably linked to the holistic development which occurs through informal and formal settings, planned and spontaneous activities, structured and unstructured events. The extent of the learning experienced by each child is in part determined by a supportive environment, involving adults who respond to children's natural curiosity and support their development from the very early stages to the later years of early childhood.

The main thrust of the NCF cannot focus on the compulsory school years (which in the local context starts in the year a child turns five) without embracing, promoting, supporting and acknowledging the on-going development which occurs in the pre-school years. The Early Years cannot be ignored for several reasons:

- the overall, holistic development, learning and understanding which occurs in the first years must be recognised and used as the foundation towards learning and development, whether children are being cared for at home by parents¹ and other familiar caregivers, Early Years settings outside the home, or during the transition phase between non-compulsory and compulsory education;
- the number of child-care centres has increased over the past decade, suggesting that increasing numbers of children younger than three years of age are spending considerable time in settings outside the home;
- although attendance at kindergarten centres for 3 and 4-year-olds is not compulsory, some 80% of 3-year-olds and 95% of 4-year-olds attend kindergarten centres available in the State, Church and Independent sectors; and
- the curricular demands in the upper primary and secondary school years can be successfully achieved following the establishment of firm foundations in the Early Years where children are given opportunities to develop their self and their identity as a result of positive experiences and relationships with their immediate and eventually, the extended world around them.

Because the Early Years are characterized by a period of rapid growth and change, a curriculum framework which purports to address learning outcomes for children in this

¹ Throughout this document any reference to parental involvement in education includes legal guardians and significant adults recognised as having a parenting role in the life of the child. This definition is without prejudice to the legal obligations of schools.

phase gains relevance and significance when it advocates in favour of:

- broad outcomes which are all-encompassing and not exclusively focused on academic achievement;
- pedagogical approaches which respect children's age and developmental level;
- unlimited content which is to be presented to children in ways which engage their attention and secure their direct involvement and participation; and
- highly trained and skilled staff who are sensitive to the characteristics of young learners and in tune with the learning processes of toddlers, infants and young children in the early stages of formal schooling.

The NCF endorses the position recommended by the 1999 NMC² which

regards the first two years of primary schooling as a continuation of the two-year Kindergarten period. This entails that the teachers adopt a pedagogy that develops knowledge, attitudes and skills which derive from concrete experiences. The 3-7 year period, considered as the pre-conceptual phase, must be regarded as the formative period which precedes the one during which the school experience becomes more formal. (p. 57)

Purposes and general objectives

The Early Years serve multiple purposes and must be acknowledged as the foundation for all future learning experiences. Within the Early Years' experiences, from birth to seven/eight, young children develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which enable them to become successful learners and active participants in society. For these general objectives to be achieved, the content of the experiences becomes secondary to the processes of learning which children participate in. Successful learning experiences are characterised by approaches which:

- respond to children's interests and prior knowledge;
- respect young learners' cognitive maturity and preferred learning patterns;
- stimulate curiosity;
- instil an interest for learning;
- promote exploration, discovery and creativity; and
- foster environments which promote communication and interactive styles of learning.

Powerful learning experiences contribute to the development of children who become involved in pursuing their interests, are motivated, develop perseverance and learn to assume responsibility. Such outcomes are realised through an environment of trust and respect, which gives learners self-confidence and self-esteem in their abilities.

2 http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/nmc_english.pdf

In order for the Early Years' goals to be successfully achieved by all children, the NCF ought to:

- be supported by the visionary leadership of key practitioners working in early childhood education;
- recognise the uniqueness in children's learning and development through a variety of learning styles and pedagogies;
- encourage programmes of activities which move away from emphasising specific subject or content teaching in favour of pedagogies which enhance curricular links and thus facilitate learning processes;
- endorse policies for assessment and transitions;
- facilitate capacity building of major stakeholders, predominantly parents and staff; and
- incorporate measures to ensure quality assurance procedures thus promoting a reflective approach which monitors and evaluates practices and outcomes.

Leadership of key practitioners

Practitioners in early childhood education, whether directly responsible for designing and developing a programme of activities or having an administrative role must be highly-trained and qualified staff. They must be skilled in supporting and extending children's communication skills and creative in designing an appealing environment which will arouse and stimulate children's thinking and interactions. Staff must be observant and reflective in order to adapt and modify activities based on cues and feedback proffered by children themselves. Most importantly, practitioners must capitalise on the social dimension through interacting frequently and directly with children in their care thus facilitating a sense of well-being. Practitioners must be responsive to children's learning interests. They must be highly skilled and competent as a result of the strong theoretical foundations which direct and support their professional and pedagogical decisions. Practitioners need:

- a sound theoretical base to understand how young children learn and develop;
- pedagogical knowledge to determine what is reasonable to do with young learners and the most effective ways to achieve this, therefore applying theory to practice;
- personal and practical knowledge about a range of professional issues which impact directly on the management of and relationships amongst a group of learners;
- research skills which enable them to understand on-going development in their field and critically position themselves when faced with results;
- a genuine interest in listening to and responding to children to promote a pedagogy of respect, responsiveness and reciprocal relationships (Podmore, Meade & Kerslake Hendricks, 2000; UNCRC, 1989); and
- reflective skills which allow them to think critically through their work with children, question their perceptions and understandings of children's experiences and examine their interactions with children with a view to improving the quality of the Early Years experiences.

A key feature of successful learning experiences in the Early Years is the realisation that learning occurs through meaningful social processes, rooted in positive relationships and acknowledging reciprocity. "A culture of learning depends on appropriate relationships, secure but challenging environments, and high but achievable expectations" (Eaude, n.d.).

Apart from being knowledgeable about child-development, learning processes and suitable pedagogies, early childhood practitioners must demonstrate empathy and solidarity with the families of children with whom they are working and show that they are capable of working with children and their families.

Learning Processes and Effective Pedagogies

The first years of children's lives are significant in the rapid development which they undergo. These are the years where children learn through observation, experimentation, trial and error, exposure to stimulating environments and highly contextualised settings which facilitate their understanding of the world around them. There is significant linguistic and cognitive development; physical and moral development as well as personal, social and emotional development. Indeed, children develop holistically, and progress in any one area influences other areas.

Every child has the right to develop to his/her maximum potential. The foundations for realising this potential are laid down in the Early Years: skills which are extremely useful to face the challenges of daily life can be nurtured in the Early Years' settings. If practitioners capitalise on activities, events, resources which are of particular interest to a child or group of children, they stimulate the youngsters' interest. As a result of sustained interest, motivation develops which in turn supports perseverance as children want to participate in activities willingly and in so doing, they gain confidence and self-esteem (see Figure 3.1).

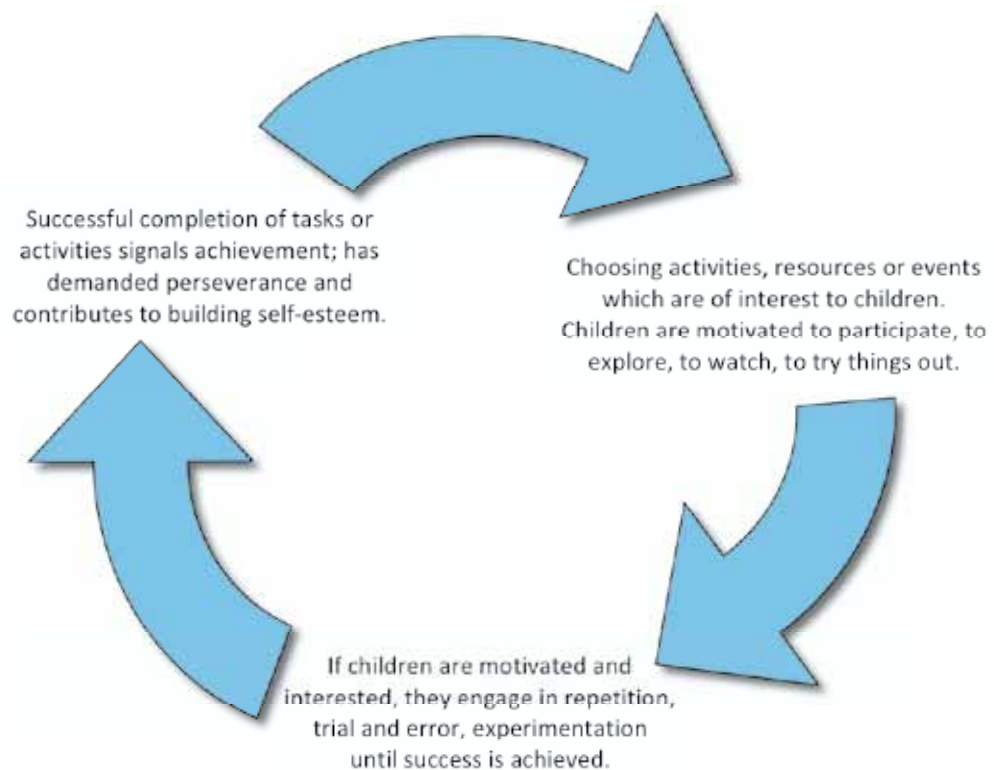


Figure 3.1: Stimulating learning in young children

Development does not occur at the same rate or in the same way for all. Apart from the genetic make-up and personal characteristics, cultures and the social environment have an impact on what and how children learn. Young children come to organised Early Years' settings with their baggage of prior knowledge and understanding. As the children's experiences with the world widen and broaden, their prior knowledge has a bearing on new experiences in that it informs them (they try to make sense of what something is by using previously-acquired information) but with new information with which they are faced, they modify existing knowledge and amend their understanding. Learning occurs when new knowledge and information is internalised and modifies previous understandings.

The learning process is different for individuals because of the variation in both natural and environmental factors. Children receive, react to, interpret and process information differently. With this knowledge in mind, early childhood educators should plan for a curriculum (a programme of activities) which appeals to different cognitive styles. Because of limited experiences and immaturity (limited development) as a result of their age, children thrive on multi-sensory approaches where their understanding of the world around them improves when using all their senses. By relying on what they can see, smell, touch, taste and hear, the likelihood of understanding how things work, drawing conclusions to hypotheses, culminating in understanding cause and effect, and learning how to discriminate and differentiate between contrasting objects increases.

Learning environments

Since young children develop holistically and because learning and development do not occur in a sequential, linear fashion, compartmentalising learning programmes by subject areas does not facilitate learning. On the contrary, subject teaching serves to create artificial pockets of knowledge which are often considered to be unrelated, disjointed, irrelevant and developmentally inappropriate for young children. Conscious of the learning and developmental processes which young children undergo, Early Years practitioners are therefore encouraged to set up learning environments which appeal to children's interests, are relevant to the common day experiences children are likely to have and which can be explored in an exciting manner. Direct, hands-on experiences encourage interaction, engagement and involvement which in turn lead to improved understanding, recall and the development of mental representations. This supports children in their move from concrete, tangible experiences to symbolic and abstract notions.

Another advantage of setting up dynamic learning environments relates to the depth and multiple perspectives with which issues can be dealt with. Thorough and detailed observations, analysis, investigations, exploration and experimentation through projects, topics and themes fits in with children's curiosity and need to find out the what, why and how things work.

The setting up of interactive learning environments which appeal to children require careful planning on the part of the practitioner in order to ensure promotion of a range of skills, attitudes, knowledge and values which young children can acquire through well-thought and presented activities. Yet, a hallmark of good Early Years practice is the recognition and promotion of child-initiated activity and enquiry. Such activity should be encouraged as it acknowledges learning as an on-going process where all involved make valid contributions. A quality programme should strike a balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities

that emerge directly from children's interests.

Assessment

Assessment in early childhood education is a means of finding out what children are interested in as well as finding ways of recording and documenting their progress. According to Carr (2001) assessment in early childhood education has multiple functions, namely to:

- understand children's learning better;
- start discussions about children's learning;
- share information with others in the early childhood setting;
- reflect on practice;
- plan for the learning of individuals and groups;
- ensure that all children receive attention;
- highlight the learning that is valued in the setting;
- involve children in self-assessment;
- discuss the programme with the family, and
- share experiences with family.

For assessment to be effective and meaningful for young children, documenting narrative accounts of their achievements can provide a more holistic reflection of what each child is truly capable of doing. Assessment in Early Years is as important for the children as it is for the adults, especially for practitioners. Assessment based on careful observation and a responsive and reflective attitude informs practices. Observing and documenting children's achievements helps adults to capture the learning processes as well as the outcomes.

Transitions

During the Early Years, children go through several transition phases which must be acknowledged and supported to ascertain that they gain a positive and self-confident attitude towards change, growth and development. Transitions are an inevitable part of growing up and although they offer a challenge, the changes which young children face need not be insurmountable difficulties, nor should they be unpredictable and unsupported events.

Whilst certain procedures ought to be established and initiatives taken to minimise the impact which transitions can bring about, the variety of early childhood settings where children spend their time should ensure that children encounter opportunities which allow them to develop their identity and establish themselves whilst embracing the complex nature of a gradually widening world.

In the Early Years, transition processes are not experienced exclusively by the children but also by their families. Thus school authorities, administrative staff and primary carers/educators who are in direct contact with children need to involve the parents and require the involvement of these significant adults in young children's transition processes. The personal, social and emotional growth of families, especially of young children, is at stake when dealing with the transition process.

With regard to the implementation of the NCF, it is worth highlighting that in the local context, the most significant transition which young children are expected to experience relates to the change from informal to formal education. During the early childhood phase, children move from the non-compulsory years in child-care and kindergarten centres to compulsory, primary education in the year when they turn five. Malta is one of the few EU countries where compulsory education starts at the age of five³, the majority of countries maintaining six as the first year of compulsory schooling and others opting for seven as the age when children formally begin school.

Irrespective of the age when compulsory education starts, the over-riding concern should remain one of appropriate pedagogies which match the cognitive and developmental levels of very young children and which seek to provide for a multi-sensory approach to learning where children are challenged to take calculated risks and increase their knowledge and understanding of themselves and of the world around them through environments which contextualise and facilitate learning.

With the realisation that the practice and principles applied in educational settings need to respect and match children's development and promote their active participation, it becomes evident that the Early Years phase should be seen as a time which is distinct from experiences of later childhood and consequently, the Early Years settings should be conceived of as a sequence of opportunities for children to establish themselves and their identities; when children enjoy 'being' rather than forced into 'becoming' something or someone else.

Parental involvement

While acknowledging and recognising the role of parents as partners in the education process is important throughout the different cycles (see NCF Document: Rationale and Components), this needs to be especially emphasised during the Early Years. The influence of the home on children's personal achievements cannot be negated and the effects of home are tangible at a very early age. Parents and the Early Years settings need to support each other through a range of facilities which allow easy communication and sharing of essential information. By having settings where the information is easily accessible as well as personnel who are readily available, parents and educators join forces in helping children develop into confident learners who can become active in their own learning.

Parents should have access to information and support which enable them to encourage their child's development within the home, in Early Years' settings and within the community through varied and diverse activities which ought to be available for children of all ages.

³ Compulsory education starts at the age of six in fourteen EU countries; and at the age of seven in nine EU countries. Apart from Malta, compulsory education at the age of five is mandatory in Britain (including Northern Ireland) Cyprus and the Netherlands (Oberhuemer, 2007).

Quality assurance

In order to ensure that an Early Years programme is of high quality, there need to be opportunities for self-evaluation, critical reflection and enquiry. These can be achieved through collaborative fora where examples of good practice are recorded and shared; where staff within an Early Years setting meets to discuss, review and consider events, approaches and pedagogies; where staff discuss their knowledge, observe others and share their reflections and considerations.

Working in isolation with a group of children prevents any personal or professional growth or development. In fostering a culture where evaluation and reflection become shared routine, practitioners are supported in making necessary amendments to current practices and applying a range of strategies and techniques which improve the learning outcomes for a wider number of children.

