EDUCATION 2000

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Cover photo: CHILDHOOD by NOEL ZAHRA, featuring young Rakele Gauci.

EDITORIAL

Charles Mifsud

Whither the Faculty of Education?

Happy Birthday!! The Faculty of Education is twenty years old. Our Faculty has grown very fast to become the largest one of our university. It embraces the rich diversity of six departments: Foundations in Education; Primary Education; Arts and Languages in Education; Science, Mathematics & Technical Education; Psychology and Communication Studies & Educational Technology. Both as an undergraduate and now as a member of its staff, I have seen the Faculty evolve and adapt to the changing needs of Maltese society. In conjunction with the Education Division, it has spearheaded many exciting developments in Maltese education. There was never a time in these last twenty years when change was not being contemplated or effected. Over the years the Faculty has exhibited great vibrancy as a result of the great dynamism of its members.

The programmes and activities of the Faculty of Education are multifarious, as evidenced by the recent, successful event held by its Education in Correctional Facilities Programme. The recent published list of publications of its members of staff demonstrates the variety of interests and the richness of expertise of the Faculty. Its main activity, that of teacher education, is constantly being reviewed and next year changes will be effected to ensure a better focus of its initial teacher education programmes. In order to allow for more flexibility within its existing administrative structures, the Faculty has embarked on a number of Programmes, namely: Inclusive Education, Youth Studies, Literacy, Comparative Education, Physical Education, Education in Correctional Facilities, Adult Education, Creative Thinking and Teaching English as a Foreign Language. New structures should be explored to ensure greater administrative support for such programmes.

Richness in Diversity

The diversity and large numbers of its students and the changing needs of the University and Maltese society have placed considerable pressure on the Faculty of Education. Various demands are made on the Faculty, as by the nature of its mission, it has to interact daily with other faculties and institutions outside the University. Oftentimes there is not enough time to interact professionally, let alone socially. It is not easy to accommodate the diverse professional interests and agendas of so many. It is not easy for a psychology or a communications student to identify with the concerns and preoccupations of a student teacher, and vice-versa.

Richness in diversity has become very much the main characteristic of this Faculty. Much has been achieved through the great personal sacrifice of its members. However, how can we ensure that this Faculty continues to have a unifying soul that binds it together and provides it with a distinctive identity? How can we ensure that burn-out does not set in? The administrative and co-ordination tasks of the Faculty and the work of the various Faculty Boards and Committees have become considerable. An essential, but very time-consuming aspect, in such a congested place of work and island is the supervision of students in schools. The teaching load, especially with large groups, has become prohibitive. There is also the supervision of student dissertations. Many members of staff are heavily involved in national initiatives and school-based work like that of School Councils. The current surplus of (generalist) teachers in Maltese schools may allow opportunities for reflection and for the professional development of the Faculty members.

In conjunction with the Education Division, we need to investigate ways of providing opportunities for teachers and school administrators to engage in on-going professional development and to specialise further to be able to meet the changing needs of our schools. Greater emphasis is to be put on the research and outreach programmes of the Faculty.

The Future

The future of the Faculty of Education is very bright indeed!! Wide-ranging experience and expertise are coupled with tons of energy. So much has been achieved through the sheer dedication and hard work of so many. There need to be opportunities for former graduates of the Faculty to continue feeling part of the Faculty. There is so much to celebrate!! Together we have achieved so much. These last twenty years have not been easy. However, the new millennium finds the Faculty of Education willing to face new challenges and directions.

Education 2000

Education 2000 is yet another service rendered by the Faculty of Education to the educational community in Malta and Gozo. It seeks to act as a forum for the exchange of teaching ideas and innovative practices in education. It is a means of on-going professional development for teachers, school administrators and other educators. You, the educators of these Islands, have demanded that we continue this enterprise. We invite you to continue submitting to us your contributions.

Where does character come from?
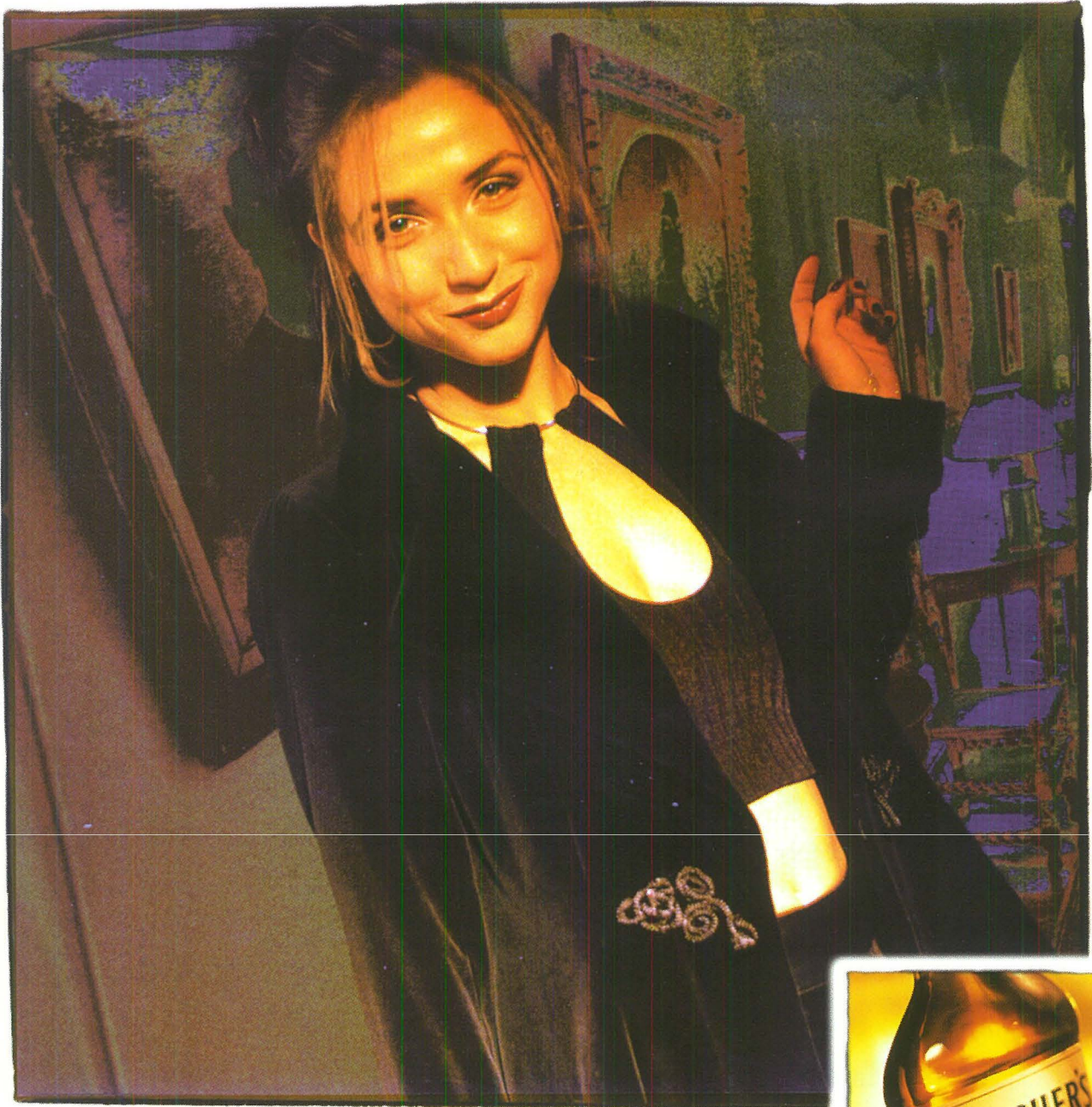
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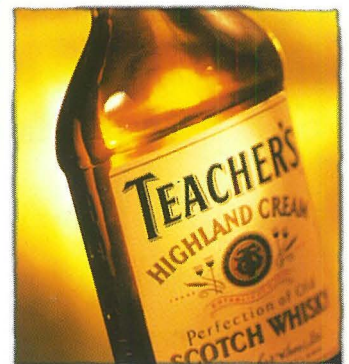
An exceptionally high malt content.

TEACHER'S

Hearing the Learners: *Letmelearn*

Joe Mifsud

For each of us, learning encompasses three broad domains – knowledge, skills and attitudes. When we think of creating a positive environment for learning, we try to set the conditions for learners to move through a range of behaviours in each domain from simple to increasingly complex. It follows, then, that positive learning environments are those that consider pupil's needs in each domain:

● Cognitive learning is affected by the instructional/teaching environment;

● Psychomotor learning can be enhanced or frustrated by the physical environment;

● The psychological environment, both within and external to the classroom, affects and is affected by the feelings, attitudes and emotional well being of each individual learner.

The challenge of creating a positive learning environment is one that all teachers face regardless of the physical environment in which learning takes place. Learning can occur in many settings and includes a wide range of learning environments.

Creating a positive learning environment is the cornerstone of effective teaching. In order for our pupils to succeed, they must first believe they can succeed. Learners must have confidence in their abilities and they must feel that the teacher shares that confidence. A positive learning environment nurtures these feelings by allowing learners to explore and expand their knowledge without undue risk or fear of failure. A positive environment is assisted when learning outcomes, objectives and expectations are clearly communicated to the learner. Learners (and teachers) on the other hand employ a wide range of learning patterns, and this diversity is often overlooked in most classrooms. The size of the classroom, the arrangement of the furniture, the functioning of the equipment and other physical details all contribute to, or detract from, the learning environment. When these factors can be manipulated to be positive influences, an environment more conducive to learning will be created.

'Whatever level of motivation your students bring to the classroom will be transformed, for better or for worse, by what happens in that classroom.' (Gross, 1993)

> **❝ Creating a positive learning environment is the cornerstone of effective teaching ❞**

assumptions and guard against acting out our own biases. We must avoid creating or tolerating a climate in the classroom, which in any way results in the 'unfair' treatment of an individual because of his or her learning identity.

Who is prepared to answer the Learner's call?

This is the question that the Letmelearn programme has tried to reflect upon and answer in a practical manner. This year's curtain-raiser to primary education in Malta targeted learning patterns. With a project which started over four years ago, Christine Johnstone of Rowan University in the United States (a partner

Equity

A positive learning environment is one in which all learners have an equal opportunity to learn. 'Equal opportunity' was a compelling philosophical idea before it became a legal one in Western Democracies. As espoused by the French Revolutionaries, the principle of la carriere ouverte aux talents (careers open to talents) denied that birth may rightly bound a person's opportunities in life. As conscientious teachers, we need to become aware of our own

Joseph Mifsud Ph.D. (QUB) is the head of Department of Primary Education. He lectures in Classroom Management and in the Management of Collaborative Learning in the elementary environment. Dr. Mifsud is also the Socrates European Union Programmes Office Manager of the University of Malta.

institution of the University of Malta) has worked on developing the theme of equity in learning from the learner's point of view. She has developed Gardner's framework of multiple intelligence into four bridging learning patterns, which harness learner's preference to Precision, Sequence, Confluency and Technical reasoning. The Let Me Learn Process is based upon an interactive learning model which emphasizes the unique relationship of three functions of the human mind: cognition, which refers to information processing; conation, which refers to persistence in performance; and affectation, which refers to feelings and values.

Where traditional education methods tend to favor the cognitive part of students' minds, the Interactive Learning Model seeks to help educators understand how all three functions are vital components of the pupils' success in school.

The Learning Patterns

The sequential learning pattern involves the need for step-by-step instructions, rules to follow and the opportunity to finish without interruptions. The precise learning pattern excels in detail, asks higher order questions and covets exacting information. The technical learning pattern involves independent reasoning, problem-solving and learning from real life experiences. Finally, the confluent pattern relies on intuition, takes risks and looks for creative alternatives to any task. Each learner uses these patterns collectively and simultaneously.

The Learning Combination Inventory

Christine Johnstone promotes the Learning Combination Inventory (LCI) as an instrument that registers the degree to which individuals use each of the four learning patterns. The LCI, which asks individuals to respond to 28 statements and three open-ended questions about learning, identifies the patterns a learner uses "First," "As Needed," or "Avoids."

Identifying one's unique combination is a gratifying experience for both student and teacher. It creates an opportunity for the teacher and learner to form a partnership which results in unlocking the student's will to learn.

The LCI has undergone extensive tests of its validity and reliability. International locations which have participated in LCI field studies include the United Kingdom (Belfast, Northern Ireland; Nottingham-Trent; York; and Abergevengy, Wales), Italy, Malta, Israel and Australia. A Master of Education dissertation at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, has been completed analysing the Maltese use of the Letmelearn. A group of third year B.Ed. students have also completed the translation of the LCI into Maltese and intend to pilot the revised instrument in February 1999.

Letmelearn in Action

Studies on the letmelearn (including those carried out in Malta) have shown that learner/teacher awareness of the concepts identified by the programme are allowing the student to unlock his/her will to learn. These studies contend that it also:

● Increases tolerance towards those with different learning combinations.

● Improves the quality of interactions between students and teachers.
● Increases self-confidence as a learner.
● Empowers students to succeed.

Pilot research in Malta will take place in three locations (two primary schools and a girls' school – ex-opportunity centre) which have been identified as letmelearn sites. It is clear that these schools will need to adopt innovative policies and develop new strategies that:

● Place the learner at the center of instruction.
● Provide an understanding of the diversity in learning.
● Promote the desire to meet the needs of all learners.
● Increase tolerance towards those with different learning combinations.
● Identify how the teacher's learning combination affects teaching.

Going by the research conducted in the United States it has been suggested that the Letmelearn concept:

● Improves relationships between the child and parent through understanding.
● Allows an understanding of the child's learning needs.
● Allows different approaches to homework by children to be understood.
● Creates the potential for more enjoyment in school through realistic expectations.
● Can remove conflict caused by differences in learning combinations of parent and child.

Conclusions

In Malta we are at the initial stages, letmelearn needs to be tried and tested in all aspects of education. The major objective that supports the letmelearn practice is that it provides a conscious arena where students and teachers should be able to establish mutual understanding and respect—to hear their joint or individual concerns and struggles—to separate them from issues of personality and misperceptions of lack of motivation to learn. Here is a place to start within a comfort zone of the learner and to move into more challenging assignments with a new confidence and awareness of how to attack the challenges of learning in a manner which creates Awareness, Insight, Understanding and Change.