Learning Outcomes for the Early Years

The hallmarks of successful, quality Early Years programmes are those which:

- embrace the socio-cultural dimension surrounding children's learning;
- are concerned with promoting and encouraging positive learning dispositions;
- put children at the centre of the learning environment;
- allow child-initiated activities acknowledging that learning in the Early Years is a process of co-construction and collaboration;
- promote activities that are related to children's real-life experiences;
- offer children opportunities for hands-on activities; and
- draw on a variety of pedagogies which address needs of particular learners.

Thus, rather than identifying specific content knowledge associating it to subject areas, in the Early Years emphasis should be given to general competences developed through cross-curricular themes which contribute to establishing the foundations for lifelong learning. The Early Years are comparable to a journey of discovery where children find out who they are as individuals and position and establish themselves within a society as they interact with others. To achieve both successfully, children learn about and experience ways of using communicative tools necessary for self-fulfilment, personal development and meaningful social engagement.

Success in promoting a love for learning and holistic development comes with suitable pedagogies which must embrace play and experiential, joyful learning. The various types of play children should engage in effectively meet the objectives and outcomes necessary for quality experiences in early childhood education. Thus pretend play, imaginative, creative, constructive, symbolic and role play as well as engagement, interaction and participation in all forms of expressive arts constitute an integral part of children's experiences in the Early Years. Through programmes which seek children's active involvement and experiential

learning, children are expected to acquire social, communicative and intellectual competences in an environment which fosters personal well-being and positive learning dispositions (See Figure 3.2).

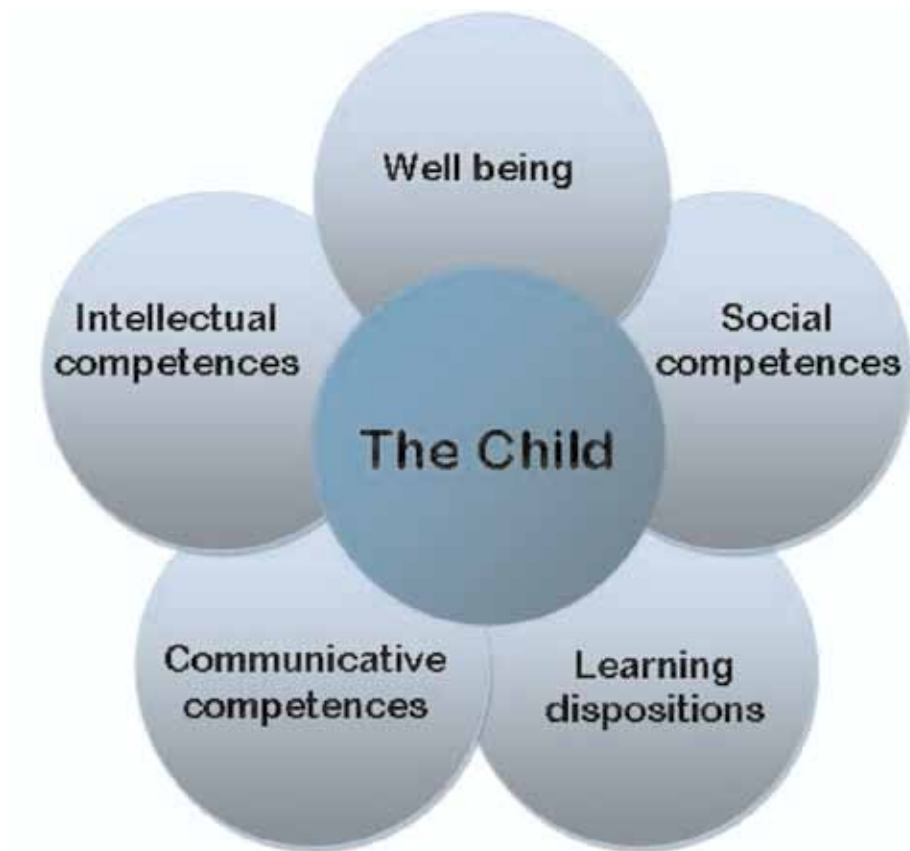


Figure 3.2: Competences in Early Childhood Education

Well-being

The Early Years ought to offer environments where children feel safe and secure to the extent that they have a sense of belonging; feel loved and accepted by all; and are respected for who they are. Adults working with young children need to show and share a genuine interest in each child and make every effort to foster warm, caring and friendly relationships. The extent to which a child's well-being is enhanced depends on the very attitudes and relationships which are promoted and which prevail amongst the adult carers themselves.

An environment which offers children security is one where there is stability and consistency. Such environments support children in building their self-esteem, developing a positive self-identity and gaining confidence in themselves and their achievements. Within a safe environment where they are accepted, given freedom of choice, and allowed to explore and experiment on their own and with others, children learn to become risk-takers. They can develop individual strategies which help them to cope with new challenges, become autonomous, self-regulating and self-determining individuals who make progress, overcome difficulties and feel satisfied with their endeavours. Hence, young learners become independent.

As they become independent and learn to take care of themselves, young children learn how to deal with their feelings, recognise and label emotions, accept themselves and learn to be comfortable with themselves and others. In developing socio-emotional competences, young children acquire self-discipline as they learn to be more in control of who they are and what they can do.

In addition to their affective development, in the Early Years children learn about who they are and what they can do through physical activities which can be used to promote a healthy life.

Social competences

Apart from learning to feel comfortable with themselves in the Early Years, children increasingly gain awareness of others and learn how to live and grow with others. This means that children experience and deal with turn-taking and sharing activities, ideas, thinking processes and achievements that will help them develop positive and authentic relationships. In so doing, children realize what it means to respect others, value each other and develop a sense of community. Together, children have to resolve conflicts as a result of their learning to contribute and participate in a democracy. Empathy development occurs when children can understand the emotions which others are experiencing and see different perspectives.

As they develop social competences and in an atmosphere where their personal well-being is safeguarded, young children develop a moral identity; a sense of right and wrong as they distinguish between what is acceptable or unacceptable; as they experience and adopt values depending on how they are treated and how they see others being treated.

Communicative competences

Successful personal and social development necessitates expressing oneself in a comprehensible manner. Several communication tools are available to help children understand themselves and others. The predominant tool which facilitates communication is language. As children engage with and gain experiences in using both oral and printed language, their abilities to think, understand, express themselves and extend social relations are strengthened. The overall objectives of language in the Early Years should predominantly focus on helping children increase their awareness of the functions and purposes of language skills⁴ which make them a versatile tool for any member in a society. Where language learning is concerned, from a young age children gain flexibility and control over language through correct and appropriate choice of words; extend their vocabulary; learn how to assert themselves; become aware of the subtle influence which language has on society and how listening, speaking, reading and writing are tools which are used almost constantly in order to get other things done.

Whilst respecting, promoting and strengthening the child's first language, young children growing up in the Maltese context begin their journey of second language learning. This is a direct reflection of the wider society rather than necessarily being an immediate need young children have. However, it is imperative that children are exposed to the two official languages of the country in meaningful ways which would serve to promote learning and

4 'Language skills' refer to listening, speaking, reading & writing. 'Language skills' is also broadly used to refer to receptive skills & production skills.

understanding of the world which goes beyond language learning itself. 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.

In addition to language, from a relatively young age, children are exposed to alternative sources of communication access which has been greatly facilitated with the widespread availability of digital technologies. Growing up in the 21st century, children require digital competences which enable them to communicate more effectively not only with their immediate contacts but even with others. Availability of and accessibility to different information sources enables children to engage with and make sense of the world around them; encourages them towards communication and collaboration; promote skills for conducting research as well as locating, storing and retrieving information.

Learning dispositions

A child-centred environment is one which encourages children to find things out for themselves allowing for experimentation, hypotheses testing, and trial and error. Through hands-on approaches in pursuit of answers to self-initiated activities, young children develop perseverance and concentration. The role of adults is to be sensitive to young learners' interests and inclinations and to provide stimulating environments which challenge the minds of learners in their quest for information. Adults responsible for young learners need to believe that children have a thirst for knowledge and by allowing for inquiry based activities and independent exploration, children are more likely to remember and understand what and how certain results are achieved. Learning by doing is a more effective methodology than learning by telling. Children need to enjoy learning and have a real sense that they are more than capable of achieving and learning.

Intellectual competences

The Early Years experiences should offer children possibilities to engage with and understand the world around them. Rather than restrict children's opportunities and interests, every effort ought to be made to ensure that activities, environments and resources are challenging and that children are given the possibility of tapping into diverse sources of information. Early Years settings are responsible for helping children become aware of skills and strategies necessary to access, look for, elicit, retrieve, organise and understand information. Equipped with appropriate strategies and a healthy approach to risk-taking, children acquire a range of cognitive skills such as identifying, labelling, sorting, grouping, sequencing, classifying, categorising, and matching.

These competences can be translated into learning outcomes which young children are expected to achieve by the time they are moving from the Early Years to the later primary school years. The holistic development of children contributes to successful achievement of all the outcomes.

Outcome 1: Children develop a strong sense of identity

- Children develop in a safe, secure environment which they can trust.
- Children develop a sense of independence and autonomy.
- Children become responsible and resilient in the face of challenges.

Outcome 2: Children gain a positive self-image

- Children believe in themselves fully aware of their potential and capabilities.
- Children gain confidence in themselves and their achievements.
- Children develop positive attitudes which enable them to take the initiative and become risk-takers.

Outcome 3: Children are socially adept

- Children become capable of establishing relationships with others.
- Children develop empathy, respect and acceptance of different points of view.
- Children develop an awareness of the notions of fairness, a sense of justice and non-preferential treatment.
- Children learn to collaborate with peers and adults with diverse backgrounds and needs.

Outcome 4: Children are effective communicators

- Children who are capable of using different forms of and media for communication.
- Children interact and engage with varieties of text and printed material increasing their awareness of purposes/functions.
- Children gain familiarity with symbols and patterns and their use.
- Children become aware of different language systems, notably L1 and L2.
- Children engage with digital literacy as a means of retrieving data as well as representing and communicating ideas.

Outcome 5: Children nurture positive attitudes towards learning becoming engaged and confident learners

- Children develop a range of cognitive skills to include labelling/identifying, recognition, sorting, hypothesizing, predicting, comparing, sequencing, grouping.
- Children develop positive dispositions to include enthusiasm & motivation, curiosity, questioning, concentration, perseverance, imagination, ability to accept alternative suggestions/criticism.
- Children broaden their knowledge and reinforce their understanding through availability of and access to various sources of information.

Recommendations for successful experiences: Putting the Early Years framework into practice

A successful Early Years programme consists of well-planned, well-resourced and well-delivered activities which take into consideration the needs, abilities and perspectives of the children. A plethora of activities can be developed with young learners whilst respecting their developmental stage. There are several benefits accruing from well-chosen activities. Apart from the enjoyment and fun, varied activities should provide:

- real learning contexts whereby children's skills and knowledge increase;
- positive attitudes about themselves as learners; and
- positive attitudes towards learning itself.

It is undesirable to draw up a prescriptive programme for the Early Years especially when allowances are to be made for child-initiated activities. The Early Years' curriculum and programme of activities cannot be an all-encompassing document which dictates what should be done, when, with whom and how.

Successful development and implementation of activities require careful planning, research, provision of materials, adult resource books, tools and a variety of reading material suitable for children. It is also assumed that chosen themes and activities reflect and indeed arise from the interests of children in a particular group. However, the adult should strive to create environments that stimulate and motivate young learners, keeping in mind that children are naturally curious and are keen and interested in finding out information about the world around them. Children should participate fully in activities and be allowed to take over. Rather than being told what to do, when and how to do something, children should be provided with the raw materials, taken for site visits, allowed to observe, see, touch and use equipment in order to enhance the growth of knowledge and real understanding.

On the basis of the adults' knowledge about child development, information provided by families and an in-depth awareness of the range of pedagogies, Early Years educators can assist young learners by:

- *creating opportunities for children to engage in a range of experiences with others and with their environment;*
- *intentionally guiding and supporting them to discover their potential and achieve their learning goals; and*
- *ensuring that children encounter cognitive challenges through teaching techniques such as modelling, open questioning, speculating and explanation.⁵*

Rather than coverage of particular content, the main concern of Early Years educators

5 The Australian *Early Years learning framework* (Draft) Nov, 2008. Available at: <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/development/eylframework.pdf>

should be on learning outcomes which promote positive learning attitudes, dispositions and competences which the children will foster during the Early Years and which will see them through life-long growth and development.

The summary of key data on education in Europe (Eurydice, 2009), indicates that the terminology used by European countries which identify general aims to be achieved in the pre-primary years refers to 'development', 'autonomy', 'responsibility', 'well-being', 'self-confidence', 'citizenship', 'preparation for life at school', 'the pursuit of learning' (p. 65).

Table 1 below shows some of the achievements young children are expected to develop during their Early Years together with the evidence that can be recorded as a demonstration of what has been achieved. Information is also provided with suggestions about provision which adults need to incorporate in their planning in order to facilitate the meaningful experiences, leading to the achievement of positive learning dispositions⁶.

6 The table has been modelled on examples provided in: *Belonging, being & becoming. The Early Years learning framework for Australia.* (2009). Available at: http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Policy_Agenda/Quality/Documents/Final%20EYLF%20Framework%20Report%20-%20WEB.pdf

Table 1: Outcomes, achievements, evidence and support in the early years

Outcome	Related achievements	Evidence	Required Support
A strong sense of identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop in a safe, secure environment which they can trust Develop a sense of independence and autonomy Become responsible and resilient in the face of challenges Show empathy towards and respect others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel comfortable with peers and adults Identify with early years setting willingly Participate easily Develop positive relationship with adult carer Gradually extend relationships with various adults Take the lead with activities Initiate activities Take risks Choose activities expressing preferences Take responsibility for choices, actions & decisions Do not give up easily Engage with activity until success is achieved Accept others readily Collaborate with peers Are aware of and accept different perspectives Show concern for others Imaginative & creative Take up challenges Inquisitive – seek alternative solutions Develop a range of strategies Persevere Prepared to try things out Prepared to demonstrate their achievements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults respond warmly to individuals Primary caregivers show a genuine interest in children Adults act/ behave consistently Ensure children settle down in new unfamiliar setting Adults respond to child-initiated events Adults react to children's contributions Show children strategies Adults actively support individual interests Adults demonstrate explicit strategies if necessary Adults allow for individual and collaborative play activities Adults treat each other, children & their families fairly and with respect Encourage children to see things from different points of view Adults spend time speaking with children Create environments to encourage experimentation Allow exploration & risk-taking Allow time for events Encourage children to make choices for themselves Give children opportunities to succeed Offer praise for success Share achievements with parents
A positive self-image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believe in themselves fully aware of their potential & capabilities Gain confidence in themselves and their achievements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imaginative & creative Take up challenges Inquisitive – seek alternative solutions Develop a range of strategies Persevere Prepared to try things out Prepared to demonstrate their achievements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults spend time speaking with children Create environments to encourage experimentation Allow exploration & risk-taking Allow time for events Encourage children to make choices for themselves Give children opportunities to succeed Offer praise for success Share achievements with parents

Outcome	Related achievements	Evidence	Required Support
Socially adept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop positive attitudes which enable them to take the initiative and become risk-takers Accept themselves and demonstrate emotions rationally Capable of establishing relationships with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivated to lead Make their own choices Developed sense of independence Share feelings freely Learn to control emotions Learn to express one-self appropriately Engage in activities with others Participate in activities where roles are shared Allow for turn-taking Collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give children opportunities to take initiatives Celebrate individual achievements Adults show sensitivity to different achievements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop empathy, respect and acceptance of different points of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show interest in others & their needs Demonstrate concern for the well-being of others Accept others' perspectives Respond positively to different perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage role play Encourage children to accept themselves Adults take an in-depth interest in each individual's needs Encourage children's participation in different activities Encourage collaborative games & activities Help children distribute work & tasks for the common good
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an awareness of the notions of fairness, a sense of justice and non-preferential treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in decision-making Take on roles and identities in pretend play Deal with consequences of choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide children with opportunities to talk and discuss equal and respectful interaction Explore stereotypes and limitations Create opportunities for children to take decisions that influence their lives Observe situations where choices have to be made
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn to collaborate with peers and adults with diverse backgrounds and needs Are socially responsible & treat the environment respectfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate & collaborate in shared activities Reach out to include others in their play activities React to each other with respect Recognise their role in communities Are aware of their potential contributions Acknowledge the effect of their contributions on the environment around them Appreciate and care for natural and constructed environments Increasingly observe, explore, interact with environments to increase their understanding of the world around them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss notions of fairness especially in situation where a child dominates Treat children equally and fairly Provide opportunities for children to explore environments – indoors; outdoors Discuss choices and actions and their impact on others Encourage children to take action which is sustainable Promote values and practices which demonstrate civic responsibility