Dr. Joseph Mifsud, Head of Department, Dept. of Primary Education, Faculty of Education, University of Malta. Email: jmif@educ.um.edu.mt *Letmelearn* **on the WWW: HYPERLINK http://www.letmelearn.org/ CONTACT PERSONS FOR** *LETMELEARN*: **Dr. C. Borg/Mr.C. Calleja, Department of Primary Education, Faculty of Education, University of Malta – tel:32902935**

The Internet - an essential resource for today's teacher

Ninette Lucia

This is an extract from a long essay written jointly by Ninette Lucia and Maria Mintoff.

> 66 **Use the Internet as a learning environment not just a transmitter of information** 99

Ninette Lucia is an assistant Head of School at Hamrun 'B' (G.P.) and is currently following a University course leading to a diploma in I.T. in Education. She attributes great importance to Primary School teaching and believes that computers in primary classrooms will bring about invaluable improvement in this sector.

Today's technology can provide teachers and students with opportunities for teaching and learning that were impossible in the past. The Internet has become a powerful means of communication, a unique combination of information and *people* who collaborate to create a massive web of resources and data available to anyone. In education, the Internet could be an ideal way of assisting teachers in their professional development. By providing ideas, material and data which are relevant, up-to-date and quick and easy to access, the Internet's potential as an educational resource and as an innovative medium of teaching is obvious.

It is, however, important that teachers use the Internet as a learning environment not just a transmitter of information.

The innumerable educational Web sites that can be accessed on the net offer a wide range of material that vary in accuracy, relevance and quality. This is due to the fact that the Internet is not managed by any particular organisation and as a result the information is not always reviewed by editors. Anyone is free to write and publish anything on 'Cyberspace'.

Issues concerning the use of the Internet by the teacher

If the Internet is to become an integral part of education as outlined in the draft document of the new National Curriculum for Education in Malta (March, 1998), then it is imperative for teachers to acquire the necessary expertise to be able to use it and have access to it. An effort must be made to educate teachers in this new technology.

Network Literacy

In order to be able to manipulate 'Cyberspace' teachers have first and foremost to understand what the Internet is, its capacities and its limitations. It is also important that they gain a certain amount of technical detail and Internet terminology. Teachers need to learn how to navigate the Internet and how to upload and download files. It is necessary for teachers to be trained in the use of search engines, to know exactly what they are looking for and to find the right way to phrase their requirements. If not, the search might come up with too many unnecessary answers or no answers at all.

Digital Literacy Skills

Of utmost importance is the fact that it is the teachers' job to assess and evaluate what is located on the Internet. They should develop digital literacy skills which would enable them to
● evaluate information;
● sort the appropriate sites from the inappropriate ones;
● look for the type of information which is suitable for specific purposes.

It is correct to conclude that *'Nothing before has captured the imagination and interest of educators simultaneously around the globe more than the World Wide Web'* (Owston, 1997) This synergistic outcome is by itself already remarkable and certainly a phenomenon which Maltese educators should strive to be a part of.

The Faculty of Education celebrates its 20th Anniversary
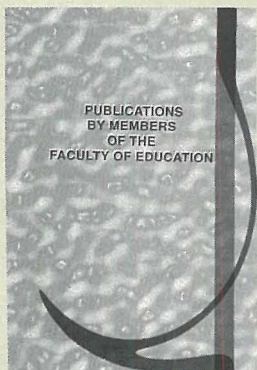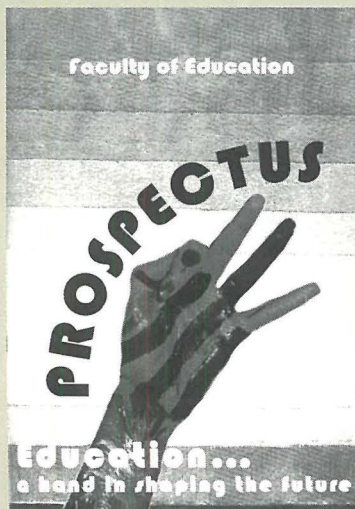
As part of its celebrations of its 20th Anniversary, the Faculty of Education has published two important volumes: *The Faculty of Education Prospectus: Education...a hand in shaping the future,* and *Publications by Members of the Faculty of Education.* Both publications can be obtained from the Faculty itself.

"What better way to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta than to present this list of academic publications of staff members to the community? ... Not only does it prove, if any such proof were required, the healthy - indeed thriving - implant of educational studies at the University, but it also speaks volumes to those who would wish to construct an educational community on a science of teaching and learning, in Malta and further afield."

Ronald G. Sultana, Dean, Faculty of Education
from the Foreword to Publications by Members of the Faculty of Education

Faculty of Education

PROSPECTUS

Education...
a hand in shaping the future

PUBLICATIONS
BY MEMBERS
OF THE
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

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A Total Quality Management Approach to Secondary Education

An initiative of St.Theresa Junior Lyceum, Mriehel

Lydia Zammit

"If changing is really learning, if effective organisations need more and more intelligent people, if careers are shorter and more changeable, above all, if more people need to be self-sufficient for more of their lives, then education has become the single most important investment that any person can make in their own destiny"
C.B. Handy

Establishing a norm of continuous improvement by applying the principles of Total Quality Management was the theme of a one-day seminar for the staff of St. Theresa Junior Lyceum held on the 22 October, 1998. The school has been innovating on its educational practices and the provision of a total quality education is the leading ultimate goal.

In her speech on the occasion of Prize Giving Ceremony back on May 6th, 1998, The Head of School at St.Theresa Junior Lyceum, Mriehel, Miss J. Mifsud-Matrenza, said that *"if we intend to be successful in our preparations for the new millenium, we need an education that is broader in scope, flexible and purposeful to the students; an education that identifies and releases the full potential of students' talents."*

WHY TQM?

The multi-dimensional role of the school demands a change in the existing school culture. Teaching and learning is a way of life and not a process restricted to the school years of the individual. Flexibility and mobility are the qualities we are seeking to equip our students and our staff with. It is a long-term process that demands:

a) continuous reviewing of resources and teaching strategies;

b) upgrading the content of and questioning the appropriateness of activities;

c) modifying practice to increase effectiveness.

With the decentralisation of power at Systems level, schools are consequently acquiring an increased degree of autonomy in many aspects of the internal educational dynamics. Although curriculum design is still centralised the school has a substantial amount of autonomy in developing curriculum content at classroom level.

St.Theresa JL endorses the fact that enhanced autonomy creates a more complex form of accountability to the shareholders. Members of staff require job satisfaction and professional development. Students' quality of life depends to a large degree on the type of education the school provides. Parents'

expectations and involvement are being translated in tangible terms since they expect higher academic standards but at the same time want their children to be balanced, mature citizens. Employers expect schools to be instrumental in building up a 'learning society' and all over the globe there is a pronounced emphasis on the role of schools as mechanisms from where the solutions of the pressing problem of unemployment may be proactively implemented. They also require greater learning skills, teamwork and self-motivation based on a good grasp of the basics. The European Commission's White Paper on Education and Training claims that "building up a broad base of knowledge, i.e. the wherewithal to grasp the meaning of things, to understand and to create, is the essential function of school". The Paper sustains that the broader the knowledge base of individuals the better their chances of employability and mobility. In fact it was management guru Peter F.Drucker who coined the term "knowledge workers" (Drucker, F.Peter, *Landmarks of Tomorrow*, 1959) in predicting a new class succeeding that of industrial workers.

Internationalisation and new technologies have caused a boom in unemployment. Workers, both those who performed routine and repetitive tasks and those who had paper qualifications that did not correspond to standard profiles, were not flexible in adapting to changes in work conditions. The function of schools is to train students to acquire skills by which they will be able to revalidate their qualifications through a dynamic process of lifelong learning. Let us quote one example close to 'home'. The role of teachers was restricted to unloading compartmentalised chunks of knowledge within the isolation of the classroom and to formally test how much of that information pupils had retained by the end of the scholastic year. Teachers are now expected to fulfil the function of educational managers who can be effective as long as they are living an ongoing process of professional development themselves. "They need to develop skills in group processes; to become enablers rather than instructors; to facilitate learning at first hand (through experience)

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> *"Total quality management is a process which derives its content and values from the needs of its clients. Thus TQM in a company producing luxury cars will be driven by consumerism – in a school it needs to be driven by educational values."*
> *West-Burnham John, 1992*

rather than at second hand (by gathering others' knowledge)." [Handy, Ch., 1990, Pg.29] Furthermore, this newly-defined role of the teacher has entailed a change in the internal organisation of educational establishments. These arguments substantiate the necessity for schools to apply the principles of total quality management to education.

WHAT IS TQM?

"Total quality management is a process which derives its content and values from the needs of its clients. Thus TQM in a company producing luxury cars will be driven by consumerism – in a school it needs to be driven by educational values." [West-Burnham John; 1992, page 56-57]. Schools, like business organisations, are providing a service to their clients. Schools that aim at providing a quality education are better known in the educational context as effective schools and empirical studies have identified certain characteristics common to effective schools, namely;

● Purposeful leadership
● Professional expertise
● Ongoing professional development amongst staff
● Links with external agencies
● Strategic planning

If we are resorting to the tried and proven concept of TQM in the provision of education we have to bear in mind certain principles that were originated by W. Edwards Deming.

> **❝ Building up a broad base of knowledge, i.e. the wherewithal to grasp the meaning of things, to understand and to create, is the essential function of school ❞**

Achieve a constancy of purpose and improve constantly

Long-term planning and continuous improvement of all processes is the initial step towards quality. By no means do we pretend that a school development plan is an insurance for total quality but it is surely an indispensable factor.

St. Theresa JL has earned a reputation for being an effective school. The high examination scores achieved by the majority of students and the number of students who went on to tertiary education were for a long time considered as the primary indices of the effectiveness of the school. However, academic excellence is only one of the various nuclei that make up a holistic type of education. We can argue that pupils are motivated to achieve because the type of teaching and learning taking place in the school is learner orientated and educationally challenging. The SMT and the staff at ST. Theresa have devised a three-year development plan that focuses on innovation and change. St. Theresa JL aims to 'provide a secure, caring and happy environment within which all students will encounter stimulating and challenging educational experiences [...], to "enable

students to develop their full potential, seize the opportunities, accept the responsibilities and prepare for the realities of the adult world." [...] ' to enable them to look to the future, eager to face the challenges that confront them with a sense of self-worthiness, purpose, respect and regard for others." (Vision Statement: School Development Plan 1998-2001)

Another aspect that aims at improvement is the shift from a paper-based organisation to a computerised one. The administrative section of the school is being computerised and the application of information technology for educational purposes is another of the areas that the school is developing. The school houses three I.T. laboratories that are also used for the realisation of a pilot project aimed at implementing a networking system in local schools. Another 'communications room' has started functioning this year so that there are now 36 networked computers in 3 labs. Members of staff are already availing themselves of this resource during and outside formal lesson time. Another two computers are available for the teaching staff and students alike in the school library. If we are seeking to be qualitative in our work computerisation is a sine qua non.

Institute leadership and break down barriers between departments

By capitalising on the strengths of each individual in the school we can render all activities more meaningful. In this respect, the entirety of the staff in a school adds another dimension to its' managerial and administrative role; that of educational leaders seeking to translate the principles of their educational vision through planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and changing. This process is carried out through a team effort in collaboration with parents and external agencies for the fulfilment of set targets. Teaching and learning takes place at all times of the school-day. Morning assembly is an invaluable communication channel and there is a wealth of extra-curricular activities during break-times, after school and on weekends and holidays.

The classroom is, in more senses than one, a boardroom where the teacher-facilitator-coordinator regularly liaises with the team of learners to initiate and carry out projects, exchange ideas, develop learning skills and generally pursue educational goals.

An enhanced school ethos has enabled us to work together and share information. The school culture is undergoing a positive change in that all members of staff seek to work in a relaxed atmosphere where relationships

develop trust. Meaningful relationships with students, parents and external agencies are the logical way towards quality education.

Institute a vigorous programme of education and retraining and encourage self-improvement for everyone

Members of staff are clients with requirements as much as the students themselves, their parents and the community. They need the autonomy to decide how they are going to reach goals and not feel victims of the system. Their ideas, their talents, their creativity and their expertise are a valuable resource to the organisation. Staff also needs continuous training and development. Staff professional development needs is one of the aims on our School Development Plan (1998 –2001). The target is "to devise a clear structure of school-based INSET whereby members of staff liase and co-ordinate departmental and inter-departmental staff development opportunities in an atmosphere of professionalism and collegiality." The direct involvement of members of

staff in facilitating school-based inset enhances collegiality and individual expertise is a benefit to other members. A school-based computer course for members of staff was oversubscribed within the hour the circular was pinned to the staff notice board in May 1998. This initiative was welcomed by members of the staff, rewarding to the organisers and an empirical exercise.

We aim to create the best quality students capable of appropriating their own learning. All of our students are given the chance to develop their capacities. The wide range of extracurricular activities give the chance to all pupils, whatever their academic capabilities, to develop their talents. The school has a record of success marked by the winning of several competitions:

● Sports events, Video competition on Rubble Walls, French and Bible quizzes to mention a few that happened during scholastic year 1997-98)

● Participation in school exchange programmes

● Participation in international educational projects (JR Summit, Water Project)

Furthermore, slow achievers tend to feel inadequate therefore they are encouraged to participate in those activities which empower them to increase their self-esteem by identifying their strengths.

The responsibility for providing a quality education is assumed and shared by all members of our establishment

Our vision cannot be fulfilled unless it is also owned by our students and their parents. Positive staff-student-parents relationships can never be overestimated for the decisive role they play in education. The direct involvement of parents in school matters is one of the key

areas that the Lyceum is focusing on strengthening. The representation of students on the Students' Council means that they participate in decisions taken on important school issues. The leadership role of the Head Girl and Deputy Head Girl (who are elected by their peers) enhances communication between our 'clients' and ourselves 'the service-providers'. The opportunity to air their problems and concerns freely during their frequent informal meetings with the Head of School, together with a school culture where members of staff are supporting them at all times (very often even after school hours and on holidays), are all factors that reinforce our determination to resolve conflicts in a win-win situation and employ the richness of our differences by pulling in the same direction; towards continuous improvement.

Providing a total quality education is not a clean-cut package that is unwrapped and implemented at a whim. It is a lengthy process that unravels gradually. Constant commitment and evaluation will guide us through this initiative. Nor is it a question of applying Deming's industrial model tale quale. We need a combination of the best expertise in both this model and of the outstanding learning theories and methods from the world of education. Henceforth, our plans and efforts are all centred around focusing on the task of helping our students to learn how to navigate effectively these changing times, both at school and within society, now and in the future.

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THE MOTIVATED CHILD

Looking at the emotional factors affecting reading

Geraldine Taylor

> **66 The motivated child is the child who has a reason for learning, is not afraid of learning, and who wants to go on learning for the rest of her life 99**

Geraldine Taylor is Educational Consultant to Ladybird Books. She holds a BA and an MA from Bristol University, and a Diploma in Special Education from the University of the West of England. She has led workshops on children's learning for thousands of parents in the UK and has published widely on the emotional factors affecting children's learning.

May I explain the background to my research in this area? I'm Educational Consultant to Ladybird Books[1], and I'm an English teacher with two specialist qualifications in teaching children with learning difficulties. In 1984, I wrote what became a landmark book in parental involvement: *Be Your Child's Natural Teacher*[2].

Writing about parental involvement is one thing, getting the message across face to face is another, and infinitely more important. I've taken hundreds of workshops for parents and teachers, worked with thousands of parents, and with professionals keen to encourage parental involvement in their schools or nursery settings.

I also come from a counselling background and my special interest is in the emotional factors affecting learning, especially reading. Now at last the importance of these factors is being acknowledged: we are hearing words like empowerment, confidence and wellbeing.

It's now being acknowledged that the emotional factors are so important for motivating lifelong learning that we must actually plan for them.

Often, it takes only a small development in our understanding, a small shift in our ways of communicating with children to make a major contribution to their motivation and well being. These small shifts can be incredibly empowering and can equip children with the attitudes to become lifelong learners. And we know that these early years are those in which the all-important attitudes to learning are formed.

The motivated child is the child who has a reason for learning, is not afraid of learning, and who wants to go on learning for the rest of her life. And we all want the children we teach to be life-long readers.

Motivation simply cannot be left to chance and this is why I have mentioned my work with parents at the outset. It seems to me essential to try to share our understanding of the emotional factors affecting learning with parents and children's carers. Encouraging motivation in children needs an all-round approach and the family is as important as the school.

Pressure

Memory plays a fundamental part in all learning and especially in learning to read. Anxiety and the stress of pressure hinders the efficient use of memory and reading is especially vulnerable.

If we understand what pressure is, we are obviously better equipped, as professionals working with young children, and as parents, to avoid it.

Put simply, pressure is when children feel that our approval, our love or liking of them depends upon their ability to perform a certain task, be it learning to tie shoelaces or learning the sounds made by the letters of the alphabet. It's also when children are compared with their friends and siblings and feel that they themselves are a disappointment.

Pressure isolates: why can't *you* do it ... but encouragement gives the lovely feeling that we're all in this learning business together: *Let's all look at this and see what we can do.*

Effective encouragement creates a supportive atmosphere in which children want to master new steps.

Effective encouragement

Effective encouragement strengthens motivation and gives courage. Giving effective encouragement is a skill we can learn, and it is a skill which will boost the confidence and motivation of the children who are learning to read with us. In essence, effective encouragement involves:

● concentrating on the individual child's achievements without comparison with their peers.

● finding something to praise in every child's efforts, and understanding that the praise of detail is the key to progress in reading (and in any other skill). *You read that page very well - it really sounded as though the lion was cross!*

● keeping our body language welcoming. Young children are very sensitive to body language while we are hearing them read: they dread adult tuts and sighs of exasperation.

● regarding mistakes as useful clues to what needs further help, and encouraging children to see them in this light, too. For me, this is one of the most important elements of encouragement and strengthening motivation. In my work as counsellor of University students, I frequently see young people who are terrified of making mistakes because it seems to them a threat to their own, and to family happiness. Teaching young children to read, we can show them that mistakes can help us and ask ourselves what can we learn from the kind of mistakes they are making. Would more talking about the meaning of the story be useful? Would it be helpful to reinforce phonics as a strategy to 'unlock' a word?

Look for ways to make what children are reading personal to them

> **We can boost confidence in *doing* by showing delight in small steps of progress and by giving children time to feel happy with each step before we move on**

Make it personal - make it powerful

The developing brain searches for patterns and needs to repeat an activity in order for it to be stored in the memory: *Repetition is important because it is a basic characteristic of the brain that its nerve cells repeat patterns of activity: skills like walking, talking, eating, playing or writing are all developed from the earliest patterns*[3].

Young children (and most of us, surely!) actively seek to repeat what they enjoy. Young children (and again, most of us) remember best what matters to them, what connects with their world. Specifically for reading, this means that we should:

● look for ways to make the necessary repetition of words/sentences/stories full of fun and pleasure. I know that this is asking the teacher to act almost as entertainer - but it can be well worth it. Young children respond well to our use of puppets who 'react' to what the children are reading, and we can bring lots of laughter, sound effects and drama to our teaching to make sure that repetition never feels like a chore.

● look for ways to make what children are reading personal to them.

This means selecting books which reflect the child's world, hobbies and preoccupations. It means talking about the stories, asking children for their opinions and for their own experiences.

● understand that related writing activities can significantly contribute to the way we make things personal and powerful when children learn to read. It's motivating for children to write (or dictate) stories about their own toys and pets and hobbies to make their own lists of friends, favourite foods, sports. And it's especially motivating to write because it is going to be displayed, used and shared.

Confidence

We know that children need a certain amount of confidence and belief in themselves as learners in order to progress with reading skills.

It helps to understand that there are two main types of confidence - confidence in doing and confidence in being.

A confidence in doing is perhaps easier to achieve but a confidence in *being* is vital, too. If we don't feel valued for being ourselves, no achievement can make a permanently positive impression on us and it's hard to sustain motivation in the long term if we lack belief in our own value. (In the *short term* lack of confidence in being can lead to achievement after achievement as the learner tries to compensate for lack of self-worth. This can lead to paralysing emotional difficulties and a rejection of skills in the long term. Many children who can read, don't read and this is one of the reasons.)

In the context of reading we can boost confidence in *being* by: asking children's opinions, by showing that we value their choices, and by avoiding competitive elements when we teach to read. We can boost confidence in *doing* by showing delight in small steps of progress and by giving children time to feel happy with each step before we move on.

Involving parents

In my experience, workshops for parents looking at how to encourage young children's learning - especially reading - are usually well attended and appreciated. Small leaflets or school newsletters on such subjects as *encouraging reading* and *how to boost children's learning at home* are well received, too.

Again, in my experience, the very smallest start in parental involvement is well worth making.

Slowly, with a welcoming atmosphere, a group of three interested parents will become a group of 30 - perhaps more. Many of us are already sharing with parents our knowledge of how skills such as literacy and numeracy develop. It's equally, arguably more, important to share our understanding of the emotional factors which make for the motivated child and the life-long learner.

We need to work together.

Notes

1 Geraldine Taylor is the author of *Help your child learn to read* Ladybird Books Loughborough 1997, ISBN 0 7214 2664 6

2 *Be Your Child's Natural Teacher:* Geraldine Taylor, Second Edition Impact Books London 1993, ISBN 1 874687 10 2

3 *A Human Birthright: Giving the Young Brain a Chance*: Dr John Brierley, British Association for Early Childhood Education: 1984, p 18.

LEJN IS-SENA 2000 - L-EDUKAZZJONI TAL-KONSUMATUR FL-ISKEJJEL

Wieħed mid-drittijiet bażiċi tal-konsumatur huwa d-Dritt għall-Edukazzjoni. Kemm huwa edukat f'dan il-qasam il-konsumatur Malti? Sfortunatament għad baqalna x'naqdfu sabiex nilħqu l-livell ta' sħabna fl-Ewropa! Għalhekk huwa meħtieġ li l-Edukazzjoni tal-Konsumatur għandha tkun parti mill-Kurrikulu Nazzjonali. Ir-Riżoluzzjoni tal-Kunsill u tal-Ministri ta' l-Edukazzjoni ta' l-Unjoni Ewropeja Nru. 86/C 184/07 tistipula li l-edukazzjoni tal-konsumatur għandha tiġi mgħallma minn għalliema mħarrġa apposta fejn l-Awtoritajiet tal-pajjiż għandhom jipprovdu l-materjal meħtieġ. Ir-riżoluzzjoni issostni li l-Edukazzjoni tal-Konsumatur għandha ssir fuq dawn il-linji:

Joyce Borg

> 66 **Illum it-tfal u ż-żagħżagħ jgħixu f'dinja ta' reklami jlellxu. Mingħajr ma jridu jiġu mħajra jixtru prodotti u jidħlu għall-piż tagħhom mingħajr ma jkunu jifilħu għalihom** 99

Ms Joyce Borg DPA. MICA. Principal, Dipartiment għall-Affarijiet tal-Konsumatur.

Finanzi Personali

Fis-soċjetà konsumista tagħna malli koppja tiddeċiedi li trid tibda familja tidħol għal ħafna dejn sabiex tibni u tforni darha. Għalhekk it-tfal u ż-żagħżagħ iridu jkun armati biex jagħmlu l-aħjar għażliet skond kemm jippermettilhom buthom. Hawnhekk huwa meħtieġ li l-istudenti tagħna jkollhom tagħrif bażiku u ħiliet ta' kif jieħdu ħsieb il-finanzi tagħhom. B'hekk fil-futur ikunu kapaċi u iktar responsabbli għal finanzi tagħhom u tal-familja.

Id-Drittijiet u l-Obbligi

Huwa meħtieġ li jkunu jafu d-drittijiet u l-obbligi tagħhom biex il-parteċipazzjoni tagħhom f'soċjeta konsumista tkun mingħajr diffikultajiet.

L-istudenti għandhom isiru jafu l-punti li huma l-aktar essenzjali tal-liġijiet u r-regolmanti li jitrattaw id-drittijiet u l-obbligi tal-konsumatur. Iridu jsiru familjari mar-regoli ġenerali tal-ftehim u l-kuntratti. Huwa essenzjali ukoll li jkunu mgħarrfa dwar ir-regolamenti dwar l-ittikketjar tal-prodotti.

Ir-Reklamar

Illum it-tfal u ż-żagħżagħ jgħixu f'dinja ta' reklami jlellxu. Mingħajr ma jridu jiġu mħajra jixtru prodotti u xorta jidħlu għall-piż tagħhom mingħajr ma jkunu jifilħu għalihom, għaliex jaħsbu li se jsibu sodisfazzjon fihom. Għalhekk l-istudenti għandhom ikunu konxji li l-għan huwa kummerċjali u għandhom jkunu kapaċi jeżaminaw u jinterpetaw b'mod matur, jekk ir-reklam huwiex ġenwin jew le.

Il-Konsum u l-Ambjent

Aspett ieħor importanti fl-edukazzjoni tal-konsumatur huwa l-konsum u l-ambjent. Għandha tinħoloq kuxjenza fost it-tfal dwar it-thedida li l-industrija, l-agrikoltura, it-trasport u l-iskart li narmu aħna stess jimponu fuq l-ambjent.

Iridu jkunu konxji dwar ir-responsabilitajiet tagħhom bħala konsumaturi u jitgħallmu jirrispettaw l-ambjent li jridu jgħixu fih.

Is-Saħħa u s-Sigurtà

Dritt ieħor bażiku tal-konsumatur huwa d-dritt għall-protezzjoni tas-Saħħa u s-Sigurta'. L-istudenti għandhom jiġu mħarrġa sabiex isajru ikel bnin u jkunu jafu kif l-ikel li jieklu jaffetwa saħħithom. F'dan il-qasam diġa' sar titjib għaliex in-Nutrizzjoni diġa' qed tiġi mgħallma fl-iskejjel tagħna permezz tal-*Home Economics*.

Metodoloġija

Il-Kurrikulu Norveġiż jagħmel enfasi kbira li dan is-suġġett għandu jiġi mgħallem b'attivitajiet kreattivi u l-prattika f'dan it-tagħlim hija importanti. L-edukazzjoni tal-konsumatur titratta id-drawwiet u l-attivitajiet tagħna li għandhom x'jaqsmu mad-dinja materjali li l-istudenti jħabbtu wiċċhom magħha ta' kuljum. Permezz ta' drama, arti u attivitajiet prattiċi, l-edukazzjoni tal-konsumatur tista' tibni pont bejn il-ħajja ta' kuljum ta' l-istudenti u d-dinja ta' l-iskola. Fil-fatt il-kurrikulu Norveġiż igħid hekk:

"Subject curricula emphasize that pupils shall be active, participatory and independent. They should learn through doing, experimenting, and trying things out in the context of actual working situations."

M'hemmx dubbju li biex jintlaħaq dan l-għan huwa importanti li wieħed ikollu l-materjal edukattiv meħtieġ. Fil-fatt l-iskejjel għandhom jiġu pprovduti b'din l-għodda tant meħtieġa. Ma nistgħux ma msemmux li l-kompjuter jista' jkun wieħed mill-aħjar mezzi imprezzabbli sabiex ngħallmu dan is-suġġett.

Il-proposti tad-Dipartiment għall-Affarijiet tal-Konsumatur dwar l-Edukazzjoni tal-Konsumatur jinsabu f'paġna 40 ta' l-Abbozz tal-Kurrikulu Minimu Nazzjonali Nazzjonali, ippublikat f'Marzu, 1998. Hawnhekk nħeġġeġ lill-istudenti u l-għalliema sabiex jiflu dawn il-proposti u jagħmlu s-suġġerimenti tagħhom lid-Dipartiment ta' l-Edukazzjoni.

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Official Journal of the European Communities, C184 Volume 29, 23 July, 1987

Dan huwa reklam bi ħlas

Media Workstation

PLANNING FOR MEDIA USE

T eachers often complain that media is not always available to use in lessons. Only one overhead projector to share among all the staff, if any at all. The slide projector is old and jams often. Only one television room, and that and its video are constantly booked by those teachers whose lessons depend on the medium. Even printing facilities are limited, with restrictions on the number of photocopies made per teacher, and stenciling just does not get the job done well. And only a few schools have invested in image reproducing equipment. Computers and ways of projecting what's on their screen? Forget it.

Gorg Mallia

66 If a Resource Mentality were there our lessons would be planned on a Visual/ Audio/ Verbal plane that would make for Efficiency, Effectiveness and (believe it or not) Entertainment 99

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That's what always comes up during seminars and workshops on media use in the classroom. No media readily available, so can't use media. Alternative? Chalk and talk. Pity about the fact that media makes for more effective teaching. Nothing to be done about it!

Wrong! Availability of the media is only one of the factors affecting media selection. The main element involved in whether media of any sort is used during lesson planning does not depend on the actual presence of the hardware, but on the teacher him/herself and the way he/she approaches the actuation of pedagogical objectives.

Bypassing verbalisation

By nature we are verbalisers. We communicate intentionally primarily with words. We plan our communications to others as a set of verbal structures that will only incidentally use non-verbal signs, although these are as integral a part of what we communicate as our words are. The same applies to our lessons.