Outcome	Related achievements	Evidence	Required Support
<p>Effective communicators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capable of using different forms of and media for communication Interact and engage with varieties of text and printed material increasing their awareness of purposes/functions Gain familiarity with symbols and patterns and their use Become aware of different language systems, notably L1 and L2 Engage with digital literacy as a means of retrieving and organising data as well as representing and communicating ideas Experiment with designing & making artefacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coherent in mother tongue through clear, sequenced narratives Has good command of oral language Use different media (music, art; dance; drama) to express thoughts, ideas, emotions Respond warmly to different activities Engage with books (fact & fiction) Interact with realia for pretend purposes & real needs Use literacy-based activities in play situations Become aware of basic concepts: colours, shapes, numbers, patterns Learn to see symbols as means of representation Use mother tongue comfortably Express themselves coherently Awareness of second language through songs, rhymes, stories Good command of language through wide choice of vocabulary Browse through relevant software & internet sites Use digital cameras Recording meaningful events Represent experiences pictorially Make/construct artefacts using different materials Predict/experiment with choice of materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote aural and oral activities Discuss events of importance with the child/children Provide opportunities for children to engage with creative and expressive art forms Participate in children's activities to support & extend language development Availability & accessibility of variety of resources Adults promote use of different resources in children's environment Exposure to symbols and patterns through different resources Encourage children to make their own patterns & symbols Examining patterns & symbols in the environment Exposed to range of stories, poems, rhymes, songs, in both L1 & L2 Provided with variety of listening experiences through different resources/media Encouraged to narrate stories Sequence pictures and/or stories Provide opportunities where children see adults using technology Provide opportunities for children to use technology to create, record, edit productions Encourage children to construct artefacts using a variety of materials

Outcome	Related achievements	Evidence	Required Support
Engaged and confident learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a range of cognitive skills Develop positive dispositions Broaden knowledge and reinforce their understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can identify, sort, group, sequence, classify and organise Make predictions Express their ideas – likes, dislikes Communicate coherently Show an interest in and curiosity towards the world around them Initiate activities Collaborate with peers Committed to tasks at hand Persevere when faced with difficulties Are creative and confident in their contributions Investigate/examine/observe environments Conduct simple research Explore Develop a range of strategies Transfer knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide for a broad and varied range of experiences Encourage experimentation, trial & error Present children with activities where they experience some degree of success Provide a stimulating environment Respond to children's queries & interests Show a genuine interest in children's concerns Share general knowledge and information Facilitate children's quest for information Demonstrate strategies to explore, retrieve, review and confirm evidence

Section 2

The Primary Years (Years 1-6)⁷

The NCF proposals for the Primary Years, take the following into consideration:

- by the time children are embarking on formal education, the overwhelming majority of children would have experienced an Early Years programme;
- the Primary Curriculum links the philosophical and educational principles set out in the Early Years Curriculum to the later demands set by the curriculum for the Secondary School years; and
- especially for children attending State schools and for most of the boys in Church schools, the recent developments within the educational reform that have seen the abolishment of the high-stakes entry examinations into the Secondary years ought to facilitate a developmental approach to learning⁸.

The challenge that lies ahead is one that ensures that the Primary School curriculum allows for the implementation of pedagogies founded on a socio-constructivist approach which respects individualised learning patterns, addresses all children's needs and successfully develops children's full potential, thus reducing the over-emphasis on the pass or fail mentality brought about by an examinations-oriented system.

Purposes and general objectives

At the primary level, children are entitled to a stimulating, happy, safe and caring educational environment which builds on early childhood experiences, promotes the development of their full potential in all aspects of learning and paves the way for capacity-building and life-long learning which will be strengthened at the secondary level. Education at the primary level aims at:

- supporting children in their journey of discovering the joy of learning;
- strengthening children's holistic development; and
- enabling children to acquire knowledge, concepts, skills, values and attitudes which will allow them to develop into life-long learners able to progress from one level to another at their individual pace of development.

The educational settings and experiences during the primary years aim at enhancing children's learning capacity. This is achieved through the planning, implementation and

7 In line with the philosophy of a seamless curriculum, it is recommended that the primary and secondary cycles within compulsory education are referred to as Years 1 to 11.

8 Girls in Church schools, some boys in Church schools and students in most Independent schools have had all-through schooling for many years.

evaluation of educational activities that develop children's ability to acquire, comprehend and apply knowledge, develop and practise a wide variety of skills and key competences and internalize positive attitudes and values. Specific programmes of studies and assessment modes are to be clear, valid and relevant.

The primary curriculum will assist children to develop into learners who are:

- confident, have a positive self-image, high self-esteem and are capable of nurturing healthy socio-emotional relationships;
- critical and innovative thinkers who are capable of generating creative ideas and putting them into practice;
- proficient users of Maltese and English;
- numerate and have a firm foundation in mathematical reasoning and concepts;
- scientifically literate and capable of engaging in enquiry that inculcates the love of exploration and wonder;
- digitally literate, capable of using and adapting to new technologies; and
- physically active, capable of making choices in favour of a healthy life-style.

Aims of Primary Education

The NCF aims at developing:

A. Learners who are capable of successfully developing their full potential as lifelong learners

This leads to the development of:

Personal and social skills

Children's interpersonal, intrapersonal and communication skills are developed to bring about positive self-esteem, self-confidence and self-awareness. A totally integrated approach across the curriculum enhances these skills within the affective domain in order to develop the children's capacity to build solid relationships with self, peers and adults.

Moral and spiritual development

The development of the moral, spiritual, and religious dimensions contributes towards the children's capacity to value, appreciate, perceive and interpret the world they live in. It aims at initiating the children into a profound and life-long search for truth and the value of life and existence through a Catholic perspective. An ethical education programme will be made available as an alternative to denominational religious education programmes.

Literacy, numeracy, and digital literacies

Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy are the foundations for further learning. Through programmes which build upon the initial skills inculcated during the Early Years, children become proficient in speaking, listening, reading and writing in both Maltese and English. Mathematical concepts and language are inculcated through systematic teaching and learning activities to help children develop numeracy and problem-solving skills. Progression is achieved through thinking, manipulating, reporting and presenting results. Digital literacy is developed together with literacy and numeracy through children's engagement with technologies.

Bilingualism and multilingualism

In addition to the simultaneous development of Maltese and English, in the later years of the primary cycle, children are encouraged to experience a foreign language awareness programme.

Science and technology competence

Problem-solving and enquiry skills are inculcated through practical work and through exploration of ideas. The skills of investigation, designing and making, testing and reporting are to be given importance.

Critical and innovative thinking

During the Primary Years children's imagination and inquisitiveness are drawn upon in order to investigate problems and explore possible solutions. They are introduced to different experiences, media and materials which allow them to develop their own ideas and experiment with alternative ways of problem-solving. They learn to focus on systematic ways in which to address problems; collect, test and analyze information and apply results to solve problems in different situations.

Aesthetic appreciation and creative expression

Through Arts Education, children appreciate, respond to, participate in and explore creative performance and expression.

B. Learners who are capable of sustaining their chances in the world of work

Although in the Primary years children are far-removed from the world of work, the foundation skills and attitudes for employability are to be nurtured from an early age. Such skills and attitudes develop through:

The ability to communicate effectively and confidently

Communication skills in verbal, non-verbal, written, visual, physical, technical and emotional/expressive fields are to be developed to prepare children to respond and interact with situations as they occur.

Competence in using new information and communication technologies

Emphasis is given to the acquisition of basic ICT skills including issues related to safety and use. Digital Literacy encourages learners to discover and use digital data sources, create digital multimedia presentations and use collaborative authoring tools. Learners are able to program devices to respond to input using a simplified iconic interface. They are also able

to send emails and attachments, use VOIP and video-conferencing, and chat to collaborate with others. They will learn and practice netiquette and online safety measures.

The ability to train, re-train and develop new skills

Appropriate learning and teaching strategies enable children to be receptive to their own strengths and limitations providing them with an ability to improve and adapt intelligently to changing realities and contexts.

Economic stability and independence

Children learn to take initiative and to become independent thinkers and participants in team-work. Their initial understanding of the value of co-operative and collaborative work is further strengthened at the primary level. Through their experiences, children become aware of the vital contribution of each member in society towards the good of the community. Learning to be flexible, tenacious and resilient, paves the way for responsible citizenship.

Innovation and entrepreneurship

Children value the processes that lead to creating and implementing new ideas. Through risk-taking, planning, perseverance and the use of their imagination, children understand and develop the ability to think, create and value new products that help them and others adapt to changes in society. Attaining self-belief and the ability to be useful and productive for one's self, one's group of friends, class and school inculcate the right attitudes necessary for the eventual contribution towards the common good.

The ability to readily embrace mobility and exchange

School exchanges with students from other colleges, sectors, towns, countries allow for and encourage mobility. Such activities prepare children for the social, cultural, and economic changes that they will experience during their lifetime. Multilingualism and awareness of different cultures and lifestyles broaden children's understanding and appreciation of diversity.

A systems view of reality that facilitates their engagement in the promotion of sustainable development

From a young age, children can appreciate and value empathy and with appropriate support develop curiosity, enthusiasm and good judgment. With the aid of inquiry-based learning, children learn to understand that all actions may have long-lasting effects on communities and societies.

Be actively involved in sustainable development issues

Responsible citizenship results in active citizenship. Children build a sense of community through the inculcation of value and belief systems most prevalent in their school and home. Through their experiences, including those of a cross-curricular nature, children become aware of a range of plausible solutions and take action to improve their immediate environment. They also become aware of national and regional issues and develop informed opinions about them.

C. Learners who are engaged citizens in constantly changing local, regional and global realities

These learners need to:

Respect diversity and value difference

Children discover similarities and differences around them through their engagement with different cultures and languages. In this way they begin to understand and value diversity.

Respect and promote Maltese culture and heritage

Children at the primary level ought to experience their cultural and national heritage and wealth. Through visits, exhibitions and other first-hand opportunities children study and explore their country's past and present. Inquiry-based learning, the viewing of artefacts *in situ* as well as the study of documents and texts enable pupils to form a solid understanding of who they are and where they come from. Children can actively engage in projects that assist in the conservation of their regional and national heritage. Other experiences include participation in e-twinning and Comenius projects among schools locally and internationally.

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

Children strengthen their ability to appreciate social, cultural, national and geographical realities by learning historical and geographical knowledge and developing attitudes and skills which promote intercultural understanding. The Mediterranean and European dimensions are of particular interest for children at this level. Participation in e-twinning and Comenius projects among schools at local and at international levels facilitate intercultural experiences.

Work towards strengthening social cohesion and ensuring social justice

Appreciating diversity and difference, whilst concentrating upon similarities, promotes tolerance and the ability to recognize ways in which a community can work towards a more socially-cohesive society. At a class, year and school level, children engage in collaborative learning strategies that promote practices which are socially-inclusive.

Uphold social justice and democratic principles

Children learn about social justice and democracy with an understanding of one's rights and responsibilities as they actively engage in discussions, debates and governance practices. Cross-curricular links are also advocated for the development and achievement of this crucial objective.

Learning Areas

The learning areas have been set out in a way which ensures that a broad-based, and well-balanced curriculum is formulated in order to address and achieve the aims outlined above. The educational activities organized at the primary level develop the important dispositions of active thinkers and learners: *"cooperation, concentration, courage, curiosity, direction, empathy, flexibility, good judgement, humility, imagination, independence, perseverance, an open mind, precision, reflectiveness, responsibility, risk-taking and self-discipline"* Simister (2007, p. 23). Effective pedagogies are included in the development of the learning areas below.

Languages

Languages encourage children to develop:

- listening, speaking, reading, writing, and presenting skills;
- abilities to organize thoughts, ideas, feelings, and knowledge; communicate with others and respond to how others communicate;
- as competent users of both Maltese and English, who are able to appreciate and enjoy the literary heritage of both languages;

intellectual skills which allow learners to explore and effectively use questioning, information, critical thinking, decision-making and memory; and

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.

Whilst Maltese and English are core languages of the learning area, a language awareness course is being proposed in the later years of the Primary Cycle. A school-based decision as to which foreign language/s should be introduced is being advocated⁹.

Speaking, listening, responding to various texts (written, visual, oral and aural) and communication skills are given importance through a wide range of authentic experiences drawing upon various resources including situations and events, printed materials, literary texts and digital technologies.

For English and Maltese, assessment is carried out in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) taking into consideration the wide range of levels of achievement. At the end of the Primary Cycle, the four skills in English and Maltese will be assessed in the national end-of-primary benchmark from 2011, as stipulated in the Grima, Grech, Mallia, Mizzi, Vassallo & Ventura (2007) transition report.

Mathematics

The learning that takes place within the area of Mathematics allows children to develop:

- essential numeracy skills which support them in daily life;
- key numeric competences that include the understanding of concepts, principles, and applications;
- creative approaches in the four strands, namely, use of number, measurement, space and shapes and data handling; and

9 The Common European Framework (Council of Europe 2001) promoted the need for multilingual capability. Although the imposition of learning too many languages needs to be safeguarded against, children must be given the opportunity to be introduced to at least one other language (L3) in an informal manner during the later years of the Primary Cycle. The current trends in language learning at this level recommend an approach that is dialogic and interactive, wherein pupils are exposed to the language and the culture through carefully selected language activities.

- logical thought and engagement with investigative processes that lead to solutions.

Mathematics is a core learning area in the Primary years.

All children need to experience primary mathematics as a rewarding and enjoyable experience. This can best be achieved by using a combination of different teaching styles and through differentiated teaching taking into consideration different learning styles.

In addition to continuous assessment in each of the four strands and end-of-year examinations in the later years of the Primary Cycle, assessment in Mathematics at the end of the Primary years will also be examined in the national end-of-primary benchmark.

Science

In the Primary years the purpose should be to create awareness and develop a sense of wonder about the world while introducing simple scientific concepts and vocabulary. Science programmes in the Primary years encourage children to:

- develop an inquiry-based approach to finding out facts by observing, exploring and investigating their environment;
- communicate their findings orally, pictorially and in writing; and
- learn how science works, and how information has been discovered through biological, chemical, physical and environmental contexts.

Science is a core learning area in the Primary years¹⁰.

Science can be learnt through play and other enjoyable hands-on activities, with an emphasis on observation and communication of experiences rather than explanations that require abstract ideas. Children can be encouraged to engage with science through simple investigations which allow them to question; to use multimedia and locate appropriate information; and to use storytelling and drama to link science to daily living and the local environment in which they live.

Assessment of student success should take place alongside learning and involve situated problem-solving activities. It should be formative in nature and based not only on individual achievement but include group and self-assessment. This encourages the learners to develop a sense of themselves as “young scientists” within their class community. Learning outcomes can be captured and reported through various forms of recording such as investigations, learning logbooks and portfolios. The assessment should be a narrative account or “learning story” which documents the skills and processes of science as they are experienced by the learner.

Religious Education

The school is committed to the holistic formation of children. In this respect, Religious Education, which in the Maltese context is understood as Catholic Religious Education

10 A Vision for Science Education has been developed and is being presented concurrently with this document.

(CRE)¹¹, contributes by helping children to:

develop their own identity and better understand their cultural identity. It is important that the RE programme is sensitive to the diverse ways in which human beings throughout history have given expression to the spiritual dimension of humanity;

nurture and enhance a sense of spiritual self. Through CRE pupils may explore and experience God's love, principally through the person of Jesus Christ but also through creation and life in the community. Learners can express and better understand the fundamental questions which have always been asked by humanity. The spiritual dimension of the self should be supported by promoting values that include justice, personal responsibility, respect, reflection and active engagement in moral issues; and

begin to critically question society and find their place in it. CRE seeks to educate learners regarding the dignity of the human being and the responsibility of each individual towards others for the building of a better society and a better world.