Oh yes, there's the ubiquitous board, and, of course, the text-books, but we do not think simultaneously of WORDS and MEDIA. We think first of words, and then, if at all, of the media that can SUPPORT those words. Hardly ever the other way round.

If that all-important RESOURCE MENTALITY were there to begin with, then our lessons would be planned on a VISUAL/ AUDIO/VERBAL plane that would make for (1) Efficiency, (2) Effectiveness and (believe it or not) (3) Entertainment.

Beginning with the last one first, and accepting that its inverse is the norm in classroom teaching, i.e. entertainment being the last thing on the teacher and students' minds during lessons, we might try to understand why this is the case.

Content probably has a lot to do with it. Even with selectivity, syllabi demand their pound of flesh, and the knowledge base needs to be built in all subject areas.

Student attention is also a culprit, with physical and psychological distracters often accounting for minimum cognitive absorption and leaving room for little or no affective domain involvement.

Classroom environments often add to the burden, even in the best of times clinically invoking the icon of the imposed closed room, fostering lack of enthusiasm and feeding tedium.

So a lot depends on delivery, and pure verbalisation, even from excellent orators, puts too much emphasis on one channel, struggling with semantic preoccupations while cornering attention and imposing discipline. Little wonder the traditional 20 minute student attention span seems to be getting shorter and shorter.

The use of media varies the output. It applies to more than one sense and leaves little room for aberrant use of the other senses in the meantime. It often involves physical manipulation and needs some sort of motion from the students (if only in the craning of necks to catch sight of a monitor), so there is very little chance of somnolence settling in. There is disruption, true, but that's the healthy disruption of thinking human beings who need to be involved in learning proceedings, and not left at the receiving end of almost intravenous knowledge injection.

Number two: the difference between describing an object and showing it either as an R/O (real object) or as an image is obvious. Logically, this is a generalised comment and not applicable across the board, but it applies enough times for the generalisation to be made. So use of media in teaching is effective in most cases, if enough planning goes into their use and the selection of media is apt.

And, number one: efficiency. Continuing the above analogy, it takes much longer to describe an object than to show it, and, taking the same comment on generalisation as read, one must say that that reduces both actual delivery time, and student absorption time. Recall is also usually better, since research has indicated that comparatively much less of what is heard is remembered than of what is seen. By "heard", we mean the explanation itself, not the audio enhancing of the explanation.

Planning with media in mind

So how does all that replace an OHP if the equipment does not exist on the premises? It doesn't. What it does is show the necessity of, for example, projecting an image in front of a

30-strong class. Once that necessity is felt, then the teacher will know that he/she cannot replace the missing OHP with chalk and talk. He/she will merely have to find an alternative way of projecting the visual, or at least enlarging it enough for the class to see ... or, even multiplying it in a reduced size for the benefit of the class, reasonably divided in groups for the occasion.

The RESOURCE MENTALITY creates resources where these are missing. But first, the need must be felt and accepted for it to do so. Which is were we came in.

Once that is accepted, what formal regime must be followed to ascertain that the media selected are the right ones for the job at hand? If you want to get the benefit of the 3E's, that regime must be a pretty thorough one.

Today we'll present here a two pronged approach based on the literature.

First, one of Ellington and Race's (1994) algorithms for selection of instructional materials is being presented (Fig.1) as a facile model of the media selection process. The algorithm dealing with "mass instruction" has been chosen because it is the closest to the way we traditionally deliver our lessons in classrooms, i.e. as presentations. It needs a bit of updating, but is generally quite applicable.

Second is Gagnè, Briggs and Wager's (1992) classic list of practical factors to be considered in media selection (Fig.2).

Conclusions

This was really nothing more than a prologue to the realm of media use. Really nothing more than the posing of tantalising questions and an introduction to selection processes. More of the same (but taking it from here, and in more detail) will be presented in future issues, but for now I will end this piece with one more question.

When was the last time you enjoyed listening to somebody giving a speech more than watching a movie (any movie)?

I don't think you need to bother answering.

Fig. 1
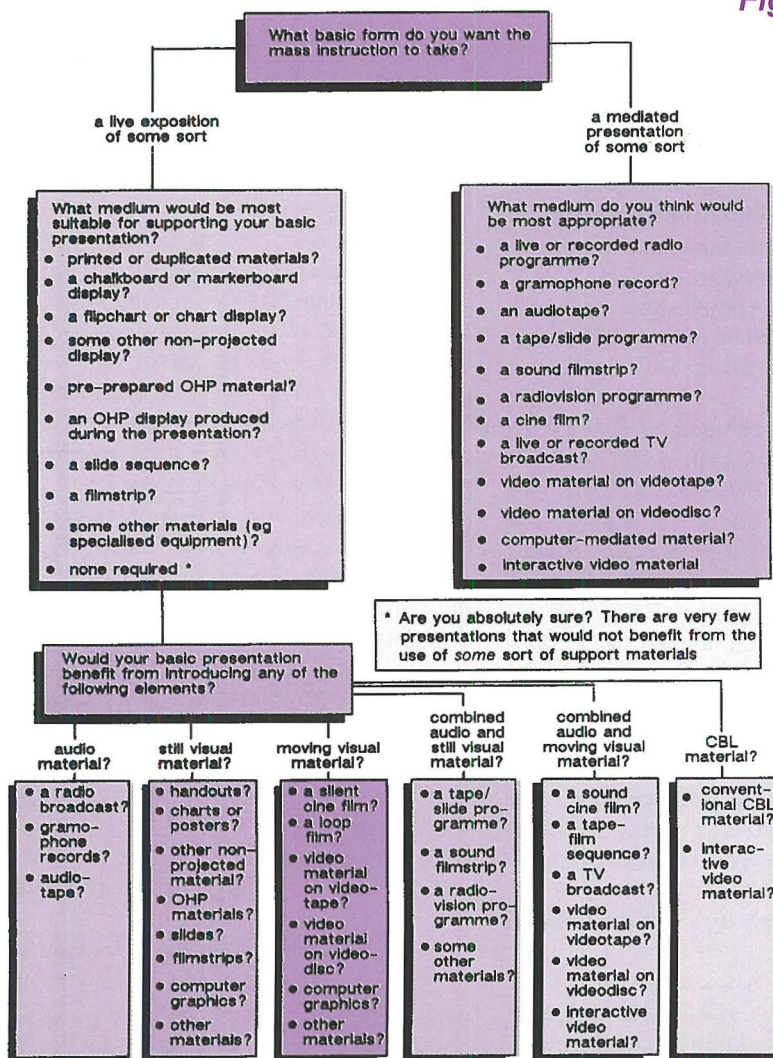
from **Ellington, H., & Race, P. (1994).** *Producing Teaching Materials.* (3rd ed.). London: Kogan Page.

1. What size of group must be accommodated in one room on a single occasion?

2. What is the range of viewing and hearing distance for the use of the media?

3. How easily can the media be "interrupted" for pupil responding or other activity and for providing feedback to the learners?

4. Is the presentation "adaptive" to the learners' responses?

5. Does the desired instructional stimulus require motion, color, still pictures, spoken words, or written words?

6. Is sequence fused or flexible in the medium! Is the instruction repeatable in every detail?

7. Which media provide best for incorporating most of the conditions of learning appropriate for the objectives?

8. Which media provide more of the desired instructional events?

9. Do the media under consideration vary in probable "affective impact" for the learners?

10. Are the necessary hardware and software items obtainable, accessible, and storable?

11. How much disruption is caused by using the media?

12. Is a backup easily available in case of equipment failure, power failure, film breakage, and so on?

13. Will teachers need additional training?

14. Is a budget provided for spare parts, repairs, and replacement of items that become damaged?

15. How do costs compare with probable effectiveness?

Fig. 2 *from* Gagnè, R. M. & Briggs, L. J. & Waver, W. W. (1992). Principles of Instructional Design. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

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L-edukazzjoni tal-ġenituri

Xi priniċipji pedagoġiċi dwar proċess trasformattiv

Carmel Borg

It-tisħiħ tal-proċess tad-demokratizzazzjoni tas-sistema edukattiva jġib miegħu, fost ħwejjeġ oħra, il-bżonn tat-tkattir ta' l-edukazzjoni tal-ġenituri. Is-sħubija vera bejn il-partijiet ikkonċernati titlob li l-ġenituri jiffurmaw attitudni pożittiva lejn il-kunċett tas-sħubija, jakkwistaw l-informazzjoni neċessarja dwar l-aspetti differenti tas-sistema edukattiva, u jsaħħu l-ħiliet li jghinuhom jipparteċipaw b'mod sħiħ u konkret fit-tijib u t-trasformazzjoni tal-proċess edukattiv. Dawn l-għanijiet ma jistgħux jintlaħqu f'kuntest edukattiv li ma jqisx l-edukazzjoni tal-ġenituri bħala għan ewlieni. Lanqas ma jistgħu jintlaħqu permezz ta' azzjoni sporadika, ikkaratterizzata minn numru żgħir ta' laqghat fejn l-esperti jferrgħu għerfhom fuq il-ġenituri. Programm edukattiv maħsub biex iġib bidla holistika fis-sistema jrid jibda mill-bżonnijiet ta' l-istess partijiet u jispiċċa f'azzjoni konkreta li tirrifletti sħubija ġenwina u orizzontali. B'hekk, tinħoloq dinamika prassjali fejn ir-riflessjoni u l-azzjoni jsegwu u jinfurmaw lil xulxin. Biex din id-dinamika tirnexxi, l-edukaturi li janimaw dawn il-programmi jridu jħaddnu u jħaddmu prinċipji li huma differenti minn dawk li jiffurmaw relazzjonijiet trasmissjonali. Dan l-artiklu jiffoka fuq uħud mill-prinċipji l-aktar importanti ta' programm edukattiv għall-ġenituri ta' bixra trasformattiva.

> ❝ **L-ghalliema, flimkien ma' l-amministrazzjoni ta' l-iskola, jistgħu jibdew il-proċess** ❞

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Viżjoni u impenn

Il-pjan ta' żvilupp huwa indikazzjoni tajba ta' fejn qed tħabbat qalb l-iskola. B'taqsima li titratta l-edukazzjoni tal-ġenituri, l-iskola tkun qed turi li temmen f'edukazzjoni holistika jew, fi kliem iehor, edukazzjoni li tagħraf li l-iskola hija holqa waħda f'kullana ta' siti edukattivi li jinfluwenzaw l-iżvilupp tat-tfal.

Taqsima dwar l-edukazzjoni tal-ġenituri tikkomferma wkoll li l-istituzzjoni edukatttiva hija interessata li tiżviluppa l-kunċett ta' skola bħala ċentru komunitarju. Wiehed mill-aspetti l-aktar importanti ta' dan il-kunċett huwa l-edukazzjoni tal-kotra komunitarja.

L-ghalliema, flimkien ma' l-amministrazzjoni ta' l-iskola, jistgħu jibdew il-proċess tal-kitba ta' din it-taqsima b'diskussjoni interna dwar: l-importanza tal-kunċett tas-sħubija; ir-rwol tal-programm edukattiv fit-tisħih tal-kunċett; min se jiddefinixxi l-bżonnijiet tal-ġenituri; u x'sehem jista' jkollhom il-ġenituri fil-fażijiet differenti tal-programm edukattiv. Din id-diskussjoni hija determinanti fl-għażla tal-politika u l-pedagoġija tal-programm. Jekk l-edukaturi jagħżlu li l-iskola għandha jkollha kontroll assolut fuq il-programm edukattiv, ix-xenarju li jsegwi minn din id-deċiżjoni x'aktarx se jkun ikkaratterizzat minn ġenituri li jipparteċipaw b'mod passiv f'dak kollu li torganizzalhom l-iskola. Jekk, għall-kuntraju, l-edukaturi jaqblu li l-programm edukattiv ghandu jkun innegozjat mal-parteċipanti, l-ghalliema jkunu qeghdin jimpenjaw ruħhom favur djalogu kontinwu mal-ġenituri.

Deċiżjoni favur id-demokratizzazzjoni tal-programm edukattiv normalment twassal biex il-vuċi tal-parteċipanti tinstema' mill-bicu tal-proċess. F'kuntest ta' relazzjonijiet demokratiċi l-programm edukattiv jinbena fuq it-temi li jidentifikaw il-parteċipanti stess.

Il-bżonnijiet u l-interessi tal-ġenituri jistgħu jiġu identifikati permezz ta' laċghat esplorattivi, preferibbilment fi gruppi żgħar. Fejn dan mhux possibli ghandha ssir laqgha ghall-ġenituri, akkumpanjata minn kwestjonarju li jilħaq lill-ġenituri kollha. Din l-analiżi tematika, kif isejhilha Paulo Freire, ghandha twassal biex il-programm edukattiv ikun rilevanti ghall-parteċipanti.

Il-kitba tat-taqsima ghandha tirrifletti l-istess impenn lejn il-proċess demokratiku. L-iskola tkun qed tikkomforma ma' dan l-impenn jekk tiddelega l-kitba ta' l-abbozz tat-taqsima lill-kunsill ta' l-iskola jew lill-kumitat li jirrifletti l-partijiet interessati fil-proġett

Il-verżjoni finali tat-taqsima ghandha tinkiteb wara li l-ghalliema u l-ġenituri jiltaqghu biex jiddiskutu l-abbozz u l-pjan t'azzjoni.

Il-ġenituri bhala protagonisti

Proċess edukattiv ta' bixra trasformattiva iqis lill-parteċipanti, f'dan il-każ lill-ġenituri, bħala ċentrali ghall-programm. Din iċ-ċentralita tisarraf f'numru ta' prinċipji li jikkuntrastaw sew ma' l-idea tradizzjonali tal-parteċipanti ddominati mill-edukaturi. F'kuntest ta' edukazzjoni trasformattiva

● l-gherf, l-istorja u l-esperjenzi ta' kull paretċipant huma importanti;

● l-edukaturi jirrispettaw u jaffermaw l-identità tal-ġenituri;

● il-parteċipanti kollha huma indispensabbli;

● il-parteċipanti jistgħu jitghallmu mill-esperjenzi ta' xulxin;

● il-ġenituri huma parteċipanti attivi; u

● il-ġenituri jistgħu jidentifikaw ruħhom mal-kontenut u l-metodu tal-programm.

Fi kliem iehor, il-ġenituri m'humiex klijenti li ġew jixtru programm lest. Il-kunċett ta' proċess trasformattiv jirreżisti l-idea ta' pakkett edukattiv imgeżwer sew u lest biex l-istudenti jassimilawh.

Edukaturi li jisimghu

Edukaturi li jemmnu f'edukazzjoni trasformattiva huma semmiegha tajbin. Din il-ħila hija kruċjali, ghaliex il-pedagoġija trasformattiva hija bbażata fuq djalogu ġenwin. Djalogu veru jitlob li l-edukaturi jkunu

awtorevoli f'xogholhom minghajr ma jkunu awtoritarji fir-relazzjoni socjali li jizviluppaw mal-genituri. Fi kliem iehor, filwaqt li l-edukaturi trasformattivi ghandhom ikunu ippreparati u kompetenti f'xogholhom, u dejjem lesti li jippresiedu fuq il-process edukattiv, ghandhom jirrifjutaw li jservu biss ta' fonti ta' informazzjoni ghal udjenza silenzjuza.

L-edukaturi trasformattivi ghandhom ikunu kapaci jitghallmu mill-istejjer tal-genituri u, fejn ikun hemm bzonn, jipproblematizzaw u jghinu lill-genituri jitrasformaw s-sens komun taghhom.

L-edukazzjoni trasformattiva hija bbazata fuq in-negozjar ta' l-ispazju edukattiv bejn il-partijiet ikkoncernati. B'dan il-mod, il-poter ma jibqax ikkoncentrat f'idejn l-edukaturi meqjusa bhala esperti, izda jinqasam mal-partecipanti. Dan ifisser li se jkun hemm mumenti fejn l-edukaturi jieqfu, jisimghu u jitghallmu mill-esperjenzi u l-gherf tal-genituri.

> **" Il-poter ma jibqax ikkoncentrat f'idejn l-edukaturi meqjusa bhala esperti, izda jinqasam mal-partecipanti "**

Process edukattiv ta' bixra trasformattiva jqis lill-partecipanti, f'dan il-kaz lill-genituri, bhala centrali ghall-programm.

Adulti mhux tfal

Edukaturi trasformattivi, bhal edukaturi kompetenti ohra, ifittxu li jtejbu lilhom infushom fil-qasam ta' l-edukazzjoni ta' l-adulti. Peress li ftit huma l-edukaturi li jahdmu b'mod permanenti fil-qasam, hawn tendenza li l-ghalliema involuti f'dan il-qasam jaddottaw l-istess pedagogija li juzaw mat-tfal. L-infantilizzazzjoni tar-relazzjonijiet socjali hija wahda mill-aktar ragunijiet komuni ghalfejn l-adulti jivvutaw b'saqajhom.

Edukaturi trasformattivi jibbazaw il-pedagogija taghhom fuq ir-rispett lejn il-partecipanti.

Ghalhekk, joqoghdu attenti li l-pedagogija li jaddottaw tkun immirata biex issahhah l-istima personali tal-partecipanti. Dan il-fatt huwa importanti, specjalment f'kuntest edukattiv fejn il-genituri jkunu involuti f'taghlim baziku.

Dawk li jattendu dawn il-korsijiet ikunu ghamlu sforz kbir biex jirbhu lilhom infushom u jersqu biex jitghallmu hwejjeg li normalment huma assocjati ma' l-edukazzjoni skolastika.

Fiducja

Programm trasformattiv huwa mibni madwar l-idea li l-partecipanti kollha ghandhom potenzjal, irrispettivament mill-possibiltà li fil-fazi skolastika taghhom setghu ma rnexxewx. Il-programm trasformattiv jenfasizza l-process tat-taghlim aktar mit-tikketti li jissuggerixxu kemm hu difficli jew facli li l-partecipanti jitghallmu.

Sigurtà

Is-sigurtà hija marbuta mal-kuncett ta' rispett reciproku bejn l-ghalliema u l-istudenti. L-edukaturi jridu jkunu zguri li m'humiex jintimidaw lill-partecipanti b'kontenut li jaljena, lingwagg tekniku li ma jinftihemx mill-partecipanti, ghanijiet ambizzjuzi li ma jhallux hin bizzejjed ghall-iccarar ta' punti jew ghad-diskussjoni, gruppi kbar li jbezzghu lil dawk li ma jhossuhomx komdi jitkellmu fil-pubbliku, u atmosfera impersonali u bierda.

Ambjent li jnissel sens ta' sigurtà qalb il-partecipanti huwa kkaratterizzat minn genituri li jhossuhom komdi li jistqarru l-fehmiet taghhom u ma jibzawx mill-possibilta li dak li qed jghidu jkun zbaljat.

Sehem attiv

Fi programmi trasformattivi ssib li l-genituri mhux biss huma involuti bhala 'studenti', izda x'aktarx issibhom ukoll involuti f'aspetti ohra tal-programm. Dawn il-programmi jaghtu lok lill-genituri li jippartecipaw f'attivitajiet bhal amministrazzjoni tal-kors, pubblikazzjoni ta' fuljetti edukattivi, u zvilupp ta' librerija. Programmi trasformattivi jaddottaw strategija komprensiva ta' partecipazzjoni.

Taghlim rilevanti

Ir-rilevanza tal-programm tiddependi hafna fuq kemm il-programm huwa sensittiv ghall-interessi u l-bzonnijiet tal-partecipanti. Element iehor li hafna drabi jiddetermina kemm il-partecipanti jibqghu fil-kors huwa l-fattur ta' l-immedjatezza. Hafna adulti jattendu programmi edukattivi bil-hsieb li jtejbu l-kwalita ta' hajjithom u ta' familthom. Ghalhekk, prorammi trasformattivi huma mahsuba biex tassew jaghmlu differenza f'hajjet il-partecipanti.

Perspettiva kritika

Programmi edukattivi ta' bixra trasformattiva jinkoraggixxu dak li Paulo Freire jirreferi ghalih bhala l-qari kritiku tad-dinja. L-edukaturi trasformattivi m'humiex kuntenti bit-trasferiment ta' l-informazzjoni.

Ghalihom, ir-riflessjoni kritika dwar is-socjeta tifforma hija integrali ghall-process edukattiv.

Din l-analizi ssib l-izvog taghha f'azzjoni konkreta fil-komunita.

B'dan il-mod, il-partecipanti jsiru l-protagonisti ta' azzjoni trasformattiva u liberatorja.

Evalwazzjoni kontinwa

L-evalwazzjoni tal-programmi trasformattivi issir tul il-programm kollu. Il-principji msemmija hawn fuq jipprovdu l-kuntest ghall-process evalwattiv u jikkumplimentaw l-ghanijiet funzjonali tal-programm.
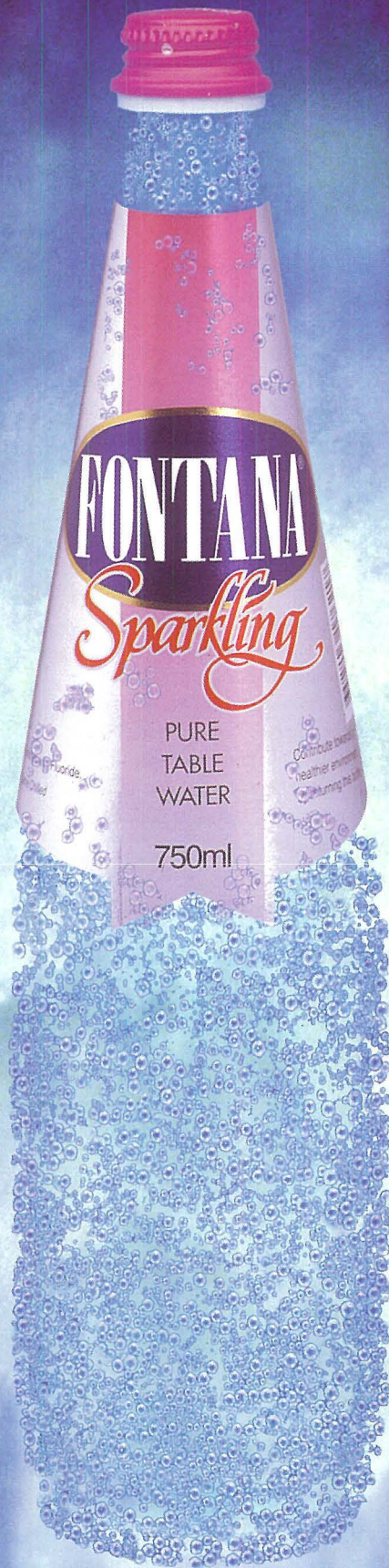
Drama in Education

Mary Doris Aquilina

The sad news of the death of the well-known Maltese linguist Profs. Guzè Aquilina, inspired my school, Lily of the Valley, Secondary School, to pay its due homage to this great writer, linguist and novelist. With this in mind we worked out a plan-of-action to adopt the work of this author and draw out its many educational values as much as possible.

The perfect choice of Guzè Aquilina's historical-romantic novel - *"Taħt Tliet Saltniet"*, gave us ample openings where we could roam about in various fields. We decided to present the musical based on *"Taħt Tliet Saltniet"* for our Prize-Day ceremony. We focused mostly on the theme *"Maltese Heritage"*. First of all we got permission to use Joe Friggieri's lyrics and Paul Abela's music.

> 66 **Industrious "disruptions" during drama practice create a healthy atmosphere** 99

A group of five enthusiastic teachers got together and analysed the libretto, drawing out the highlights of our national history in the times of the Knights of St. John, the French and the British rule. The script was adapted and some dialogues were included to bring the story more to life. The teachers were highly ambitious in their ideas and their creativity was like a magnet drawing them close together to reach one main target - to draw the best out of every individual and to illustrate through drama our exciting Maltese history.

A series of voice auditions were held to choose the soloists and to form a choir. The best of these were given main roles - like Mikiel Anton Vassalli - a well-known Maltese linguist; Dun Mikiel Xerri, a priest who led a patriotic group who rose against the French; Alessandru, a Maltese noble gentleman, and his fiancée Pawlina - a woman of humble origin. The funny and intricate role of the witch - *"Is-Saħħara ta' Wied Għafrid"*, was played by a talented student. This provided some most welcome humour in an otherwise very serious drama.

The various types of dancing, mainly folkloristic, Spanish, free movement and contemporary, provided entertainment and a

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link between the different aspects of the history and way of life of our forefathers. The first dance to Pawlina's song depicted the lifelong dream of every young girl thirsty for romance. The four young dancers swayed and stepped to the melodious soft tunes of Pawlina's Love-Song. The folkloristic dance showed the Maltese peasants at their best. There was frivolity, joy, cheering and rowdiness, and dancing in the village square where the crowds gathered and went on with their daily lives. The women washed their clothes at the **Għajn tal-Ħasselin** and engaged in lace-making as they hummed and sang their daily happenings. The men who worked to earn a living created a contrast with the Maltese noblemen.

However, social life centred on **il-Ħanut ta' Dovik**. Such was the life towards the end of the eighteenth century. As the Turkish power weakened, so did the reason for the continued existence of the Military Order of St. John. The Knights, especially the young ones were becoming too idle and many of them whiled away their time in activities far removed from their monastic vows. All this was portrayed in the Spanish dance. The fourth dance provided a rhythmic round-up of Maltese history as it passed from the Knights' sovereignty to French occupation and on to the British Rule.

Effective teaching through drama

One can well imagine how effective teaching can be extracted from such a play. Primarily, the students were enjoying themselves heartily. Being on the stage, or practising in the hall, and not in their classroom gave them the possibility of mixing with other older or younger colleagues. They listened attentively and willingly to their teachers and enthusiastically carried out any directions they were given. Towards the end some students even managed to give their personal interpretation to their specific role. Some students stood out as being more good at it than others. However, each and everyone succeeded

> **❝ Prize-Day shows, when seriously produced, are a good opportunity to discover and explore hidden talents ❞**

> *We decided to present the musical based on "Taħt Tliet Saltniet" for our Prize-Day ceremony*

in learning their role and monitoring each other. A few students whose reading was below standard, demonstrated great perseverance when they struggled to learn their lines to perfection. I could read the joy written all over their faces on achieving such a feat and I happily shared their satisfaction. This is proof enough that children can learn a lot through fun. During their rehearsals, students respected each others' role and could appreciate that their personal outcome of success depended on the good performance of their friends. They had a good opportunity to socialise and make new friends. Maybe, for some it might have been the only time of pure and sound enjoyment. There were over a hundred participants with over twenty different scenes. The diversity of the performers' characteristics, the choir and variety of scenes blended together to create a harmonious atmosphere which was shared by the audience. Yet they were disciplined enough to synchronise each and every scene together with the music. Teachers normally find it hard to believe that fun and discipline go hand-in-hand, yet watching a rehearsal leaves no doubt whatsoever of this truth. Besides students grew to love and respect these teachers more than ever because they now fully understand the pains a teacher goes through to teach them.

Prize-Day shows, when seriously produced, are a good opportunity to discover and explore hidden talents. During auditions for voices and actors, we always find out a few hidden talents. This year's *"Taħt Tliet Saltniet"* was no exception. Two students are taking voice-training courses, whilst two others are learning ballroom dancing. From past experiences I found out that a few very shy and quiet students I coaxed myself into acting, now want to make a career out of it. Besides discovering talents drama helps a lot in character formation and in raising students' self-esteem which at times may be at rock-bottom level, especially in a secondary school like mine. When students experience success in drama they acknowledge their working efforts through the teachers and appraisal of the audience. They feel they are worth a lot and they start believing in their personal worth. They are important members in a drama group, they are important for the school, and this boosts their morale. This feeling becomes so strong that they all make resolutions to become better academically. They study harder and eventually do better in exams.