Religious Education is a core learning area in the curriculum.

Learning in Religious Education challenges children to move beyond knowledge. It should be a process of self-discovery, a discovery of their own uniqueness, in the context of a community that is rich in experiences. Thus classroom practices encourage exploration, investigation and meaning-making. The use of multimedia resources, stories, creative arts, discussions and hand-on activities are to be used to stimulate and encourage meaning-making.

Assessment should be mainly formative rather than summative. Assessment is to be integrated with the whole process of learning to make sure that children have achieved what they are entitled to according to the identified learning outcomes. Teachers are encouraged to use various tasks, including practical projects, comprehension, discussion and presentations, to assess and evaluate different levels of the cognitive and affective domains of learning.

The parents of learners have the right to decide that their child does not follow CRE. For such students, the NCF recommends an Ethics Education programme drawn up by the Education Authorities. Delivery of such a programme depends on logistical considerations.

Citizenship Education

Citizenship Education allows children to discover and learn more about their historical, social, geographical, economic, political and environmental contexts and realities. It prepares children to be active and responsible citizens.

Citizenship Education includes History, Geography, Social Studies, Environmental Education and aspects from Personal, Social and Health Education and Home Economics¹². This area also allows for the introduction of entrepreneurship.

11 Catholic Religious Education is the responsibility of the Religious Education Office of the Maltese Episcopal Conference.

12 Citizenship Education also includes elements of Personal, Social & Health Education which overlaps with Health Education.

Citizenship Education encourages children to:

- begin to understand the interrelationships between people, their cultures, contexts and land use;
- explore and investigate their immediate past and present, thus beginning to understand the importance of collecting evidence;
- develop observation and recording skills;
- collate, examine and test data in an attempt to draw simple conclusions from it;
- develop the basic concepts of chronology, empathy, cause and effect, change and continuity;
- engage in the study of geographical, environmental and social concepts; and
- employ responsible citizenship skills that explore their responsibility towards their environment and their world and the impact of enterprise and industry on their life and their world.

Through investigative and fact-finding experiences, using a thematic approach, the learners' understanding of how their community and country function will deepen. Observation, fieldwork and recording skills will be developed and used extensively.

Assessment for learning procedures will be employed in Citizenship Education programmes.

Technology Education

Technology Education includes two distinct areas namely *Design and Technology* and *Digital Literacy*. In Design and Technology learners combine practical and technological skills with creative thinking to produce useful products. In digital literacy children learn how to use digital information and communication technologies.

Design and Technology encourages learners to:

- generate, develop and communicate ideas for products that are needed;
- learn to plan what to do next;
- select tools, techniques, and materials;
- explore the sensory qualities of materials;
- measure, mark out, cut, shape and combine materials and components;
- learn about safe procedures; and
- critically examine what they are doing and try to improve it.

Digital Literacy encourages learners to:

- discover and use digital data sources;
- create digital multimedia presentations;
- use collaborative authoring tools;
- program devices to respond to input using a simplified iconic interface;
- send emails and attachments, use VOIP, video-conferencing, and chat to collaborate with others; and

learn and practice netiquette and online safety measures.

Assessment for Design and Technology and Digital Literacy is ongoing, often feedback is immediate as materials, tools, products and programmes respond to what the children are doing. Assessment is mostly formative and a record of tasks/portfolio made can be kept. If need be, children can be given a sample of appropriate tasks to perform at the end of a particular year or level.

Arts Education

Arts Education provides experiences that encourage children to appreciate, respond to and actively engage in creative and imaginative expression, thus supporting the development of one's personality. Children learn to explore and appreciate feelings, communicate them through different media, and develop their personal aesthetic dimension. This learning area incorporates music, visual and performing arts.

Arts Education encourages learners to:

- enjoy being creative and imaginative by being engaged in various art forms;
- acquire skills necessary for creative expression through:
 - communicative and theatrical skills in drama and dance;
 - musical ability, appreciation and expression in music; and
 - the appreciation and construction of visual imagery, responding to the feelings they evoke, and making artefacts during art.
- develop important skills, both those specific to the Arts and those which are transferable;
- begin to appreciate the Arts within the local and in international cultural settings;
- begin to develop an understanding of the creative process and the development of aesthetic standards and values; and
- experience enjoyment and contribute to other people's enjoyment through creative and expressive performance and presentation.

A thematic and integrated approach will draw all the above concepts and skills into various relevant learning experiences.

Assessment procedures include the recording and reporting of expressive and performing skills in the various art forms.

Health Education

Health Education deals with two aspects:

Physical Education and Sports: During the Primary years, children experience a varied programme that caters for their physical development needs. This programme includes learning and developing physical skills and agility through experiences incorporating indoor and outdoor games, athletics, gymnastics, rhythmic movement and dance.

Physical Education and Sports encourages learners to:

- actively and enthusiastically participate in activities to develop important physical skills in an enjoyable way;
- learn the skills and rules of collaborative play, sportsmanship, leadership and competitiveness;
- participate in teamwork and develop team spirit;
- begin to appreciate the importance of a healthy body and physical well-being; and
- become aware of and appreciate the changes that take place physically as they grow.

Personal, Social and Health Education: Personal, social and health education focuses on children's self-discovery with special emphasis on relationships and understanding of the self. It is enriched by aspects of Home Economics such as the study of basic nutritional facts, skills and attitudes. It lays the vital foundation for dispositions necessary for lifelong learning.

Personal, Social and Health Education encourages children to:

- experience activities that encourage social interaction, promote self-awareness, reflective behaviour, decision-making processes and consequential thinking to develop the necessary skills of emotional and social intelligence;
- begin to become aware of the importance of a healthy mind and body;
- understand the importance of nutrition and eating in a healthy way;
- discover their strengths and weaknesses;
- learn to understand and manage both positive and negative feelings; and
- develop the important dispositions of active thinkers and learners especially during key transitions.

Activities and experiences in Health Education are thematic in nature, promote collaborative learning and facilitate self-awareness.

Assessment procedures will ensure that the children's development in this area of learning is suitably recorded and used to inform further teaching and learning strategies.

Leadership of key practitioners

The NCF encourages a leadership model that promotes distributed forms of leadership. In such a context, school leaders within the senior management team (SMT) play both a visionary and strategic role. They also need to focus on developing a collaborative culture which draws upon the full range of professional skills and expertise to be found among the members of the organisation. Varied opportunities need to be created and supported within the college network system and in other sectors to invite SMTs and other educators to engage in critical discourse, to address curricular matters and improve the quality of learning and teaching.

Keeping abreast with the times and seeking training plays a major role in being skilled in areas which have a direct impact on the students' achievement and holistic education. Educators and practitioners in particular need to share a reflective approach towards teaching and learning with the sole aim of motivating the pupils through diverse pedagogies which are in line with today's educational needs. In effective schools, the staff thinks through together what constitutes purposeful teaching and learning in their particular context, based on a set of core values and beliefs. They continue to reflect on how they can improve their practice, involving all stakeholders in the debate. The latter's input is essential in order to create a solid school-home link which is imperative for a relevant and rewarding school experience for the pupils. Practitioners as well as the senior management teams are aware that their central purpose focuses on pupil learning and holistic development as they engage in collaborative activity to ensure this. In line with this philosophy of continuous training through reflective teaching and learning the NCF recommends that within a learning community, staff improvement continues through on-going professional development that values and promotes mentoring practices.

Primary school leaders and teachers in their different roles need to be:

- learner-centred and learning-centred;
- pedagogically strong within a context of diversity;
- effective communicators;
- strong believers that schools are learning communities;
- leaders of change who immerse themselves in research in a bid to be proactive and effective;
- capable of making curricular and pedagogical choices which promote high quality teaching and learning;

- capable of addressing opportunities and challenges as they arise;
- resourceful in supporting and ensuring the sustainability of initiatives; and
- curriculum managers.

Implementing the NCF in the Primary Years

This section focuses on the practical implementation of the NCF in the Primary years. It includes proposals for:

- the school timetable;
- criteria underlying the allocation of time for the learning areas into timetabled lessons, and assessment.
- Effective pedagogies have been included earlier in the development of the respective learning areas.

The school timetable

A distinction should be made between the school timetable proposed for the Early Years and that proposed for the last four years of the Primary Cycle.

The range of activities in the first two years of the Primary Cycle (Years 1 and 2) should be similar to that which is provided in the Early Years. A topic/thematic-based approach is recommended for the first two years in primary: such an approach enriches the development of each learning area. Science, Religious Education, Citizenship Education, Arts Education and Health Education as learning areas all support the development of oracy, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

Although an indication of how the school day may be distributed for primary schools is being proposed, no fixed recommendation for the Year 1 and Year 2 children is being made. Suggestions for timetables and time distribution in Year 3 to Year 6 are provided below.

Criteria underlying the allocation of time for the learning areas:

- It is being assumed that on average, in a school year there are approximately 800 teaching/learning hours. This figure does not include examination time, break-times or assembly time.
- Lessons may vary in duration allowing for flexible timings which are child-friendly. In general lesson time varies between 30 and 60 minutes.
- Physical/Sport activities are allotted an average of 30 minutes a day during the time allotted to Health Education. In addition schools are encouraged to organise sports activities during mid-day break. After-school activities at school/college level, in collaboration with the wider community and the *Kunsill Malti għall-Isport* are also to be promoted.
- The recommended distributions (learning area weighting) allows for a well-balanced

programme of activities which permits sufficient time for the different learning areas.

- Schools are to ensure that 1.5 hours per week are spent on teacher planning sessions at school.
- In line with the flexibility which the NCF is proposing, one of the time-table options sets aside one hour per week (approximately 32 hours per year) for Heads and Schools to decide how this time is to be spent. In Model C shown below, this time is designated as *School-Based Choice*. With younger children, where there is no foreign language awareness programme (L3), the school has an added degree of flexibility. It is hoped that flexibility in the timetable will increase over time.

Time allocated to learning areas

Table 2 presents three models indicating the weekly distribution of time for Year 5 and/or Year 6 classes depending on when the Foreign Language awareness programme is introduced.

Table 3 presents an example of what the annual distribution of time for a Year 6 class would be on the basis of each of the above models. This gives an indication of the approximate time available for each learning area and therefore needs to be taken into consideration when syllabi for the learning areas and subjects are being developed.

Appendix I incorporates model timetables according to the suggested distribution of learning time shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Distribution of weekly hours for each learning area			
Learning Areas/Subjects	Model A (Hours)	Model B (Hours)	Model C (Hours)
Languages: L1 + L2	3.75 + 3.75	4 + 4	3.75 + 3.75
L3	0.50	0.50	0.75
Mathematics	3.75	5	4.5
Science	2	1.5	1.5
Technology	0.75	0.75	0.75
Religious Education	2.5	2.5	2.5
Citizenship Education	2.25	1.5	1.5
Arts Education	2.25	1.5	1.5
Health Education	3.5	3.75	3.5
School-based choice	-	-	1
Children's learning hours	25	25	25
Mid-morning break	1.25	1.25	1.25
Mid-day break	2.5	2.5	2.5
Planning time ¹	(1.5)	(1.5)	(1.5)
Assembly	1.25	1.25	1.25
School week	30	30	30

Table 3: Distribution of time for each learning area over a scholastic year (32 weeks)			
Learning Areas/Subjects	Model A (Hours)	Model B (Hours)	Model C (Hours)
L1 + L2	120 + 120	128 + 128	120 + 120
L3	16	16	24
Mathematics	120	160	144
Science	64	48	48
Technology	24	24	24
Religious Education	80	80	80
Citizenship Education	72	48	48
Arts Education	72	48	48
Health Education	112	120	112
School-based choice	-	-	32

Assessment

In the first two years of the Primary Cycle, the functions of assessment are identical to those promoted in early childhood. Valid and reliable assessment methods are necessary to support learning, analyse each child's performance, reflect on practice, plan for further learning of individuals and groups of pupils, and allow for consistent recording and reporting on each child's overall performance. Everyday interactions between teachers and pupils in oral and written work and other activities, and interactions among the pupils themselves provide valuable information about each child's strengths and needs.

Assessment accumulated over the year takes into account the children's overall progress and development against a learning outcomes framework. This information helps the teacher obtain a better understanding of the children's needs and plan appropriately. This information can also be shared with colleagues and parents. This assessment is also important for school administrators as it provides information about the school's achievement in helping pupils reach the national levels of achievement.

For children experiencing learning difficulties in the core areas, namely, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, the NCF considers the checklists developed for Years 1, 2 and 3 as part of the *National Core Competences Policy and Strategy (2009)* as useful diagnostic tools for ensuring the necessary support throughout the Primary years.

From Years 3 to 6 the NCF recommends school-based assessment, incorporating the assessment of oral/aural skills in Maltese and English. The assessment process provides parents, teachers and the school administration with an overview of each child's development in terms of levels of achievement. From Year 4 the process becomes more formalised with the introduction of examinations in conjunction with other forms of assessment. The combination of approaches should help parents, teachers and school management to obtain a clearer picture of the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes of individual pupils in the different learning areas.

The moderation of school-based assessment and marking of examinations will ensure consistency in the application of assessment criteria across schools and colleges. Moderation may consist of vetting of the school/college based examination papers, which will take place prior to the administration of the examination, followed by moderation of marking at school, college and central levels as is already the practice.

At the end of Year 6, a national end-of-primary benchmark in Mathematics, Maltese and English will be set and marked centrally to provide national benchmarks. Whilst these examinations are compulsory for children attending State schools, schools in the Church and Independent sectors may also participate. The examination will be used to record the achievement of pupils at the end of the Primary years and provide important information to receiving secondary schools about the learning of individual pupils.

As recommended in the *Transition* report (2007)¹⁴, a more accurate picture of levels of achievement in particular areas of the curriculum at the national level is obtained by means of a system of external monitoring of a sample of subjects in a representative sample of schools over a cycle of five years. Such monitoring has two purposes: assessing progress of learners' general levels of achievement and the assessment of the curriculum itself with a view to recommending changes.

Transitions

Whilst in the first two years of the Primary Cycle, the curriculum builds upon the foundations laid during the Early Years, in the later years it links closely with the Secondary years to ensure a smooth transition. The primary years support a seamless curriculum which ensures that the learning areas and the pedagogies address the learners' holistic development. In addition, assessment is reported in terms of levels of achievement thus informing secondary schools about individual students' progress and achievements.

14 Grima et al., (2007) *Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools in Malta – A Review*. Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.

Section 3

The Secondary Years (Years 7 – 11)¹⁵

The transition from primary to secondary school should be smooth and offer progression in a way which supports children as they learn to take more responsibility. The secondary years are an important period for their personal development and learners should strive to have a strong platform for further and higher education. Career guidance education and services play a crucial role throughout this cycle in the achievement of this goal.

In the later years of secondary education the relationship between the curriculum and certification becomes of key significance. By the end of secondary education, learners are entitled to an end of cycle certification which could include the Secondary School Certificate and Profile documenting their formal, informal, and non-formal learning, and the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examinations or alternatives, all of which are recognised by Malta Qualifications Council (MQC).

This section includes:

- purposes and general objectives;
- aims for secondary education;
- learning areas in the Secondary years; and
- proposals for the implementation of the NCF in the Secondary years.

Purposes and general objectives

The Secondary Education Cycle is an important milestone in the educational journey of learners as it consolidates and builds upon the learning experiences of primary education and prepares learners for the wider challenges they will face beyond compulsory schooling. Education at this level should:

- provide learners with a period of adjustment allowing them to familiarise themselves with the procedures of secondary education and an opportunity to address any unresolved issues (re knowledge and skills) related to the Primary years;
- expose learners to a wider perspective of knowledge and wisdom that goes beyond their experiences in the Primary years;
- ensure that learners deepen their understanding and aptitude in specific learning areas;
- equip learners with the required skills and competences necessary to adapt to a society characterised by change and to function successfully in their immediate community and beyond;

¹⁵ In line with the philosophy of a seamless curriculum, it is recommended that the primary and secondary cycles within compulsory education are referred to as Years 1 to 11.

- promote the development of the whole person by helping learners deal with growing up physically (issues related to health, puberty and sexuality), psychologically (issues related to mental development and health and management of stress), emotionally (issues related to positive and negative feelings); socially (issues related to interpersonal skills, peer pressure and conflict resolution) and spiritually (issues related to ethics and values);
- provide learners with experiences, competences and understanding that prepare them for lifelong learning and empower them to make wise choices for their future; and
- prepare learners for achieving qualifications and certification that are relevant for further learning and employment.

Aims for Secondary Education

The NCF aims at developing:

A. *Learners who are capable of successfully developing their full potential as lifelong learners*

This requires the development of:

Personal and social skills

Personal and social skills are developed at this level to ensure that students complete the five-year cycle equipped to handle an ever-changing social reality. The fundamental values of family, respect, inclusion, social justice, solidarity, democracy, commitment, care, love and responsibility are strengthened during the Secondary years of education.

Moral and spiritual development

The secondary school experience helps students to strengthen and enhance their moral and spiritual development. Through formal learning, individual, group or classroom experiences, through personal evaluation with the help of religious counsellors and teachers, students develop the various skills that lead to moral and spiritual growth including a more critical, mature and informed outlook on Christian beliefs and practices. Students should also accept, understand and carry out dialogue with those who profess a different faith.

After passing through a period of doubt and questioning of values that normally occurs half-way during the Secondary years, corresponding to the physical and emotional changes undergone while teenagers are developing, students generally mature and acquire the moral and spiritual growth that will serve them when they leave the sheltered world of school. The NCF supports this development.

Literacy, numeracy and digital literacies

These skills are generally acquired at the primary level. At the secondary level these skills are further developed for all learners.

Bilingualism and multilingualism

Being multilingual implies being able to communicate in speech and in writing in at least three languages. In addition to the further development of Maltese and English, at the secondary level, students formally start learning a third language with the possibility of

opting to study a fourth language. The EU's recommendation of learning one's mother tongue in addition to two other languages has been a reality in our educational system for a long time and should be maintained.

Science and technology competence

Having scientific and technological competence implies an inquiry-based approach to learning. Students develop curiosity concerning natural phenomena leading them to question what they see and feel. During the Secondary years, students deepen their knowledge and understanding of scientific and technological processes. The aim is to prepare them for a society where science and technology have a leading role.

Critical and innovative thinking

During their Secondary years students develop the skill of exploring a particular issue from various perspectives and are able to assess the veracity of whether the source of information is truthful or not. Students are expected to be creative and innovative and experiment with alternative ways of problem-solving.

Aesthetic appreciation and creative expression

Aesthetic appreciation and creative expression is enhanced through the study of art, music, dance, drama and literature. Learning in the expressive arts provides opportunities to underpin and enrich learning in other curriculum areas.

B. Learners who are capable of sustaining their chances in the world of work

This requires:

The ability to communicate effectively and confidently

Learners are expected to develop an understanding of language and gain confidence in its use in a variety of contexts including the different learning areas and everyday life situations.

Competence in using new information and communication technologies

Learners strengthen the use of a variety of digital technologies to tap into and share information resources; to assess their reliability and critically analyse the information obtained. The use of these technologies helps learners develop informed opinions and attitudes that are reflected in the choices made and decisions taken.

The ability to train, re-train and develop new skills

Learners become capable of constructive self-evaluation and appreciate the need for lifelong learning within the context of a changing society; be capable of identifying and possibly anticipating emergent needs in society; identify organisations that offer training opportunities and be flexible in adapting to new technologies and ensuing skills.

Economic stability and independence

Learners need to know how to use personal, national and global resources in order to maximise their economic value, provide stability and autonomy. They need to develop a socially responsible economic ethic that prioritises measures which promote the common good.

Innovation and entrepreneurship

Learners are equipped to anticipate, initiate and deal with change; develop organisational skills that lead towards individual and collaborative ventures; and develop and be proficient in the skills required for group dynamics, risk assessment and conflict resolution.

The ability to readily embrace mobility and exchange

Learners ought to be prepared to respond and be flexible to the emergent needs of the work force; be able to evaluate local and foreign resources required for personal development; be flexible to adapt plans to include travelling abroad to train and/or specialise in a particular field of expertise; appreciate the value of cross fertilization of ideas, methods, techniques and approaches; appreciate and be willing to share local expertise with other social contexts.

A systems view of reality that facilitates their engagement in the promotion of sustainable development

Through exposure to interdisciplinary themes, learners appreciate that reality is the sum effect of various component realities; develop skills to identify and acknowledge the complexities and interrelatedness of personal, social, cultural, religious, political, economic, technological and environmental concerns in any collective endeavour; be sensitive to the needs of other members of society, particularly the marginalised and disadvantaged individuals or groups; develop a realisation of the impact of personal decisions and actions at the local level on community and global levels and vice versa; approach problem solving by looking for links and promoting partnerships and synergies on the basis of dialogue, negotiation and conflict resolution to arrive at win-win situations.

Active involvement in sustainable development issues

Learners become committed towards the improvement of the quality of life at a personal, communal, national and global level; develop critical thinking and reflection skills to evaluate current policies/practices/lifestyles and suggest alternative sustainable behaviours; recognise the personal – not just the authorities’ – responsibility towards the adoption of sustainable development and develop into empowered citizens who are active participants in decision making.

C. Learners who are engaged citizens in constantly changing local, regional and global realities

They need to:

Respect diversity and value difference

This aim is primarily reached through the inclusive policy of schools. The inclusive school does not only cater for the student irrespective of gender, religion, race, ability and beliefs, but has set as one of its aims the promotion of the potential of each student through individualised attention and support. The school ethos and practices, especially at the Secondary years, transmit this value to all students. Besides being achieved specifically through particular learning areas, this aim is also developed through cross-curricular themes such as multicultural education and education for sustainable development.

Respect and promote Maltese culture and heritage

Different learning areas provide students with opportunities to experience our national culture and heritage to appreciate and strengthen their national identity. A good programme

of complementary curricular activities including cultural visits and projects would support formal class teaching in the achievement of this aim. Other lifelong education programmes, like e-twinning and Comenius, also contribute towards this aim. Expressive arts (art, music, dance and drama), combined with environmental studies, history, and geography, are to give particular importance to our national identity and to the understanding of Malta's place in Europe and in the world. Pride of place is to be reserved for the acquisition and skilful use of the Maltese language.

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

Language education with an emphasis on the wider cultural context is one of the most appropriate tools to develop intercultural competence. Student mobility and twinning projects with European and foreign schools are to be encouraged and be part of every student experience.

Work towards strengthening social cohesion and ensuring social justice

The NCF links to other reforms in education that seek to promote equality of opportunity and access to a quality education. The emphasis on transition and early intervention is the foundation of a just educational system that strengthens Maltese society and individual students. Promoting respect for diversity and valuing difference will also build a stable and strong society. Voluntary work schemes, multicultural schools, a strong civic sense and non-discrimination in schools are the seedbed of social cohesion. With the common good in mind, students are taught how to dialogue and reach consensus, if necessary through mediation.

Uphold social justice and democratic principles

Citizenship Education, together with initiatives which embrace democratic practices in schools, is one way through which to achieve this aim. The inclusive approach will by itself promote social justice to all. The school administration should give commensurate space to the initiatives taken and co-ordinated by the Student Council, and should consult the Student Council on matters directly affecting the student population.

Learning Areas

Learning areas introduced in the Primary years are reinforced and extended in the Secondary years. In addition, a number of optional subjects are introduced in Year 7 and Year 9. The subsequent sections present a consideration of how each learning area could be developed in the Secondary years.

Languages

Given the political, geographical and historical context of the Maltese Islands and the EU's emphasis on language learning, multilingualism assumes a greater importance.

The teaching and learning of the mother tongue (generally Maltese) at secondary level strengthens the learners' sense of identity and conceptual development.

The teaching and learning of **the second language** (generally English, which is one of the two official languages in Malta) at secondary level, reinforces the acquisition of an

important international language of communication.

The teaching and learning of **foreign languages** at secondary level provides for the acquisition of further communication tools that are useful to appreciate cultural diversity and to facilitate interaction within the European and international contexts.

The learning of Maltese, English, and foreign languages enable learners to:

- develop a strong foundation of language skills;
- widen personal, social and cultural understanding;
- enhance cognitive and affective development;
- develop an awareness and understanding of the culture/s of the people who speak the target language and respect cultural diversity;
- prepare themselves for the world of work and further education in Malta and abroad;
- develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning;
- improve learning skills of a more general application including analysis, drawing of inferences, self-evaluation, pursuit of knowledge and memorisation;
- master linguistic competence for different purposes and in different contexts; and
- acquire and develop communicative competence.

In addition to the compulsory languages (Maltese and English), learners choose one foreign language in the first year and continue to study this throughout the Secondary years. There could also be the possibility for learners to choose a second foreign language in the later years of the Secondary Cycle.

Learning and teaching of languages encompasses a variety of pedagogical methodologies that provide opportunities for learners to use a range of resources, including the use of Drama and ICT, for accessing and communicating information in the target language. Such an eclectic approach:

- ensures that languages are learned in an enjoyable manner;
- provides the ideal conditions that are conducive to effective learning and teaching; and
- is reflective and learner-centred.

At all levels of the Secondary years, assessment is carried out in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) taking into consideration the wide range of levels of achievement.

Mathematics

Mathematics provides students with the opportunity to deepen mathematical knowledge and reasoning, to come more formally in contact with the abstract and logical reasoning embedded within the subject, and also to better appreciate and apply the communication possibilities that the mathematics medium offers, such as through mathematical modelling. The idea is to consolidate previous achievements while facilitating further growth that serves the needs and interests of each student.

The core secondary mathematics experience should strive to achieve two main targets:

The applications of mathematics as tangible realities in daily life. All students should achieve a basic level of mathematical competence that will allow them to function as autonomous citizens. This independence translates to a better quality of life at both individual and community levels.

With the great majority of students expected to continue further education, the secondary mathematics experience assumes the responsibility of preparing and motivating students for further studies both in the subject itself as well as in other subjects. It should be a preparation that paves the way to a variety of levels of mathematics that relate to both academic and vocational routes.

Learners are assessed on numerical, algebraic, spatial and data-handling skills as well as the application of mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding to solve problems in real life situations. This is applicable to all levels of achievement.

Science

The teaching of science ought to develop scientific thinking and an understanding of higher order concepts, principles and theories in a holistic manner. Ethical, economic, social and moral issues contribute to a deeper understanding of science and its links to everyday life. This dimension should help students to integrate knowledge from different learning areas and understand that science does not have a solution to all problem situations.

All students in Years 7 and 8 will study Core Science. In Years 9, 10 and 11, students who do not wish to specialise in Science continue with Core Science leading to a SEC examination. Students who wish to specialise in Science can opt for two or three of the following: Life Sciences, Physical Sciences and Materials Science leading to a SEC examination in each of these options.

Learning should include:

- opportunities for individual and group activities;
- engagement with science through investigations;
- use of multimedia resources, and use of secondary resources such as science magazines and newspaper articles;
- explorations by planning, setting up and carrying out experiments in order to solve questions and problems taking into consideration health and safety issues;

- observations of phenomena to explain concepts, principles and theories and recognition that principles and theories were developed within a historical context; and
- an ability to elaborate on explanations using appropriate scientific language and techniques such as tables, charts and mathematical methods.

In addition to more formal summative assessment, learning outcomes can be captured and recorded through various forms such as investigations and problem solving activities, learning logbooks and portfolios.

Religious Education

In Malta the teaching of religion in schools is seen as an important element in the integral formation of the person. Catholic Religious Education¹⁶ throws light on the basic questions about one's relationship with God, the meaning of life, on issues of an ethical nature, on one's personal identity and on the different dimensions of dialogue and social cohesion in a society that is becoming pluralistic. Deeper knowledge of the different religious traditions should provide a valid contribution to the social and civic formation of students.

Religious Education contributes to the holistic development of students by providing the language and the skills to access and express their religious and spiritual dimensions and may challenge them to question the reasonableness of a faith journey in today's social and cultural context.

Learning in Religious Education occurs in full respect of the uniqueness of every learner:

- Religious Education adapts to the requirements of every individual student since this is the only way the wonderful diversity God created in humanity is respected.
- Respect for the person requires a methodology that is truly relational and that is guided by the belief that students learn most if learning is situated in the context of concrete experiences within a community.
- The pedagogy of Religious Education at this level should mainly be inspired by social constructivism and by an adaptive approach to learning and teaching. Preference should be given to an anthropological approach where human experience is considered central and where pupils are encouraged to correlate their experiences with those of other believers in different periods and contexts.

Religious Education makes use of a wide variety of techniques and media in order to help students become aware and engaged with the religious and spiritual basis of moral life.

Teachers are encouraged to use various tasks, such as comprehension, discussion, essay writing, and concept mapping, to assess and evaluate all levels of the cognitive and affective domains of learning. Students should learn how to make effective self assessment.

16 Catholic Religious Education is the responsibility of the Religious Education Office of the Maltese Episcopal Conference.

The parents of students have the right to decide that their child does not follow Catholic Religious Education. For such students, the NCF recommends an Ethics Education programme drawn up by the Education Authorities. Delivery of such a programme depends on logistical considerations.

Citizenship Education

The NCF is proposing a core learning area that provides for a broadly integrated approach to Citizenship Education, bringing together the subject areas of Social Studies, History, Geography, Environmental Studies and aspects from Personal, Social and Health Education and Home Economics. Citizenship Education can be reinforced by the active participation of students in class, on students' councils, through curricular activities and initiatives that take place within the local community and through national and international projects and other activities that develop entrepreneurial skills.

This learning area should encourage students to:

- discover and learn more about themselves;
- develop interaction skills, empathy and respect; and
- learn about social, historical, geographical, economic, political and environmental contexts and realities as well as their implications.

While Citizenship Education is a core learning area throughout the Secondary years, in the later years, students are also given the opportunity to take History, Geography, Social Studies, Environmental Studies, and European Studies as optional subjects.

Citizenship education as a learning area promotes an interactive, participative approach with room for classroom discussion and debate supported by project and inquiry work, fieldwork, visits and other curricular activities.

Assessment in Citizenship Education considers the attainment of the learning outcomes pertinent to the different subject areas. Non-formal learning in Citizenship Education will be recorded through the Secondary School Certificate and Profile.

Technology Education

Technology education provides learners with relevant knowledge, skills and understanding to become technologically and digitally fluent.

The learning area of Technology Education includes Design & Technology (D&T) and Digital Literacy. As a core learning area, D&T will be offered through a modular approach. In addition to a specific time on the time-table, experiences of Digital Literacy ought to be made available through the other learning areas across the curriculum. In the later years, students are given the opportunity to take Design and Technology and Computing as optional subjects.

In view of the recommendations being made by a separate subject review committee¹⁷,

¹⁷ The subject review committee was appointed by the DQSE to review the current implementation, propose amendments and make recommendations for the teaching of Design & Technology.

it is proposed that Design and Technology will include Resistant Materials, Electronics and Graphic Products. All areas carry common learning outcomes that help the students acquire the knowledge and skills of Design and Technology, through design, make, evaluation and communication. In addition, D&T provides learners with opportunities to focus on Health & Safety and Environmental issues.

Digital Literacy introduces students to knowledge, concepts and skills relating to the organisation, manipulation and querying of data using digital technologies; communication and presentation of information using digital technologies; automating digital processes; and social and ethical dimensions of digital technologies.

Assessment of D&T will include theory and design-based practical dimensions whilst assessment of Digital Literacy will include the practical use of ICT across the curriculum and an assessment of basic ICT skills.

Arts Education

Arts Education as a learning area provides learners with opportunities to be creative and imaginative, to experience inspiration and enjoyment, and to develop skills in the visual and performing arts. Participation enables learners to experience and enjoy the energy and excitement of making images and forms, performing and presenting for different audiences and of being part of an audience for others.