As educators, we make use of every opportunity to teach. Although our aim in choosing *"Taħt Tliet Saltniet"* was multi-faceted, our main target was to teach our students of our adventurous national history. Both participants and viewers learnt for the first time of our main three rulers - The Knights of St. John, The French and The British. Although students may have heard of these historical events during history lessons, yet very little sinks in. Through the play, they found out how
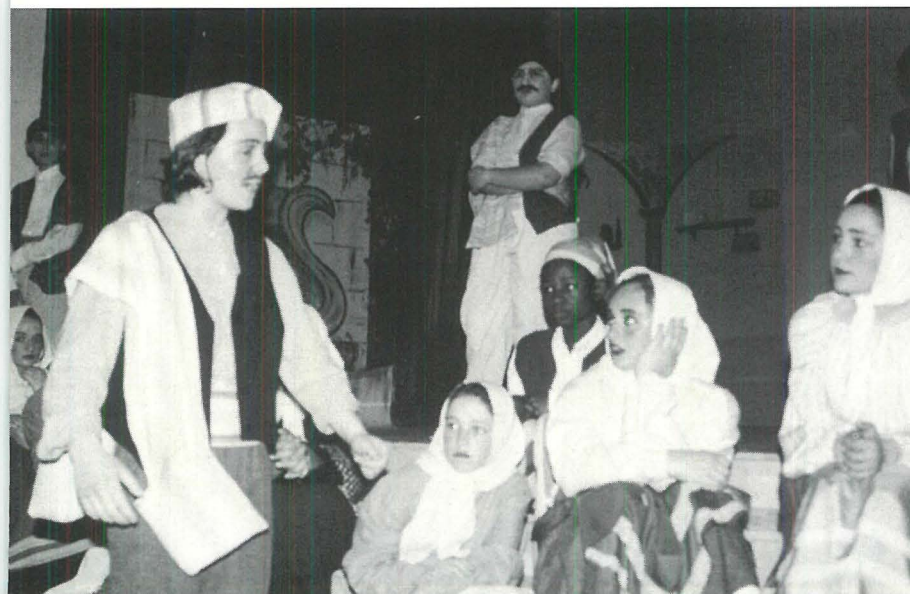
patriotic our ancestors were, how much they suffered and heroic personalities such as Mikiel Anton Vassalli and Dun Mikiel Xerri come to life. Surely this part of Maltese history will remain imprinted in their hearts for quite a long time. They can now appreciate better the love of their mother tongue, and feel proud of being Maltese.

Emphasising Maltese folklore

Another important aspect we wanted to emphasise was our Maltese folklore. Hence we included Maltese dancing, superstitions, traditional costumes and trades, like *"Għana Malti", "L-Għajn tal-Hasselin",* ladies weaving and wearing the Faldetta or l-*ghonnella,* and farmers bil-*horġa u l-milsa.* We could not fail to include historical Maltese buildings and monuments where slides were projected on the big cyclorama. These slides besides creating an interesting and informative background also helped to mentally take the audience back in time.

Students with different intellectual abilities together with seven students with a hearing impairment took part. Strange as it may seem two of the latter took part in dancing. It was surprising how these students put their hands on the cassette-recorder, memorised the rhythmic vibrations they received and danced to the music quite impeccably. Although the other hearing impaired students had minor parts, yet all the group felt so proud of their role that their faces glowed with pleasure. Their parents watched them with tears of joy in their eyes.

Some may argue that putting up a play disrupts classes and therefore the whole school is disrupted. Others may argue that the school is divided between those taking part and those not taking part. On the contrary I believe that the industrious "disruptions" during drama practice create a healthy atmosphere where the hub of the activity shifts from the formal classroom environment to the more informal setting of the hall or stage.

I try to involve every member of my school so that while some are actively involved with drama, costume-making and stage-preparation, the rest of the school works on projects to complement the theme chosen. Every year an exhibition is held in the school foyer so that every individual effort is acknowledged and appreciated.

The many benefits of drama

At my school we give a lot of importance to drama. We are all convinced of its many benefits. After prize-day, participants, teachers and myself got together and evaluated the show. All of them were enthusiastic in expressing their positive remarks. They enjoyed it so much that they were sad it was all over and requested to continue rehearsing during the Summer. But the most important of all is the fact that children enjoy it. If all teachers appreciate this truth we would all surely do our best to make our lessons more interesting by including different aspects of drama, like role-playing, reciting, singing , miming or acting. The lessons would, therefore, become less formal but more appealing and interesting to students. Their 'bad' behaviour would then change to enthusiasm and joy. Students might stop considering school as a 'prison' or a place of punishment but more as a friendly environment where they enjoy themselves learning and start building up healthy relationships with their colleagues and teachers. However, to reach this ideal stage, all teachers must work hard for it by serious preparation for their lessons.

Students would then enjoy their lessons and teachers will get more job-satisfaction.

Record Keeping and Assessment of ICT Activities

Norman C. Borg

The introduction of Information and Communications Technology and computer equipment in Primary Schools aims to make use of the technology to teach the rest of the curriculum in an efficient way; to present content in an entertaining way; to offer children better opportunities for self expression; to familiarise children with a tool which is constantly imposing itself as a major part of their everyday life. Hardware has been introduced in the classrooms. Software has been selected to cover most of the curriculum areas and the development of ICT skills. As we all know, implementation of the project is now in its third year.

Fig. 1: Maths Workshop provides record forms, levels and ranks to record users' progress.

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One of the many challenges this change is providing the classroom teacher is that of finding a way of monitoring children's progress in their relationship with ICT and the degree of positive effect the technology is providing over the teaching of the curriculum beyond the traditional methods.

Most of the software currently available in state schools is drill-and-practice in nature (say, the activities in Math Rabbit). These are like traditional tests and exercises, to the extent that they even provide a method of setting clear-cut targets and measuring progress by means of scores or marks. Comparison between individuals' achievements, whether in a positive or a negative manner, comes quite natural.

In other packages, though, as in the case of Kid Pix Studio, activities provided are very open-ended, and do not offer clear-cut boundaries in the acquisition of specific skills. These are creative activities. What the children learn through them is not easily measurable and is definitely not subject to comparison. And yet these are the activities which mostly serve to develop the individual personality of the child. At least monitoring and keeping track of, if not measuring, these developments is indispensable for the teacher in order to have a clear snapshot of the individual child's continuous development of skills, character and personality.

Fortunately, most of the software available in schools is equipped for one or more of these functions: measuring, monitoring and recording progress. Sometimes these functions are very much apparent in the overall design of the package, and work almost independently of the user. Sometimes they are hidden away and might not appear that obvious even to the teacher. In any case it is the teacher's job to make the best of them.

Some of the most common methods of record keeping are the point (or score) system, certificates and/or record forms, tokens and level indicators. The option of printing these out on hard copy is usually available, albeit to varying extents, depending on the package. Some packages may rely on just one of these methods. Others may offer a combination. Since it would be practical for the teacher to make use of these features, it is very pertinent to ask to what extent are they efficient for the teacher's needs.

Score Systems

If a software has a score system to keep track of the user's progress, a number of points

Fig. 2: The Prize centre in Math Rabbit.

> ❝ **Portfolios should be considered as a way of assessing an individual's progress, especially now that the computer in the classroom can offer various means and media of communication** ❞

must be considered before one decides to rely on it.

Does the system offer the opportunity to keep multiple scores? In a classroom environment, it is simply vital to keep multiple records. Maths Workshop and Mighty Maths Carnival Countdown, for instance, enable you to enter the names of different users. Once the software is run, the user is asked to log in to one of the names already in the list or add the name of a new user.

In this way the software will keep individual records. Of course if this is to be totally relied on, it is important for the teacher to make sure that each and every pupil is correctly logged in to his or her name. There is usually no way of editing the scores other than having to erase a user altogether and start afresh. It may take some time to teach the system to the kids, especially in Year 1, but once they grasp the concept, they will be able to log in properly by themselves.

One possibility the teacher may consider here is logging in groups or pairs of children under one name, especially since group work is essential where classroom computers are concerned. This may help in promoting team work, and each individual may feel more part of a team when login names such as The Green Team or Kate and Omar appear on the screen.

Is the score system general or skill-based? Some software may keep a global score for all the activities covered by a user. This would be somewhat superficial for classroom use. A more detailed score system, covering the various skills independently like the one in the Bowling for Numbers activity in Maths Workshop, would be more indicative of children's progress. Unfortunately this system is not common to all drill-and-practice software packages currently in use in schools.

Certificates and Record Forms

Maths Workshop also makes use of certificates in the Bowling for Numbers activity. Certificates are a step closer to giving children concrete awards for their achievement. Raw scores may be meaningless, especially among the younger children. A certificate, prominently displaying one's name on the classroom walls may be somewhat more satisfying. Multimedia Flashcards: Learn English, currently in use in Year 2 classrooms, follows this principle as well. Progress is graded; there are three levels for the child to master, and different certificates for each. Monitoring the child's progress through these levels is therefore helpful to the teacher.

Certificates are usually the printable versions of on-screen record forms, which may be accessed on command by the user or may appear when a particular level is covered.

Tokens and Level Indicators

Math Rabbit, currently used in Year 1, has a unique way of recording a particular user's progress. Scores accumulated from the various activities can be exchanged for a prize in the Prize Centre. This has a number of advantages and disadvantages. On the negative side, as mentioned earlier, it can only give a global idea of the child's general progress, and does in no way account for the varying degrees of development in the different maths skills.

On a positive note, the scheme provides a more concrete award system for the child, who, in the process, gains a sense of purpose when actually working on the activities. There are different prizes in the Prize Centre and they can be exchanged for different numbers of scores. A child may opt to choose one 'expensive' prize or two prizes costing less tokens. Of course, since the user is logged in under a particular name, the prize list is kept on record for the next session.

Unfortunately, there is no way of keeping a hard copy of the prize list; a printout of the prizes would have been a further incentive for the children's motivation. The same problem lies with the level indication system adopted by Mighty Maths Carnival Countdown, which

Student Information in *Maths Workshop*

Pupil names can be entered into Maths Workshop and their progress recorded. Since Maths Workshop is one of those programs which is used by more than one Year group, it would be a good idea to transfer the record files from one class to the next, so that the pupils' progress is continued from one year to the next. There is no direct feature in the program to enable this, but if you are well acquainted with Windows Explorer, the file management program, it should be very easy to do.

● Insert the Maths Workshop CD-ROM and a blank floppy disk.
● Run Windows Explorer, and double click on the Wkshpmpc directory. One of the files included here is called mwroster. This is the file which contains all the students' information and progress records accumulated throughout the scholastic year.
● Click once on the file name to highlight it, and then from the Edit menu select Copy.
● Double click on the Floppy icon to open the floppy disk.
● From the edit menu, select Paste. The file mwroster is now on the floppy. To transfer it to another computer, simply copy it back to the Wkshpmpc directory on the other computer.
● Once this is done, you will need to erase all the old information from your own mwroster file in order to be able to register new students.
● While still in Windows Explorer, find the old mwroster in your C:\Wkshpmpc directory. Click once to highlight it, and from Edit select Delete.
● Now, repeat the Maths Workshop installation procedure from the CD-ROM. From start select Run, Browse and Install. During installation, you will be asked whether you would like to over-ride any existing files. Click on the Replace ALL duplicate files button. If you run Maths Workshop after installation, you will note that there are no student names in the Sign-Up List.

has a very comprehensive list of skills covered in all the activities included. Clicking on the level selector on the left bottom screen of every activity will display the Level Gauge for that activity. Actually each activity covers a number of skills, coded from A to Z. The gauge indicates the level attained by the user so far. This, however, is not reliable. The gauge can be used as a level selector. If the levels and skills are selected at random, the gauge will not give a true representation of the user's progress.

Beyond the Software

Although there are a number of ways for keeping record of user's progress built into the software, it is clear from the above discussion that not all schemes are reliable in the same degree. There is then the problem of that software which has no record keeping facility at all. It is therefore up to the teacher to study carefully whatever there is available and decide what is best for the classroom needs.

Print Shop Ensemble III may help in the creation of customised certificates in the style of those produced with Maths Workshop or Multimedia Flashcards. However, one of the best way of keeping track of what is going on when the children are at the computers is to make one's own checklist, and stick

to it. Custom checklists may be devised to cover all the software packages, for instance, thus establishing a particular standard of record keeping for the whole class. The teacher may however feel that particular software may require different checklists from other packages. Again, this will be dictated by the particular classroom needs at hand.

Reader Rabbit 1, for instance, includes a number of vocabulary lists in combination with various levels, across the different activities available. The teacher may feel that some of these vocabulary lists, or the levels, are not relevant to his or her particular classroom needs. Since there is no way in Reader Rabbit 1 to display user's progress across the levels and coverage of all vocabulary lists, the teacher will definitely have to create a customised checklist.

The Portfolio: New Approaches Towards Assessment

All the above may be fine where drill-and-practice software and particular language and mathematics skills are concerned. But such record-keeping facilities are of little use where creative software is concerned. With creative software such as Kid Pix Studio and Print Shop Ensemble III, the children's actual activity should be the record in itself.

Collins (as cited in Roblyer et. al., 1997) argues that among a number of developing trends in computer-equipped classrooms, there is a notable shift from test-based assessment to that based on products, progress and effort. Whereas record-keeping facilities like the ones described above may contribute to an indication of progress, product and effort must somehow be assessed in other ways.

Portfolios should be considered as a way of assessing an individual's progress, especially now that the computer in the classroom can offer various means and media of communication. Files containing children's work may include not just printouts of drill-and-practice certificates or progress reports, but also the children's own creations with productivity software. In addition, files should not be limited only to the printed form. Floppy disks may include text, graphic and sound files. The degree of performance, in this way, would therefore be more indicative of a child's overall development.

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Multimedia software in Maltese

'Without any doubt, Interactive Multimedia is the Wild West of design', comments Tony Grimaud, an interactive multimedia designer and developer, 'there is almost no limit to what one can do with text, pictures, sound, animation and video in the production of interactive educational software. All that is required is a multitude of skills, plenty of imagination and loads of dedication!'

Tony Grimaud studied Interactive Multimedia in London under design consultants for world-renowned multimedia developers such as Dorling Kindersley and *Philips Innovations.* Back in Malta he was commissioned by SEDQA, to produce an educational interactive CD-ROM in Maltese.

The amount of encouraging comments and positive remarks from educators and parents alike, convinced Tony Grimaud to continue developing other educational software in the Maltese language.
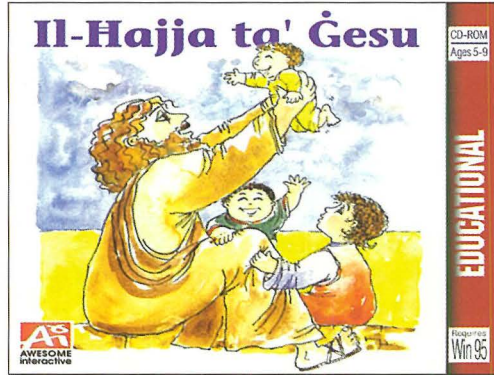
'Bil-Malti ma' Ninu'CD-ROM came next. This CD-ROM is a collection of 12 educational activities in the Maltese language, packed with plenty of vibrant colours, lively animations and inspiring sounds and voices. It encourages children to explore and enhance their learning potential in the Maltese language. Above all, this software has been designed to follow the national curriculum.

Another project by Tony Grimaud, which was commissioned by the British Council, was the creation of an interactive multimedia presentation to compliment the exhibition 'BLOCKADE'at the Malta Maritime Museum. The President of Malta and HRH Prince Andrew officially opened the exhibition. Other educational software is currently also being developed.