Arts Education is taught through a modular approach throughout the Secondary years. Art is also offered as an optional subject for the senior cycle of the Secondary years. Colleges and schools may also offer other forms of creative arts as options depending on operational parameters. Activities in the Arts involve creating and presenting, and are practical and experiential, challenging and inspirational.

Assessment in this area is on-going and includes the recording and reporting of expressive and performing skills in the various art forms. Appreciation and evaluation are integral to the creative processes and are linked to developing creative skills, knowledge and understanding and enhancing enjoyment.

Health Education

At secondary level, Health Education, includes Physical Education and Sport (PE), Home Economics (HE), and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). This learning area promotes enjoyment through engagement in physical activity that inculcates a healthy lifestyle as well as a positive disposition towards oneself, others and life. Commitment to social communities and environmental issues also forms part of the students' development at this level.

All components of Health Education are core areas. Whilst Physical Education and Sport, and Personal, Social and Health Education are assigned weekly time-tabled sessions throughout the Secondary years, Home Economics is time-tabled differently. In the junior Secondary years, Home Economics alternates with D&T whilst in the senior Secondary years, Home Economics alternates with D&T and Arts Education. Additionally in the senior Secondary years students can also choose Home Economics and PE as options.

In addition to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, the different subjects that fall within this learning area also provide for the acquisition of higher-order skills such as analysis, synthesis

and evaluation skills through discussions, problem-solving activities, debates, and practical and investigative tasks.

Assessment focuses on formative and summative approaches and includes goal setting, peer reviews and self-evaluation techniques.

Option Subjects in the Senior Secondary Years

In drawing up the NCF, consideration was given to the elimination of options in the senior Secondary years, or at least a postponement of the selection of options currently chosen at the end of Year 8. However, this consideration implies a complete redesign of the SEC examination syllabi and entry into post-secondary and tertiary institutions. At this point in time, this was not deemed feasible.

The secondary curriculum that is being proposed in this document is based on the 2+3 model, in which the first two years of secondary schooling have a curriculum that is practically common to all, and options are then taken for Years 9, 10 and 11. Schools in the non-State sector are free to consider other alternatives.

At the end of Primary years, students opt for a foreign language which may include: Arabic, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish, according to availability. Schools may consider the inclusion of other languages should this be sustainable and educationally viable. On the other hand, schools may design programmes for students who are still experiencing difficulties in the core languages.

At the end of Year 8, students generally opt for two additional subjects. The choice of subjects depends on issues such as human resource capacity; number of students choosing a particular subject; physical resources and timetabling constraints. In cases of students who are facing difficulties with the core curriculum, schools can advise students to choose one rather than two optional subjects and have the flexibility to devise an appropriate learning programme for them in lieu of the second optional subject.

The NCF proposes that schools offer a range of subjects from amongst the following list, but the inclusion of other subjects is to be encouraged, should this be sustainable and educationally viable.

- Accounts
- Art
- Business Studies
- Computing
- Design and Technology
- Drama
- Economics
- English Literature
- Environmental Studies
- European Studies
- Graphical Communication
- History
- Home Economics
- Foreign Languages: Arabic / French / German/ Italian / Russian / Spanish
- Life Sciences
- Materials Science
- Music
- Physical Education
- Physical Sciences
- Textiles Studies
- Vocational subjects: (initially) Engineering / Hospitality / IT Practitioner / Health and Social Care (see below)

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

The NCF proposes a wider spectrum of educational opportunities to cater for the interests and aptitudes of all students in compulsory education. In order to address these interests, the NCF aims at introducing vocational subjects as options in Year 9. The vocational option envisages the adoption of innovative learning/teaching strategies assessed in an ongoing manner, predominantly through coursework. These work-related subjects include underpinning skills and knowledge as well as practical competence. Key characteristics of the VET subjects include:

- a work-related rather than work-based orientation;
- a practical-based learning pedagogy as opposed to traditional transmission-based pedagogy used largely in academic teaching;
- a design to encourage the development of vocational skills and competences;
- clear progression routes to MCAST and ITS courses, and to public and private providers;
- certification in these subjects which is recognized locally and internationally; and
- quality assurance procedures based on internal and external verification.

Four vocational subject areas - **Engineering, Hospitality, IT Practitioner, and Health and Social Care** - are going to be piloted in a number of State and non-State schools from September 2011. By 2013, the implementation of VET is expected to be extended nationally.

Leadership of key practitioners

Within a NCF which is proposing important changes in curriculum provisions, the leadership role of key practitioners assumes great significance. Educational leaders and teachers in their different roles need to:

- re-examine their perceptions about students' entitlement within an inclusive framework;
- create a vision and inspire others to join in working towards achieving it;
- set clear expectations and realistic goals;
- work collaboratively and collegially with other practitioners;
- put in place school development planning and review processes;
- demonstrate commitment and resilience to implement meaningful change;
- provide for on-going professional development of staff;
- provide for the necessary resources and support and ensure the sustainability of initiatives, and
- be curriculum leaders.

Implementing the NCF in the Secondary Years

This section focuses on the practical implementation of the NCF in the Secondary years of compulsory schooling. It includes proposals for:

- the school timetable;
- criteria underlying the allocation of time for the learning areas into timetabled lessons;
- the implementation of a developmental model through a differentiated approach, and assessment.

The School Timetable

In the Secondary Years, curricular weightings are more rigid than they are in the primary years. These are reinforced by the allocation of a specific number of fixed timetable slots per week.

Notwithstanding this rigid setup, current timetable models in both State and non-State sectors bear evidence that schools have over the years adopted to prevailing individual, sectoral, and national educational and non-educational circumstances. This has led to the development of a wide range of timetable models with discrepancies of a varying nature. Table 4 summarises some of the most evident discrepancies across timetable models currently adopted by various schools across Malta and Gozo.

Criteria for the Proposed Secondary School Timetable

In secondary schools, a number of criteria need to be considered to ensure that the NCF is put into practice in a timetable which maximizes learning time. Such a timetable needs to:

- cater for a minimum of 38 lessons per five-day week since, as will be shown later on, this is the minimum amount of lessons to ensure accessibility to the eight learning areas;
- allocate regular timetabled time for day-to-day and special assemblies, use of school lockers and Year time. In this way stakeholders can have a better picture of actual learning time;
- have a reasonably long mid-day break to strengthen the presence of sport and non-formal learning activities;
- allow for lessons of between 40 and 45 minutes each, and preferably not less than 42 minutes when taking travel time between lessons into consideration, to provide enough time for effective time-on-task in the classroom;
- ensure regular time for the school professional community to discuss and/or address school-related and professional development issues; and
- be structured on the principle that teacher time is dedicated entirely to actual teaching and related professional duties and not for any supervision for which extra payment should be made available. It is therefore being proposed that the first break will not remain part of the remunerated work of teachers, but will be remunerated over and above at normal supervision rates with teachers participating on a roster basis according to the set ratios to ensure learners' safety.

Currently there is no single timetable that meets all the above criteria. Whilst the actual diversity within and between the State, Church and Independent sectors needs to be respected, different timetables are being proposed in this document in an attempt to address various priorities and realities (refer to Appendix II). However, all proposed models have advantages and disadvantages.

Table 4: Discrepancies across timetable models	
Issues	Examples of variations
Number of lessons per week	Timetables with as little as 35 lessons and as many as 40.
Number of learning hours per week	A range from 26.25 hrs to 27.75 hrs. Schools offer a range from 35 to 40 lessons in 26.25 hrs.
Range of core subjects	Environmental Studies offered as an area of study in some schools whilst History, Geography and Social Studies are offered as distinct subjects in other schools. Media Education offered as a core subject in some schools and only as part of another subject in other schools. Foreign Language not offered to students with poor literacy skills.
Range of option subjects offered	Some schools offer fewer subjects or subject combinations.
Subject weighting	Not all subjects are assigned the same number of lessons in all schools Some examples: Maltese: between 3 and 5 lessons; Science: between 3 and 4 lessons; History and Geography: between 1 and 2 lessons; ICT: between 1 and 2 lessons; PE: between 1 and 3 lessons.
Time allocated for Assembly	Variation in duration of assembly time resulting in reduction of time from a number of lessons. Some schools reduce time evenly across the day's lessons; others reduce more time from a limited number of lessons resulting in a variation in the duration of lessons (35/40/45 minutes).
Time allocated for Year time	Not all schools allocate time with the Year Teacher ¹ (Year Time) and those which do, do not necessarily allocate the same amount of time even though it is deducted from lesson time. This results in similar discrepancies as above.
Time allocated for use of lockers	Same as above with some schools deducting it from break time (thus not affecting lesson time) and others from lesson time (thus not reducing break time).
Time allocated for breaks	Not all schools allocate a mid-morning break and a mid-day break. Some allocate just one break. The duration of mid-day breaks varies between 30 to 55 minutes, thus creating a discrepancy in the time students have available to engage in non-formal activities including physical activities.

The Secondary School Timetable – Junior Secondary Years (Years 7 and 8)

The NCF proposes five alternative timetables which are presented in Appendix II. Table 5 below compares the current distribution of lessons for Forms 1 and 2 in Junior Lyceums (JL) and Area Secondary (AS) Schools with the distribution of lessons in the alternative timetables. The proposed learning areas are listed in the first column in Table 5. In some instances, learning areas replace subjects currently taught in schools. (Where applicable, the latter are presented in brackets and in italics)

Curriculum Framework Timetables (CFT) 1 and 2 are taken together and represent five-day weekly cycle allocations. A variation of CFT 1 is presented as CFT 2. One has an allocation of three lessons a week for Citizenship Education and two lessons to be chosen by the school (Column C). The other has an allocation of five lessons a week for Citizenship Education and no school-based choice (Column D).

CFT 3 is another five-day cycle timetable which is presented on its own as it has 38 or 40 lessons on alternate weeks. Timetables CFT 4 and 5 are presented in separate columns and represent 6-day cycle allocations.

An initial analysis of columns C to G in Table 5 below indicates that the minimum number of lessons required to fulfill the proposed NCF is 38. Table 5 shows that the proposed distribution of lessons among learning areas in columns C and D is practically identical. The advantages of this proposal are that:

- Maltese is allotted four lessons a week. This amounts to an extra lesson in comparison to the current JL allocation;
- Foreign languages are allotted three lessons a week. There will still be a range of languages to choose from, with the choice being strengthened by new language awareness lessons in the primary school years as mentioned earlier in the document;
- ICT is assigned one lesson a week. The use of digital literacy is to be promoted across all learning areas;
- The shift of Art, Literature and Music, commonly referred to as ALM, from cultural appreciation to Arts Education encourage greater engagement by learners. With two lessons a week, Arts Education is given twice the present allocation in Area Secondary schools;
- PE is being increased from two to three lessons a week in line with international recommendations and national priorities in addition to other activities during break time and after school;
- In the proposal in Column C, Citizenship Education retains three lessons a week, as is customary in Area Secondary schools;
- The option between Graphical Communication, Art and Design, Home Economics and Design & Technology is streamlined and replaced by modules of Home Economics and Design & Technology (to include Graphic Products) to be taken by all learners;

- The proposed lesson distribution allows schools a measure of flexibility in allocating five English and four Maltese lessons or *vice versa* according to the needs of their students.
- Another measure of flexibility is the proposal for two lessons a week to be allocated to a learning area or subject at the school's discretion. The school may decide to increase the loading of a particular subject or content area for all students or offer extra lessons in particular subjects to particular groups of learners according to their needs and interests. In the State sector the proposal for the use of these two lessons is made through the respective college Principal and needs to be approved by the Education Directorates according to parameters that ensure the sustainability and curricular appropriateness of the proposal.

Table 5: No. of lessons per weekly/ 6-day cycle in the junior years of the secondary school (Yrs 7 & 8)

Learning Area/Subject	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Present load of 37 lessons in JL	Present load of 35 lessons in AS	CFT 1&2 weekly cycle Years 7 & 8	CFT 1&2 weekly cycle Years 7 & 8	CFT 3 weekly cycle Years 7 & 8	CFT 4 6 day cycle Years 7 & 8	CFT 5 6 day cycle Years 7 & 8
English	5	5	5 / 4	5 / 4	5 / 4	6	5
Maltese	3	4	4 / 5	4 / 5	4 / 5	4	5
Foreign Language	4	4	3	3	3	4	4
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	6	6
Science	4	4	4	4	4	5	5
ICT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Arts Education (Arts, Literature, Music)	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
Religion	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
Health Education ¹ PSHE PE	2 2	2 2	5	5	5	5	5
Citizenship Education (Hist., Geog, Soc. Studies)	5	3	3	5	5	3	5
Technology Education / Health Education D&T / Home Economics (Option 1)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
School-based choice	0	0	2	0	2*	0	0
Total	37	35	38	38	38/40*	40	43

Column E presents a five-day timetable model with alternate 38-lesson and 40-lesson weekly cycles. In this model Citizenship Education and Health Education both retain five lessons a week. The would still allow for two lessons to be allocated to an area or subject according to school preference.

Columns F and G present two timetable models with slightly different lesson allocations that privilege some subjects in one proposal and others in the other. In both cases the two discretionary lessons are no longer available. These models do not, however, make a significant difference in lesson allocation to the different learning areas except for Citizenship Education. It is hoped that flexibility in the timetable will increase over time.

The Secondary School Timetable – Senior Secondary Years (Years 9, 10 and 11)

Table 6 below compares the current distribution of lessons for Forms 3, 4 and 5 in Junior Lyceums (JL) and Area Secondary Schools (AS) with the distribution of lessons in the alternative timetables. The first column of Table 6 lists the proposed content areas. In some cases, these replace content areas currently in schools which are bracketed and in italics.

Curriculum Framework Timetables (CFT) 1 and 2 are taken together and represent five-day weekly cycle allocations. CFT 3 is another five-day cycle timetable which is presented on its own. Timetables CFT 4 and 5 are presented in separate columns and represent 6-day cycle allocations.

Table 6: No. of lessons per weekly /6-day cycle in the senior years of the secondary school (Yrs 9-11)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Learning Area/Subject	Present load of 37 lessons in JL	Present load of 35 lessons in AS	CFT 1&2 weekly cycle Years 9, 10, 11	CFT 1&2 weekly cycle Years 9, 10, 11	CFT 3 weekly cycle Years 9, 10, 11	CFT4 6-day cycle Years 9, 10, 11	CFT5 6-day cycle Years 9, 10, 11
English ¹	6	5	5 / 4	5 / 4	5 / 4	5	5
Maltese	3	4	4 / 5	4 / 5	4 / 5	4	5
Foreign Language	3	4	3	3	3	3	4
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	5	6
Science (<i>Physics</i>)	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
ICT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
D&T/Home Economics ² & Arts Education (<i>Art/Music</i>)	0	1	2	2	2	2	2
Religion	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Health Education PSHE PE	1	1	3	2	2	3	4
	1	1					
Citizenship Education (<i>Hist., Geog., Soc. Studies</i>)	3	3	3	2	2	3	2
Option 1	4	4	3	4	4	4	4
Option 2	4	/	3	4	4	4	4
School-based choice	0	0 0	0	0	2*	0	0
Total	37	35	38	38	38/40*	40	43

As shown in Table 5, Table 6 reinforces the conclusion that up to Form 5 (Year 11) the minimum number of lessons required to fulfill the proposed NCF is 38 up to Form 5 (Year 11). Table 6 shows that the proposed distribution of lessons among learning areas in Columns C and D is practically identical.

The advantages of this timetable model are the following:

English focuses mainly on language, with significantly reduced English Literature content. English literature is presented as an option subject.

Maltese and the foreign language retain their loading of four and three lessons respectively as in the Junior years.

The proposed lesson allocation offers schools a measure of flexibility in allocating five English and four Maltese lessons or *vice versa* according to the needs of their students.