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The Royal Navy & Malta 1798-1800

Journal Writing in the Science Classroom

Deborah Chetcuti

Writing is usually associated with learning a language or an arts subject and it is not given much importance in science. It is simply used as a tool for the dictation or copying of notes. However as stated by Trombulak & Sheldon (1989) writing is a valuable skill in all disciplines and it will enhance learning in any discipline. One way in which students can be encouraged to write is by keeping a journal or a learning log. This can be used instead of the usual notes copy-book or in conjunction with the normal copybooks kept by students. It can include work which they have completed during their science lessons, reflections about what they have learnt, their feelings about what they have been learning and any questions which have been left unanswered. This reflective writing can improve students' comprehension, analytical skills and ability to formulate hypotheses (Strauss & Fulwiler, 1987) and also influence students' attitudes about the subject (Trombulak & Sheldon, 1989). In my view journal writing is important because:

1. It allows students to express themselves in their own words about things which they have learnt;

2. It creates a dialogue between teachers and students providing feedback to both students and teachers;

3. It helps to improve students' self-confidence and self-esteem and creates a positive attitude towards science.

Journals can be used to write about things learnt:

The journal can be used by students to describe what they have learnt in the science classroom. The journal helps the student to jot down what they have learnt, to ask particular questions which still remain unanswered, to comment about things which they have not understood well and to outline areas which they feel require further explanation. This is done in the students' own words so that the students can relate to it much more than dictated notes.

The students can also use the journal to express their feelings about what is taking place during the science lesson. For example one student drew and described the earthworm and wood louse (as shown) but she did not stop at simple description. She also describes her

emotions and feelings when confronted with the earthworm and wood louse. This enables students to think not only of what they are doing on an academic level, but also on a personal level. This will prepare students to relate science to values at a later stage.
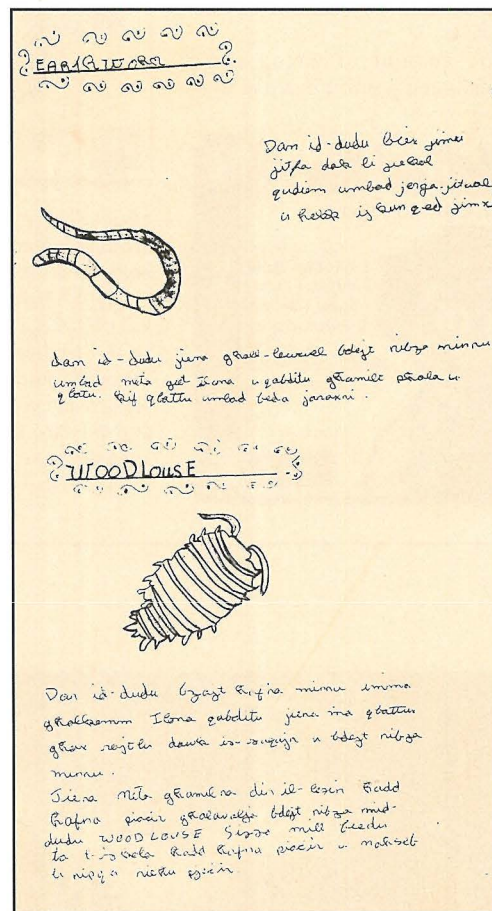
Insert one

As a means of feedback to students and to the teacher:

The journal also enables students to ask questions and obtain feedback in an informal manner without having to expose their lack of understanding in front of fellow students. It is a very effective way of giving positive feedback to students. It can be used to give qualitative descriptive feedback to students so that they are encouraged to work well. The journal can in fact be used to build up self-confidence and self-esteem in the students. The journals can

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also provide feedback to the teacher about the teaching and learning taking place. Students can be asked to write what they liked or did not like about the lesson. For example as shown below, one student describes her enjoyment and appreciation of the science lesson.

Insert two

The journal also helps to establish a continuous dialogue between the teacher and the student. Giving feedback to the students is time consuming and involves commitment on the teacher's part. However the relationship which can be built between the teacher and the student through the journal writings is rewarding and profitable for both the student as well as the teacher.

Insert three

Improving self-confidence and self-esteem:

In my view, one of the most positive aspects of journal writing is that it encourages students to express themselves, it enables them to recognise that their views are valued and valid and that through the feedback which they are receiving they can improve their learning and give their very best. This helps them to realise that they are capable of learning and achieving and helps them to work even harder. As one student pointed out *"...I like science very much...I always go home and show my book to my mother..."* and in the words of another student, *"...I did very well in the test...*

really good for me and I would like to thank you for your teaching...I have started to enjoy the writing which we do and I even understand something...I have started to enjoy physics...it's not a joke any more...".

The most exciting aspect of journal writing in science is that it can help students and teachers in so many ways. It is not just learning to write or just learning science. It is a means of communication, a means of dialogue, a way which encourages students to work at their own pace and at their own level and at the same time through continuous feedback guides them to bring out their best potential. It is also something which students can keep even after they have left school as a record of what they had learnt and were capable of doing in science.

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Gender Stereotypes in Children's Readers

Erika Azzopardi & Brian Bonnici

Gender development is a critical part of the earliest and most important learning experience of the young child. Parents, caregivers and teachers formulate the social structure that initiates the young into their gender-specific roles.

This article presents some controversial ideas. Please write in to *Education 2000* and let us know what you think – The Editorial Board

❝If teachers, parents or caregivers cannot find stories that are not stereotyped, then the only solution is to write their own ❞
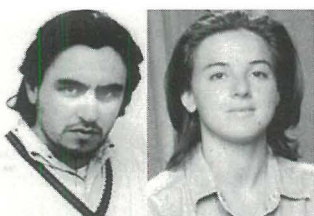
Brian Bonnici and Erika Azzopardi are currently reading for a B.Ed. (Hons.) specialising in Primary Education. They are in the 3rd year of their course. Erika is 21 years old and Brian is 25.

Major influences on gender role development and socialisation of young children occur through children's story books or any other reading material, which seem to shape and have a dramatic effect on their attitudes, their understanding and their behaviour.

Storying is a social practice and that it is inevitably a gendered practice. Stories have a functional role in our culture; we live a good deal of our lives on the power of various stories, and it is through stories that we position ourselves in relation to others, and ourselves positioned by the stories of our culture.

(Gilbert 1992: 186)

This article explores the role of texts in the production of gender-specific identities.

Books and Values

Luke (1994) points out that books are the primary vehicles for the presentation of societal values to the young child. Authors of these books have told their stories not only to entertain but also to present cultural values and social standards. For a very long time books defined society's prevailing standards of masculine and feminine role development. The young child's sense of personal and gender significance is influenced, changed, and connected to the world community through these books written by adults.

Storybooks help young children learn about what other boys and girls do, say or feel, and also provide other experiences and insights different from those of home or the community. Readers learn from a story what is expected of children and come to realise the accepted standards of right and wrong within the complexity of their gender. Storybooks provide role models and clear images that prescribe recipes about how and what children should be like when they grow up.

Gilbert (1992) argues that children receive a reasonably steady diet of gender stereotyping through classroom literature. These 'stereotypes might have detrimental effects on the development of self-concept; it also seemed likely that they might have effect on other, more cognitive developmental domains as well.' (Peterson and Lach, 1990: 186) They point out that stereotypical books affect 'readers'

perceptions of others' behaviour, their memory for that behaviour and the inferences they draw from it as well as a variety of dimensions of cognitive performance.' (Peterson and Lach, 1990: 195)

Furthermore as Richardson (1986) points out, school books that present stereotyped messages about social roles and behaviour, often emphasise either directly or indirectly the importance of maintaining traditional roles and behaviour patterns, rather than questioning or facilitating change of those traditional views. These books play an active part in maintaining the existing social structure by moulding these future adults into a copy of individuals making up today's society.

Story telling helps structure and regulate cultural meanings. By telling some stories rather than others and by carefully organising the story's events in a particular way, will help structure and regulate dominant and acceptable versions of parenting and marriage, childhood and adolescence, and of course, femininity and masculinity. Stories function in our culture as powerful means of social control, and can also be seen as design shapers and influences of the young in gender development. (Gilbert 1992). Gilbert states that through stories we learn how we talk, how we act and how we look; we learn what is acceptable and what is not.

Numerous studies showed that in many stories 'females were portrayed as passive, dependent and generally incapable, and that males were typically portrayed as active, independent and generally competent' (Peterson and Lach, 1990: 185). This can be clearly shown through close examination of fairy-tales.

Stories, like *Cinderella*, *Snow-white* and *Sleeping Beauty* have had a damaging effect on many children because they present the image of women in their traditional social roles, and perpetuate the myth of the happy-ever-after marriage. These kind of stories encourage 'passive female behaviour, male domination and even rape' (Westland 1993:238). Further research by Ezell (1985) and Dowling (1991) implies that there is a connection between the features of fairy-tales, where girls wait for their godmothers and princes to come to their rescue, and women's fear of independence in their adult lives.

In a study on children's perspectives on gender roles in fairy-tales, Westland (1993) elicited the following factors. Boys seemed to be quite happy with the traditional pattern of fairy-tales; princes are able to do what they liked. On the other hand, girls, although happily

continued overleaf

A Stone Age Home

This family lived twenty-five thousand years ago in France.
Look at their home. Can you imagine what life was like there?
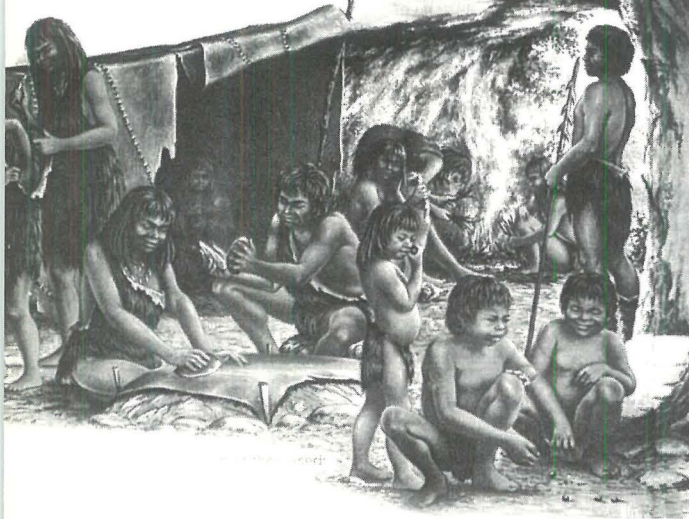
While he is at home playing with marbles, his sisters help the women make clothes, cook and keep the fire burning.

exploiting the pictorial qualities of long hair and lovely frocks that indulged towards femininity, perceived princesses as having unattractively restricted lives. When they were given a choice between sweet and tough princesses, they opted for the latter. Westland advises that if these children are given the opportunity to create princesses who free themselves from the tower, 'they may be developing ways of thinking that will help them to combat more insidious attempts to keep women and men locked in restrictive social roles' (Westland 1993: 246).

Stereotyped stories and characters are not only found in fairytales but unfortunately also in our school readers.

Changing our Reading

Between 1979 and 1982 women's organisations became more sensitive to the issue of gender. They put forward specific demands in order that primary school readers should be changed, arguing they maintained gender stereotypes, undermining the role of women and prolonging the relations of power and the submission of women to men.

Deliyanni-Korimtzi's (1992) analysis of primary school readers in Greece clearly showed: (a) the emphasis on the passive and submissive role of the women in contrast to the active, dynamic and creative presence of the men; (b) the complete dominance of the male gender; (c) the stereotyped distribution of roles and duties; (d) the traditional organisation of the family. Women were represented as limited to the duties determined by the 'triptych of wife-mother-housewife' (Deliyanni-Kouimtzi 1992: 72), and in a role that was left unchallenged. Women's dominance in the house was also unquestioned, reigning supreme as the 'queen of the household'. In spite of all this, however, it is worth noting that Deliyanni-Kouimtzi points out the lack of any reaction from primary school teachers throughout this period. (1992: 73)

Textbooks in the new readers seem to be presenting a new version of family life. 'Adult men (usually fathers) are shown carrying out, conscientiously and without complaint, many domestic tasks previously considered 'privileged', exclusively female tasks.' (Deliyanni-Kouimtzi 1992: 76) Now men shop, lay the table, help the children with their homework, and at the same time express tenderness and love to children (a totally uncharacteristic form of masculinity represented in previous reading schemes). In earlier reading schemes, women took first place in the home. This change made women lose many of their responsibilities resulting in a more dominating presence of men.

New books helped for the image of women to become increasingly blurred, to the extent that one wonders what real purpose is served by women's presence. Deliyanni-Kouimtzi explains that the presence of women at work is referred to only in relation to their absence from the home. It is due to this absence that the man is obliged to take himself some of the duties that a woman would have fulfilled if she did not work. This element is in itself positive but the overall effect is that the role of the man is enriched by many new activities, while the female presence is stripped of many of its traditional characteristics without the addition of any substantial new role. Deliyanni-

Kouimtzi concludes that in view of the above, new primary school reading books still continue to produce the ideology of the male hegemony in this particular element of the educational system.

Stereotyped texts in local schools

Two readers used in two local schools were analysed (1. Mac Iver A. 1983. *What a Fright! And other stories.* Glasgow: Bell and Bain Ltd. 2. Warlow, A. 1993. *Reasons for writing: Anthology 1.* Bucks: Ginn and Company Ltd.). The reason behind our choice was that these schools do not adapt co-education in their early childhood education program.

Are readers in these schools free from stereotyped material? Is the choice of readers influenced according to the children's particular gender, being single-sexed schools?

Our analysis was based on characteristics used by Peterson and Lach in their study.

The books' content was coded as follows:
● Gender of the Author
● Gender of the main character
● Number and gender of other 'subsidiary' characters
● Type of main character (whether it is a person, animal or 'other'

The first book (girls' school) showed complete dominance in male characters (both main and subsidiary). The book opens with a story called: "*The Butcher and the Dog*". In this story it is taken for granted that the butcher is a male (also depicted in the picture) while the pronoun *he* is used to refer to the dog.

The second book (boys' school) created a balance between the two genders but only in number value. The roles given to males and females in the stories are still very stereotyped.

An example of which is the third story presented in this book. The story is called "*A Stone Age Home*". The story is concerned with the roles of males and females in the family. Ced (main character) says that when he is old enough would be allowed to go hunting with his father. Until then he is to stay at home with his sisters. He continues to tell us that while he is at home playing with marbles, his sisters help the women make clothes, cook and keep the fire burning.