Another difference between Columns C & D is in the lesson allocation for optional subjects. The allocation is revised downwards to three lessons per week in Column C to provide for an additional lesson in Health Education and another one in Citizenship Education, and

Arts Education is currently hardly present in the senior Secondary years. Moreover, Technology Education and Home Economics do not form part of the current core curriculum for Forms 3-5 (Years 9 -11). This situation is addressed in the proposed lesson allocation, with two lessons for modules in Arts Education alternating with Home Economics and Design & Technology.

Column E presents a five-day timetable model with alternate 38-lesson or 40-lesson weekly cycles. In this model Citizenship Education and Health Education are allocated two lessons a week. The two discretionary lessons are still available for the school and it is anticipated that the degree of flexibility in the timetable will increase over time.

As in Table 5, Columns F and G present two proposals with slightly different lesson distributions, thus favouring some subjects in one proposal and others in another. In both cases, the two discretionary lessons are no longer available. Proposals F and G do not make a significant difference in time allocation to the various learning areas.

The implementation of a developmental model through a differentiated approach

The proposed Secondary years curriculum has a number of characteristics that are intended to promote differentiated learning and teaching. The NCF recommends that initially setting may be organized for the core subjects: Maltese, English and Mathematics. In the remaining subjects the grouping of students will need to be organized taking different factors such as subject options into account. The NCF further recommends that eventually the grouping of students will take on more differentiated scenarios as is the case in primary schools and in a number of secondary schools in the Non-State sector.

All learners, irrespective of the status of their mastery of core competences and even their physical or intellectual disabilities, are entitled to experience and master all eight learning areas to the highest degree that is possible for them to attain. The way forward is therefore

to develop and implement specific learning plans for these students that would include:

- supporting teachers to develop and implement differentiated teaching in their classrooms in terms of both learning processes and outcomes; and
- making best use of the possibilities inherent in the tiered syllabi associated with the levels of achievement model.

Schools need to be supported through the availability and accessibility of the necessary training, resource provision and development, tools and support structures at central, college and school level²².

Schools can develop into sites of effective, diversified learning to the extent that practitioners learn to orchestrate all the possibilities inherent in the NCF to co-construct autonomous teaching and learning opportunities that are truly learner-centred and that address the realities of their students.

Secondary Years Syllabus Development

The re-organisation of the traditional content areas into the eight learning areas at the core of this NCF and the introduction of modular learning are intended to encourage and support transformation in syllabi. One major consideration in the development of syllabi is the awareness of the actual learning time available in a given scholastic year. Syllabus designers cannot consider subject requirements in isolation but must take into consideration the interconnectedness within each learning area, and the actual time available to allow for meaningful learning arising from effective teaching.

Taking into consideration all the variables associated with the five timetable models presented in Appendix II, the syllabus designers can follow the estimation that an allocation of one lesson per week is equivalent to 20 hours of direct teaching/learning in one scholastic year²³.

The NCF recommends that this estimation is taken into consideration in the construction of the modules for different content areas. It also recommends that the SEC syllabus be reviewed accordingly.

Assessment Issues in the Secondary Curriculum

Assessment at the Class, School and College Level

The general principles of assessment also apply at the secondary level. Classroom and school assessment for formative and summative purposes will inform all stakeholders about the quality and effectiveness of their efforts to help learners acquire a quality education. At the classroom level, assessment for learning provides information about progress and informs learners and classroom teachers about progress and actions that may be needed to improve learning, helping learners to acquire knowledge and develop skills. Teacher assessment is also useful in assessing skills and attitudes that cannot readily be assessed

22 Other forms of support are discussed in Document 2.

23 The estimation is based on 28 teaching weeks, with a minimum of 42 minutes per lesson.

through conventional tests and examinations. Evidence of learning may come from written and practical work, project work, field work and other similar practical learning activities.

Assessment as part of learning and teaching should remain central to the process. This is an essential part of promoting students' active participation and helping to identify students who need support and attention. Similarly, assessment of coursework done in school under the teachers' supervision can ensure that it is the students' work and that students are given support when necessary. Both class work and coursework carried out at school promote collaborative learning and develop each student's identity as a learner and as part of a learning community. Assessment of the students' achievement for summative purposes should not be dependent on one-off performances in tests and examinations. There is much to gain from considering information obtained through multiple approaches to assessment carried out over a scholastic year. This leads to a more valid assessment of knowledge, skills and attitudes within the different learning areas.

Coursework carried out outside the classroom allows students to devote more time to research and creative work and engage with tasks in different ways. Care should be taken not to overload students with work that may be so elaborate that it requires them to seek help to complete the tasks. One way of avoiding overload is for teachers from different subjects within a learning area to cooperate in setting projects through which students demonstrate knowledge and skills.

Assessment of subjects offered in the vocational area will be based exclusively on coursework. The validity and reliability of this assessment will initially be ensured through the built-in quality assurance mechanisms of the BTEC model.

Setting coursework across more than one subject or even across more than one learning area also leads to less fragmentation in the curriculum. In addition, students are given the opportunity to apply and transfer skills across contexts. This approach requires coordination and monitoring managed at school level, so that different teachers' judgments about the quality of students' work in relation to agreed criteria are consistent. This can be addressed by local college moderation, agreeing success criteria and monitoring their consistent application with all students. Communication and agreement about expectations among the different teachers involved in assessing the students' work increases the reliability of the assessment. For State schools, it is recommended that a more flexible approach towards annual examinations is adopted whereby in some year groups the examinations may continue to be organized centrally, whereas in others they may be organized at a college level. Students following individual learning programmes may be assessed using alternative forms of assessment. This should also be considered in the assessment policy.

The NCF recommends the development of an assessment policy at the school and college level to monitor progress during the year. The policy should seek to enhance the quality of assessment and how it is reported to parents and other stakeholders such as examination boards and employers. It should also take into consideration the frequency, duration and timing of oral tasks and listening comprehension tasks in languages, and practical work and other types of coursework in the different learning areas, including the vocational subjects. For the State sector, the policy should also establish in which year groups the examinations will continue to be centrally set. For those year groups where the examinations will be college based, the Educational Assessment Unit (EAU) needs to monitor standards across

the different colleges.

Assessment at the National Level

Assessment at the national level using agreed standards is essential for ensuring that the students' entitlement for a quality education is being respected. This assessment is used to monitor consistency in the interpretation of standards within and across schools, to monitor trends, to guide students and to evaluate the impact of innovations in the curriculum, teaching methods and policy decisions.

It is the responsibility of the Directorate for Quality and Standards (DQSE) to evaluate curriculum implementation, innovation and emerging trends, through external assessment at national and international level, through end-of-year examinations, moderation of school-based assessment, monitoring achievement in the different learning areas, national benchmarks, surveys of literacy and numeracy; SEC examinations, PISA, TIMSS and other surveys.

The success of assessment at the national level depends on a number of requirements that should be in place including:

Assessments that closely link to the Learning Outcomes Framework of each learning area;

- The EAU within the DQSE to be responsible for assessment **for** learning and assessment **of** learning. Among other tasks, the unit is entrusted with the organization, implementation and monitoring of assessment in the different learning areas during the scholastic year to ensure consistency in the application of national levels of achievement, the moderation of set coursework, and the setting and moderation of examinations in different year groups.
- The introduction of external monitoring in all learning areas using samples of schools and students over a cycle of five years²⁴.
- The weighting of the coursework and the examination could be different for different subjects but there should be agreed weightings. Assessment in languages should assess speaking, listening, reading and writing while assessment in subjects which require practical, creative and problem-solving skills should include the assessment of these skills during authentic tasks set and monitored during the school year. The use of papers which relate to the levels of achievement. Students' achievement in the different subjects will be interpreted in order to guide individuals towards further subject choices, and subsequently, career choices.
- Assessment of subjects offered in the vocational area is based exclusively on coursework. The validity and reliability of this assessment is ensured through the built-in quality assurance mechanisms of the BTEC model.
- From amongst the students following individual education programmes, some may be assessed using alternative forms of assessment. This should be considered in the inclu-

24 Details about this recommendation are available in the document, *Transition from Primary to Secondary* (2008).

sive education policy as well as the assessment policy. Special support is to be given to students who fail to progress in the core learning areas.

- Half yearly and annual examinations continue to be recommended for the core learning areas, other learning areas organized in modular form may explore different modes of assessment as appropriate.
- At the end of the Secondary years, besides the Secondary School Certificate and Profile²⁵, all students should be able to qualify for certificates by an external agency, which show their achievement in the learning areas. Currently, the Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examination of the MATSEC Board awards certificates that are accredited at Level 3 (Grades 1-5) and Level 2 (Grades 6-7) of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). The BTEC extended certificate qualification in the vocational subjects at Distinction, Merit and Pass levels is also pegged at MQF Level 3.
- There is also the need to develop a complementary system of external certification that encourages students, who currently end secondary education without external certification, to obtain qualifications at Level 1 of the MQF alongside the Secondary School Certificate and Profile as recommended in the MATSEC review (Grima, Camilleri, Chircop, Mallia & Ventura, 2005).

Transitions

The proposed NCF for the Secondary years should prepare students to become life-long learners and thus be motivated towards pursuing their studies in higher and further educational institutions. The secondary school curriculum should have also laid a firm foundation for students to support their future career decisions towards higher and further education paths.

25 The Secondary School Certificate and Profile includes assessment of the students' formal education, non-formal education, informal education, personal qualities and attendance (Grech, 2009a, 2009b).

References

- Carr, M. (2001). *Assessment in early childhood settings: Learning stories*. London: Sage.
- Department of Education & Early Childhood Development & Victorian Curriculum & Assessment Authority, (2009). *Victorian Early Years learning and development framework. For all children from birth to eight years*. Australia: Dept of Education & Early Childhood Development & Victorian Curriculum & Assessment Authority. Available at www.education.vic.gov.au and <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/earlyyears>
- Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, Malta. (2009). *National policy and strategy for the attainment of core competences in primary education*. Malta: Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth & Sport.
- Eaude, T. (n.d.). *SMSC – Optional extras or hidden opportunities?* Available at: <http://www.nationaleducationtrust.net/SISL/Downloads/hiddenoppsshortened.pdf>
- Eurydice (2009). *Key data on education in Europe 2009*. Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency Available at: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/105EN.pdf
- Grima, G., Camilleri, R., Chircop, S., Mallia C. & Ventura, F. (2005). *MATSEC: Strengthening National Examination System*. Malta: Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment.
- Grima, G., Grech, L., Mallia, C., Mizzi, B., Vassallo, P., & Ventura, F. (2007) *Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools in Malta: A Review*. Malta: Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports.
- Ministry of Education, Malta. (1999). *Creating the Future Together: National Minimum Curriculum*. Malta: Ministry of Education.
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (1989). *United Nations Convention on the rights of the child*. Available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc.pdf>
- Podmore, V., Meade, A. & Kerslake Hendrikcs, A. (2000). *Aspects of quality in early childhood education*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Available at: <http://www.nzcer.org.nz/pdfs/5885.pdf>
- Simister, C.J. (2007). *How to teach thinking and learning skills. A practical programme for the whole school*. London: Sage.
- Waddell, A.T. & McBride, R.M. (2008). *New research on early childhood education*. New York: Nova Science.
- Wilks, A., Nyland, B., Chancellor, B. & Elliot, S. (2008). *Analysis of Curriculum/Learning Frameworks for the Early Years (Birth to Age 8)*. Victoria, Australia: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. Available at: http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/earlychildhood/Early_Years_Lit_Review.pdf

Appendix I:

Model timetables for primary schools according to suggested distribution of learning time in Tables 2 and 3

Model A

DAY	15 minutes	75 minutes	15 minutes	1.35 minutes	30 minutes	90 minutes					
MON	Assembly & Settling in class	Religious Education 30 mins	Maltese 45 mins	Mid morning break	English 45 mins	Maths 45 mins	Technology 45 mins	Mid-day break	Health Education 30 mins	Science 30 mins	Arts Education 30 mins
TUE	Assembly & Settling in class	English 45 mins	Citizenship Education 30 mins	Mid morning break	Health Education 60 mins	Religious Education 30 mins	Maths 45 mins	Mid-day break	Arts Education 45 mins	Maltese 45 mins	
WED	Assembly & Settling in class	Religious Education 30 mins	Maths 45 mins	Mid morning break	Maltese 45 mins	English 45 mins	Citizenship Education 45 mins	Mid-day break	Arts Education 60 mins	Health Education 30 mins	
THU	Assembly & Settling in class	Maths 45 mins	LI 30 mins	Mid morning break	Religious Education 30 mins	Science 60 mins	English 45 mins	Mid-day break	Maltese 45 mins	Health Education 45 mins	
FRI	Assembly & Settling in class	English 45 mins	Science 30 mins	Mid morning break	Maltese 45 mins	Maths 45 mins	Health Education 45 mins	Mid-day break	Religious Education 30 mins	Citizenship Education 60 mins	

Model B

DAY	15 minutes	75 minutes	15 minutes	1.35 minutes	30 minutes	90 minutes					
MON	Assembly & Settling in class	Religious Education 30 mins	Maltese 45 mins	Mid morning break	English 45 mins	Maths 45 mins	Technology 45 mins	Mid-day break	Maths 30 mins	Citizenship Education 30 mins	Health Education 30 mins
TUE	Assembly & Settling in class	English 45 mins	Citizenship Education 30 mins	Mid morning break	Health Education 60 mins	Religious Education 30 mins	Maths 45 mins	Mid-day break	Science 45 mins	Maltese 45 mins	
WED	Assembly & Settling in class	Religious Education 30 mins	Maths 45 mins	Mid morning break	Arts Education 45 mins	English 45 mins	Health Education 45 mins	Mid-day break	Maltese 60 mins	Citizenship Education 30 mins	
THU	Assembly & Settling in class	Maths 45 mins	LE 30 mins	Mid morning break	Religious Education 30 mins	English 60 mins	Science 45 mins	Mid-day break	Maltese 45 mins	Health Education 45 mins	
FR	Assembly & Settling in class	English 45 mins	Maths 30 mins	Mid morning break	Maltese 45 mins	Religious Education 30 mins	Maths 60 mins	Mid-day break	Health Education 45 mins	Arts Education 45 mins	

Model C

DAY	15 minutes	75 minutes	15 minutes	1.35 minutes	30 minutes	90 minutes					
MON	Assembly & Settling in class	Religious Education 30 mins	Maltese 45 mins	Mid morning break	English 45 mins	Maths 45 mins	Technology 45 mins	Mid-day break	Health Education 30 mins	School Based Choice 30 mins	Arts Education 30 mins
TUE	Assembly & Settling in class	English 45 mins	Health Education 30 mins	Mid morning break	Health Education 60 mins	Religious Education 30 mins	Maths 45 mins	Mid-day break	Maths 45 mins	Maltese 45 mins	
WED	Assembly & Settling in class	Religious Education 30 mins	Maths 45 mins	Mid morning Break	Maltese 45 mins	English 45 mins	English 45 mins	Mid-day break	Arts Education 60 mins	School Based Choice 30 mins	
THU	Assembly & Settling in class	Maths 45 mins	Citizenship Education 30 mins	Mid morning Break	Religious Education 30 mins	Science 60 mins	English 45 mins	Mid-day break	English 45 mins	Maltese 45 mins	Health Education 45 mins
FRI	Assembly & Settling in class	English 45 mins	Science 30 mins	Mid morning break	Maltese 45 mins	Maths 45 mins	Health Education 45 mins	Mid-day break	Religious Education 30 mins	Citizenship Education 60 mins	

Appendix II:

Curriculum Framework timetable models for secondary schools

Five different timetable models are being proposed. The Curriculum Framework Timetables (CFT) 1 to 5 are designed to fulfil the students' entitlement to the NCF. For each model the characteristics as well as its pros and cons are highlighted. For ease of comparison, all five models are shown as starting at 8.00 a.m. Comparison will also be made with a standard model of 1665 minutes (JL Model) of total student time²⁶ and 1540 minutes of actual lesson time based on a weekly average of current State school timetables.

The first three timetable models are based on a traditional 5-day weekly cycle. CFT 4 and 5 are based on a 6-day cycle. The 6-day cycle disengages learning days from the days of the week. Thus, a 6-day cycle starting on a Tuesday will finish on the Tuesday of the following week, and the next cycle will therefore start on the Wednesday. In the case of a holiday or a whole school activity during a particular cycle there are two ways how to manipulate the cycle. One can either leave the cycle unchanged and therefore miss one day of the cycle, or else reschedule the day after the missed day of work so that the lessons on, say, Day 4 are not missed out. This implies that the next cycle starts a day later. Of course, the 6-day cycle still operates within the parameters of teachers' present working conditions.

The main advantage of the 6-day cycle system is that loss of lessons due to school activities and extraneous events is evenly distributed over the school days. It also leads to more space for the allocation of lessons, although with proportionately fewer cycles over the year when compared to the 5-day cycles. However, the advantage in lesson allocation is minimal. The disadvantages in adopting the 6-day cycle are that it presents a completely new organisational paradigm for all stakeholders. Lessons, homework and school bags need to be prepared not according to the day of the week but according to the tomorrow's day number in the current cycle. Two 6-day cycle CFTs are being presented here to widen the discussion and include what perhaps were unthought-of possibilities.

26 This includes time for assembly, lesson time and students' mobility between lessons

Characteristics of CFT 1

- This model has seven lessons on two days of the week and eight lessons on the other three days.
- All lessons are 42 minutes long.
- Total lesson time per week is 1596 minutes.
- Time for locker access (5 minutes per break) is already factored into the two breaks per day.

CFT 1 38 lsns	Teacher Registration	Assembly Form time (8:00)	1 (08:16)	2 (08:58)	MMB & Locker (09:40)	3 (10:00)	4 (10:42)	5 (11:24)	MDB & Locker (12:06)	6 (13:06)	7 (13:48) (14:30)	Break for teacher (14:30 – 14:50)	School / Staff Development Mtg (16:06)
Mon	10	16	42	42		42	42	42		42	42		
Fri	10	16	42	42		42	42	42		42	42		

CFT 1 38 lsns	Teacher Registration	Assembly Form time (8:00)	1 (08:10)	2 (08:52)	MMB & Locker Start (09:34)	3 (09:54)	4 (10:36)	5 (11:18)	6 (12:00)	MDB & Locker (12:42)	7 (13:06)	8 (13:48) (14:30)
Tues	10	10	42	42		42	42	42	42		42	42
Wed	10	10	42	42		42	42	42	42		42	42
Thu	10	10	42	42		42	42	42	42		42	42

Pros

- This model provides 3.6% more learning time (1596 in lieu of 1540 minutes).
- This model has all five days ending at the same time for students.
- It also has two morning assemblies per week that are longer than the rest, allowing for special assemblies and/or circle time by the Year Teacher.
- Two of the mid-day breaks are longer than what State schools have at present, allowing more time for non formal activities.
- Every teacher is entitled to the equivalent of two lessons time-off per week.
- This model allows for one afterschool staff or professional development meeting a week that substitutes all other afterschool teacher planning and development meetings presently in place. The 20 minutes' break before the meeting allows for the administration to take care of dismissal and transport routine at the end of the day.
- This model will bring school finishing times in line with the Junior Lyceums at present. This can be seen as a family-friendly measure, since it reduces the time that children may be at home alone and/or the need for alternative child supervision arrangements.
- Four uninterrupted lessons between breaks on three days may be a bonus for school administrators since they facilitate the timetabling of double lessons, but they can prove to be more tiring both for teachers and students.

Cons

- This model does not allow for structured time for meetings of the school professional community as a whole during school hours but only after hours. This arrangement may be considered inconvenient by the teaching grades.
- The time off that teachers are entitled to in this model may be a constraint on the timetable.
- On three days the mid-day break is only 24 minutes long, including locker time.

Characteristics of CFT 2

- This model has four days with eight lessons each, and one half-day with six lessons ending with a weekly meeting for the school professional community.
- Assembly time is available at the beginning of all five days.
- All lessons are 42 minutes long.
- Total lesson time per week is 1596 minutes.
- Time for locker access (5 minutes per break) is already factored into the two breaks per day.

CFT 2 38 Isns	Teachers Registration	Assembly Form time (8:00)	1 (8:11)	2 (8:53)	MMB & locker (9:35)	3 (9:55)	4 (10:37)	5 (11:19)	6 (12:01)	MDB & Locker (12:43)	7 (13:23)	8 (14:05) (14:47)
Mon	10	11	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Tues	10	11	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Thu	10	11	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Fri	10	11	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42

CFT 2 38 Isns	Teachers Registration	Assembly Form Time (8:00)	1 (8:11)	2 (8:53)	MMB & locker (9:35)	3 (9:55)	4 (10:37)	5 (11:19)	6 (12:01)	Break for Teachers (12:43)	School / Staff Development Meeting (12:58) (14:27)
Wed	10	11	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	15	35

Pros

- This model provides 3.6% more learning time (1596 in lieu of 1540 minutes) than the current standard model.
- This model retains a lesson length of 42 minutes as in CFT 1.
- It allows for a weekly meeting for staff during school hours, thus making it a more convenient option for teachers. This meeting substitutes all other afterschool professional development meetings presently in place. The 15 minutes' break permits the administration to take care of the dismissal and transport routine at the end of the day.
- Additionally, the day that includes the weekly meeting ends 20 minutes earlier for teachers when compared to the other four days.
- The school day will be slightly longer than the current Junior Lyceum timetables. This can be seen as a family-friendly measure, it reduces unsupervised time and/or the need for alternative child supervision arrangements.
- Every teacher is entitled to the equivalent of two lessons time-off per week.
- Four uninterrupted lessons between breaks may be a bonus for school administrators since they facilitate the timetabling of double lessons, but they can prove to be more tiring for both teachers and students.

Cons

- This model does not provide for special assembly and/or Year Teacher time in the morning.
- In this model school ends early on one day a week. The half day may cause inconvenience to parents.
- The two long breaks available in CFT 1 are not available here.
- The time off that teachers are entitled to in this model may put a constraint on the timetable.

Characteristics of CFT 3

- This model has 38 and 40 lessons on alternate weeks, with minimum lesson time of 41 minutes.
- One day every fortnight is shorter than the rest by two lessons to allow for a school/staff development meeting during school hours.
- Time for locker access (5 minutes per break) is already factored into the two breaks per day.
- Average lesson time per week is 1599 minutes.

CFT 3 38 Isns	Teachers Registration	Assembly Form time (8:00)	1 (8:10)	2 (8:51)	MMB & Locker (9:32)	3 (9:52)	4 (10:33)	5 (11:14)	6 (11:55)	MDB & Locker (12:36)	7 (13:18)	8 (13:59) (14:40)
Mon	10	10	41	41	5	41	41	41	41	5	41	41
Tues	10	10	41	41	5	41	41	41	41	5	41	41
Wed*	10	10	41	41	5	41	41	41	41	5	41	41
Thu	10	10	41	41	5	41	41	41	41	5	41	41
Fri	10	10	41	41	5	41	41	41	41	5	41	41

* Alternate Weeks

CFT 3 38 Isns	Teachers Registration	Assembly Form time (8:00)	1 (8:10)	2 (8:51)	MMB & Locker (9:32)	3 (9:52)	4 (10:33)	5 (11:14)	6 (11:55)	Break for Teachers	School / Staff Development Meeting (12:56) (14:18)
Wed*	10	10	41	41	5	41	41	41	41	20	20

* Alternate weeks

Pros

- This model provides 3.8% more learning time (1599 in lieu of 1540 minutes) than the current standard model.
- This model is the most generous in the number of lessons it allows. Since it allows for flexibility, depending on how this is implemented, this model allows for a maximum of six additional lessons per fortnight in Years 7 and 8, and two additional lessons in Years 9 to 11.
- The fortnightly staff meeting does not take place after school hours. This is convenient for the teaching grades. This meeting substitutes all after school teacher planning and development meetings presently in place. The 20 minutes' break allows for the administration to take care of dismissal and transport routine at the end of the day.
- Additionally, the day that includes the fortnightly meeting ends 22 minutes earlier for teachers when compared to the other days.
- Every teacher is entitled to the equivalent of one lesson time-off per week.
- Four uninterrupted lessons between breaks may be a bonus for school administrators since they facilitate the timetabling of double lessons, but they can prove to be more tiring for both teachers and students.

Cons

- By having different timetables in alternate weeks, this model may cause a number of logistical difficulties.
- With a duration of 41 minutes, most lessons are just within the recommended minimum, although shorter than in the other models.
- Parents will face the difficulty of planning for a fortnightly shorter school day.
- The time off that teachers are entitled to in this model may put a constraint on the timetable.

Characteristics of CFT 4

- This model has 40 lessons over a 6-day cycle.
- It has five days with seven lessons each, and one half-day with five lessons. The half-day ends with a meeting for the school professional community every six days.
- Assembly time is available at the beginning of all five days.
- Time for locker access (5 minutes per break) is already factored into the two breaks per day.
- Average lesson time per week is 1500 minutes.

CFT 4 40 lns 6 day rotation	Teachers registration	Assembly Registration (8:00)	1 (8:15)	2 (9:00)	3 (9:45)	4 (10:50)	5 (11:35)	6 (13:15)	7 (14:00) (14:45)
Day 1	10	15	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
Day 2	10	15	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
Day 3	10	15	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
Day 4	10	15	45	45	45	45	45	45	45
Day 5	10	15	45	45	45	45	45	45	45

CFT 4 40 lns 6 day rotation	Teachers registration	Assembly Registration (8:00)	1 (8:15)	2 (9:00)	3 (9:45)	4 (10:50)	5 (11:35)	Break for Teachers	School / Staff Development Meeting (12:40 - 14:10)
Day 6	10	15	45	45	45	45	45	40	40

Pros

- With a duration of 45 minutes, this model has the longest lessons of all five models.
- It allows for a meeting for teaching staff during school hours every six days. This is a convenient option for the teaching grades. This meeting substitutes all after school teacher staff / school development meetings presently in place. The 20 minutes' break allows for the administration to take care of dismissal and transport routine at the end of the day.
- The long assembly time allows for special assemblies and/or Year Teacher time every day.
- This model also includes five long mid-day breaks every 6-day cycle, allowing more time for non-formal activities.
- It shifts the mid-morning break so that three lessons take place before it instead of two as in the previous models, at the time of the day that is most productive for learning.
- The school day will be 45 minutes longer than at present. This can be seen as a family-friendly measure since it reduces the need for alternative child supervision arrangements.
- Teachers will finish 35 minutes early when they have the school staff development meeting.

Cons

- This model provides nearly 2.7% less lesson time (1500 instead of 1540 minutes) than the current standard model.
- This model has a half day every sixth day, making it less convenient for learners and their parents.
- In this 6-day cycle model, the weekly lesson timetable will be different from one week to another.

Characteristics of CFT 5

- This model has 43 lessons spread over a 6-day cycle.
- It has three days with seven lessons each, two days with eight lessons each, and one half-day with six lessons ending with a meeting for the school professional community every six days.
- Assembly time is available at the beginning of all the days.
- Time for locker access (5 minutes per break) is already factored in the two breaks.
- Average lesson time per week is 1505 minutes.

CFT 5 43 lns 6 day rotation	Staff Registration	Assembly Form Time (8:00)	1 (8:16)	2 (8:58)	MMB & Locker Start (9:40)	3 (10:00)	4 (10:42)	5 (11:24)	MDB & Locker (12:06)	6 (13:06)	7 (13:48) (14:30)
Day 1	10	14	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Day 5	10	14	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Day 6	10	14	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42

CFT 5 43 lns 6 day rotation	Staff Registration	Assembly Form Time (8:00)	1 (8:14)	2 (8:56)	MMB & Locker Start (9:38)	3 (9:58)	4 (10:40)	5 (11:22)	6 (12:04)	MDB & Locker (12:46)	7 (13:06)	8 (13:48) (14:30)
Day 2	10	14	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Day 3	10	14	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Day 4	10	14	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42

Pros

- Lessons in this model have a duration of 42 minutes, similar to CFT 1 and 2.
- It allows for a meeting for the school professional community/school development every six days during school hours, thus making it a more convenient option for teachers. This meeting substitutes all after school teacher planning and development meetings presently in place. The 20 minutes' break allows for the administration to take care of dismissal and transport routine at the end of the day.
- The long assembly time allows for special assemblies and/or Year Teacher time every day.
- Four uninterrupted lessons between breaks may be a bonus for school administrators since they facilitate the timetabling of double lessons, but they can prove to be more tiring for students and teachers.

Cons

- This model provides 2.3% less lesson time (1505 instead of 1540 minutes) per week than the current standard model.
- This model has one day in every 6-day cycle that is shorter than the rest, making it less convenient for learners and their parents.
- In this 6-day cycle model, the weekly lesson timetable will be different from one week to another.

Appendix III:

Number of Hours per Scholastic Year for secondary schools

Number of hours for Years 7 & 8

Learning Area	Subjects	AS	JL	CFT 1	CFT 2	CFT 3	CFT 4	CFT 5
Languages	Maltese + English + Foreign Language	256	237	235	235	230	245	229
Mathematics		98	99	98	98	96	105	98
Science		79	79	78	78	77	88	82
Technology Education	ICT + D&T	20 Option	20 Option	20 20	20 20	19 19	17 17	16 16
Health Education	PE + PSD HE	79	79	98 20	98 20	96 19	88 17	82 16
Citizenship Education	History + Geography + Social Studies	59	99	59	98	96	53	82
Religious Education		39	39	39	39	38	35	49
Art Education		20	39	39	39	38	35	33
School-based Choice		0	0	39	0	19	0	0
Options	HE/D&T/ GC/Art	39	39	0	0	0	0	0
Total Lessons		35/ week	37/ week	38/ week	38/ week	38 & 40/ alternative weeks	40/6 days	43/6 days
Total Hours		689	730	745	745	38 = 728 40 = 747 Avr = 738	700	703

Number of Hours for Years 9, 10 & 11

Learning Area	Subjects	AS	JL	CFT 1	CFT 2	CFT 3	CFT 4	CFT 5
Languages	Maltese + English + Foreign Language	256	237	235	235	230	210	229
Mathematics		98	99	98	98	96	88	98
Science		79	79	78	78	77	70	65
Technology Education	ICT D&T	20 Option	20 Option	20 10	20 10	19 10	17 9	16 8
Health Education	PE + PSD HE	39 Option	39 Option	59 10	39 10	38 10	53 9	65 8
Citizenship Education	History + Geography + S. Studies	59	59	59	39	38	53	33
Religious Education		39	39	39	39	38	35	33
Art Education		20	0	20	20	19	17	16
School-based Choice		0	0	0	0	19	0	0
Options	HE/D&T/ GC/Art	79	158	118	155	153	140	131
Total Lessons		35/ week	37/ week	38/ week	38/ week	38 & 40/ alternate weeks	40/6 days	43/6 days
Total Hours		689	730	746	743	38 = 728 40 = 747 Avr = 738	701	702

Total Number of Hours over 5 years

Learning Area	Subjects	AS	JL	CFT 1	CFT 21	CFT 3	CFT 4	CFT 5
Languages	Maltese + English + Foreign Language	1280	1185	1175	1175	1150	1120	1145
Mathematics		490	495	490	490	480	474	490
Science		316	316	390	390	385	386	359
Technology Education	ICT D&T	100 Option	100 Option	100 70	100 70	95 68	85 61	80 48
Health Education	PE + PSD HE	275 Option	275 Option	373 70	313 70	306 68	335 61	359 56
Citizenship Education	History + Geography + Social Studies	295	375	295	313	306	265	181
Religious Education		195	195	195	195	190	175	197
Art Education		100	78	138	138	133	121	114
School		0	0	78	0	133	0	0
Option Years 7 and 8	HE/D&T/ GC/Art	78	78	0	0	0	0	0
Option Yrs 9, 10, 11	See List in Section F	237	474	354	465	459	420	393
Total Lessons		35/ week	37/ week	38/ week	38/ week	38 & 40/ alternate weeks	40/6 days	43/6 days
Total Hours		3366	3571	3728	3719	3690	3503	3422