One realises that both books clearly promote and try to channel children into society's preformatted niches of male and female roles.

If teachers, parents or caregivers cannot find stories that are not stereotyped, then the only solution is to write their own new stories. Self-written stories are potentially a powerful tool for the teacher who wants critical imagination to become part of the 'obviousness' of the classroom. One aim would be 'to enable girls to position themselves as agentic rather than passive: increasing the numbers of ways girls can be.' (Jones 1993: 23) Another aim would be to make desirable the widest possible range of positions for both

girls and boys. Golden points out that one of the

Important conditions of possibility for making a wide range of positions available and desirable, is for both girls and boys to hear and read about large numbers of heroes of both sexes.

(Golden 1996: 331)

This means that the base line for a teacher would be to tell and read stories with equal numbers of both females and males as central characters, acting in equally powerful ways, not stereotyped gender. A solution can be that when traditional stories offer

When a child reads a book, s/he brings with him/her a set of expectations about the way that characters should behave

35   NAN'S STORY

I rose at seven o'clock every morning and helped Aunt Nell to make the breakfast. After breakfast, I washed the dishes and helped to tidy the house. It was my job to look after the chickens. I fed them with a mixture of meal, seed, and crumbs of bread. Afterwards I went to the coop and collected the eggs in a basket. Another of my jobs was to feed the little piglets. Their food was made up of all the scraps which had been left over from our meals. Next I went with Aunt Nell to watch her milk the cows.
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35   DICK'S STORY

I did not rise as early as Nan, and had always to hurry to be in time for breakfast. Every morning I went with Uncle Fred to see if the sheep and lambs were safe and well. On our way back, we visited the fields to see how the crops were growing. There were fields of hay, wheat, potatoes, cabbages, and turnips.
One day the sheep were gathered together and driven into a pen by Betty, the clever collie. They were afterwards taken out one by one and sheared by Uncle Fred and a shepherd named Sam. This work is done in summer so that the sheep will not feel the cold when their coats of wool are cut off.
142

supremacy of male heroes, the teacher might make up or find a corresponding number of female heroes. Golden advises that

It would seem preferable to avoid stories with passive heroines who are seen primarily as 'objects' of the males gaze, stories that are familiar in the dominant culture- Another source of story material would be the lives of contemporary women and men of achievement.

(Golden 1996: 332)

The teacher should be free to adapt, modify or restructure any characteristic or character of the story. As s/he needs to examine any story and thus make visible to him/herself the way binary thinking is embedded in it – to begin the 'the process of deconstructing the story'. (Golden 1996: 333) In order to do this the teacher must keep in mind that 'no attribute and no positioning is essentially gendered'. (Golden 1996: 333) Like this as s/he begins to shape and change stories and in turn hopefully change and shape children's understanding of gender.

Golden continues to explain that the teacher would need

To have an understanding of identity as multiple and fluid, not unitary and fixed; of gender as a construction, not a biological given; of themselves as positioned and taking up positions within discourse. They would need to understand the present time as one of change and transition in terms of cultural understandings about gender, and be willing to take questions about gender on board as a serious and central question for our time.

(Golden 1996: 328)

Such teachers would understand that children bring with them to the classroom a range of experiences that they go through discourse and their own lived experiences of gender within their family. In view of this the teacher's knowledge of the male and female positions available to children should be presented in an ethical way that values the individual child and respects his/her view.

'Bringing together the deconstruction, imagination and values to examine and adapt traditional or original narratives gives teachers one's strategy with which to tackle questions about gender'. (Golden 1996: 334) Sometimes this process might lead a teacher to abandon a story or make small changes that might make its telling more enjoyable and appropriate. In this way, the teacher might achieve many hero positions that are desirable and available to both girls and boys.

'Bill's New Frock' by Anne Fine is one of the most recent examples of such stories. In this story, the author literally places a boy into girl's shoes or in this case, a pretty pink frock.

Through her study, Anne Fine shows that boys and girls have a clear view of the expectations held for their own gender and 'the combination of text and discussion helps it to the surface'. (Wing 1997: 501)

This story raised more awareness about different ways in which girls and boys are treated. Through the issues raised in the text, children are able to identify themselves with Bill.

Peter and Lack (1990) concluded that although a lot of new books present fewer stereotypical images than they did in the past, the decrease is not statistically significant.

When a child reads a book, s/he brings with him/her a set of expectations about the way that characters should behave, differing from each other due to the different experiences they have had.

For example, in *Bill's New Frock,* humour is constructed from the fact that although Bill is internally a boy, will be treated differently because he looks like a girl.

Although children's attitudes about gender stereotyping are influenced by many factors, it seems that awareness can be raised 'with a book as a catalyst' (Wing 1997: 503), that children can identify with, through discussion (an opportunity to express opinions and listen to others) and the teacher's intervention.
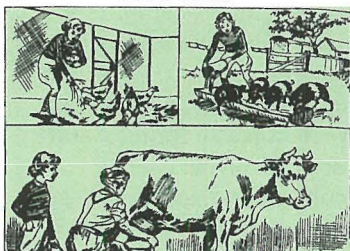
If children are constructing their inner worlds from information they receive at a very early age, then it is important that books for children of all ages present alternatives ways of viewing man and women, boys and girls, if one truly desires equal opportunities.

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Well-managed schools

Carlo Diacono Girls' Junior Lyceum, Żejtun

Maria Ciappara, Head of School, interviewed by Paul A Attard

In the series on Well-Managed Schools we feature an interview by Paul A. Attard with Maria Ciappara, a dynamic head of school. Past issues of the journal have featured reports on the Xghajra and Attard Primary Schools.

> Between 1970 and 1986, this school was a Girls' Secondary School. It became a Junior Lyceum in 1987, catering mainly for students from the south of the island. The school has a Head of School, four Assistant Heads, ninety-five teachers, 1,250 students and support staff. The school has five blocks, enjoys spacious grounds and gardens and sports facilities

Maria Ciappara B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Admin. & Man. in Educ taught Maltese in Secondary Schools for 8 years, was Asst. Head of Higher Secondary, Msida and Zabbar Primary. Was Head of Maria Teresa Nuzzo Girls School. Is at present Head of Carlo Diacono Girls Junior Lyceum.

Paul A. Attard is Assistant Director of Education, Planning and Research.

PAA: *How long have you been Head of Carlo Diacono Girls' Junior Lyceum, Żejtun?*
MC: Since September 1995.

PAA: *Which do you consider to be the major achievements of your school?*
MC: Major achievements … good relationships: management team and teachers, students, parents, ancillary staff; a mature school ethos; young enthusiastic staff (average age 39 years); well-disciplined students; very adequate equipment and resources, a healthy educational environment.

PAA: *How did you initiate and develop the School Development Plan?*
MC: I first reported to the Assistant Heads what Heads of School had discussed during the seminars organised about School Development Planning by the Education Division. We shared a number of ideas about how to go about School Development Planning in our school. We met again about fifteen days later and decided on two important points as major targets:
·   the development of the school ethos;
·   the improvement of English teaching and learning.
I held another meeting with the Subject Co-ordinators when we discussed what we were about to initiate. The next step was a staff meeting where we held a brainstorming session. We held a number of workshops in order to discuss possible strategies. Then followed a one-day seminar to discuss priorities, to set the ball rolling on a larger scale and to decide on possible courses of action. I tried to involve as many members of the staff as possible, firm in the belief that, unless they own the plan, they would not commit themselves fully to any future related action and the whole project would be a futile paper exercise.

PAA: *What is the staff's vision for the school?*
MC: I believe they actually want to contribute to make the school a better place to work and be in, so that teaching and learning would be easier and more fruitful. They are enthusiastic to contribute in every possible way

because, I feel, they believe that the school is theirs and they are proud that they belong to it.

PAA: *How do you formulate the mission statement for the school and for the various sections within it?*
MC: By consulting and discussing with the Assistant Heads and staff what we want our students to achieve during the five years they spend in our school.

PAA: *Could you list major objectives for the coming years?*
MC: We want to give our students a higher self-esteem, fluency in languages, greater participation in sports activities at all levels, and higher academic results. We want to make learning more enjoyable.
I wish my staff find it easier to face challenges and changes. Hence, staff development is very high on our agenda.
I must find more time to spend with my staff, my students and parents … I must know their expectations. I have to find more time to discuss what is happening at school so that we can continue to work as a compact team.

PAA: *What kind of leadership style do you prefer?*
MC: I prefer to listen to whatever everybody has to say, discuss issues and initiatives with my Assistant Heads and then decide. I do not only do this with my teaching staff but also with my students. They seem to appreciate my approach because they feel they form part of one big team.

PAA: *How far has a collegial approach developed in your school?*
MC: Even though I know that there are a few who tend to be critical, I think the vast majority form the school team … whenever an

Drama is given great importance in the curriculum

activity comes up, they come forward to make a contribution and to give their share and support. I am always supporting and ready to introduce new ideas and take initiatives.

PAA: *Do your teachers actually feel they have a very important role to play in school development?*

MC: I think they'd rather participate informally than referring to the Development Plan. We do things because we believe in them, rather than because they form part of a formal plan.

PAA: *What was the response of your school to the new national curriculum? Have you studied its implications?*

MC: I asked for the reactions of every teacher to the new curriculum. I wanted to represent their views whenever I was asked for my opinions. We organised workshops on the different sections. The Subject Co-ordinators were the chairpersons. A frank discussion followed and suggestions were formulated and forwarded to Head Office.

PAA: *Which major initiatives have been taken during the last few years to enrich the school's curriculum?*

MC: Before we take any new initiatives I discuss things with members of my staff and with Education Officers who visit our school. I hold subject meetings at least once a term to listen to teachers' opinions and to try to implement ideas they suggest. Last year, a University lecturer delivered seminars to our teachers of French before introducing a new textbook. I take initiatives mostly during teaching practice when some teachers can be released from class. I intend to adopt this initiative with other subject teachers.

I wish to hold discussion groups in English between students of different classes, perhaps also with students from other schools. We must work harder on oracy, self-expression and self-confidence in facing an audience. I wish that modern technology, cassettes, computers, television, videos, will be given much more importance than whiteboard and felt pen ... after discarding the blackboard and chalk!

Things that we have already done include new equipment and visual aids to help teachers in their job; an enormous facelift to the school building itself, including the transformation of an area so called 'wilderness' into a sports area

66 Good relationships: management team and teachers, students, parents, ancillary staff; a mature school ethos; young enthusiastic staff; well-disciplined students; very adequate equipment and resources, a healthy educational environment 99

... a dream come true. Here I found the support of the Education Division and Ministry.

PAA: *How far are you - management, teachers, students and parents - concerned with the academic achievement of students?*

MC: Very concerned... We try to make the school environment as pleasant as possible, we try to encourage extra-curricular activities as much as we can. I work hard to have each and every student participate in extra-curricular activities because I believe so much in them ... BUT ... not to the detriment of academic achievements ... in today's world they are so very important. A student in our school cannot afford to be excellent in drama and then obtain just two subjects at MATSEC level ... In my opinion, as administrator, we would have failed with this student.

PAA: *Do students themselves participate actively in school life and development?*

MC: You always find a small number of students who need some encouragement but during the mid-day break I feel elated to see that each and every corner of the school hall is crowded with students ... dancing, playing some instrument, practising gymnastics, participating in Scoops, rehearsing drama parts, learning their Carnival dance, playing darts and a host of other activities. Others, in the recently refurbished sports areas, play volleyball, basketball, and other physical activities. Of course, none of this could happen without the full support and participation of the dedicated teachers.

PAA: *What is the role of the School Council in the administration of the school?*

MC: The School Council advises, consults, shares, is informed and supports all that is going on in the school.

PAA: *Have parents themselves an important part to play in the life of the school?*

MC: Yes, very important. We give them a lot of importance ... because they are our customers also ... they have to support from home what we do with the students at school. If I get a parent phoning on anything, I *never* leave school without having first contacted him/her to see what the problem is. This helps me know my students better and my relationship with the parents grows stronger.

Whenever parents attend some activity, I leave all my work and spend the whole morning with them ... With the help of the Guidance team we prepare tea or coffee for them and it is over a cup of coffee that we share their complaints, their worries, ... they appreciate immensely the time we spend with them.

PAA: *How do you communicate with parents?*

MC: Usually through circulars, over the

phone, during activities we organise specifically for them, and during meetings we hold for them.

PAA: *Which are the more important functions you organise during the year?*

MC: In September we invite Form V students of the previous school year to come to school to speak about their experiences during their years at school. This serves both as a reunion and an encouragement to the new Form V students who are invited to listen! We organise a special parents' day for Form V students. The Christmas Concert and, especially, the Christmas Pantomime are really big occasions for us. The Evacuation Drill and Fire Hazard Day have established themselves in our school calendar. We have an Open Day, Sports Day (we give a lot of importance to sports in our school). Spiritual exercises are well organised. We also hold the Form V Farewell Play and Farewell Party. Prize Day is to some extent a show window for us. We hold Mothers' Day and even Grandmas' Day. Perhaps we'll organise something special for fathers in the near future.

PAA: *Does pastoral care feature prominently on your agenda?*

MC: Yes, very much, even though I wish to have much more help in the office (I need an efficient and bigger clerical team who can deal with a host of chores, who can act as School Secretaries), so that I will be more in the classrooms, in the staff rooms, and nearer to the staff and the students. They actually want *the Head of School* around, but sometimes very unwillingly I have to refer them to other members of the staff. Nevertheless, when I get certain notes in my suggestion boxes (found around the school) saying they want to speak to *me*, I treat them as very urgent, I leave everything behind and give all my time to the particular member of the staff / students / parents.

PAA: *Do you feel there are any threats to real education in your school?*

MC: The staff need support ... I have to give it to them ... but other things in the office sometimes keep me back. They want me around but sometimes I am somewhere else and it takes me longer, then to explain and show them that I appreciate what they do. I support them all the time but sometimes I feel that I do not have enough energy to dedicate to them because ... I *myself* also need support ... I treat everybody as an individual and not a number ... but I feel treated as a number myself! I feel I still have a lot to give, I feel full of enthusiasm, I feel as if each day is the first day of work, funnily enough. However, there are times when I *myself* feel discouraged, helpless, ignored by people higher up, or from people who are not in my boots. What I feel I transcend ... the same for the teachers ... once we build a healthy atmosphere, everybody will be happy, eager to work, communicating in the right way ... ready to face problems, sympathise with our students ... Once we are treated as a number, we start doing the same to others and lose the human element that is so important in life. Parents often feel the same when their children go back home ... it's a vicious circle ... so once we are enthusiastic and supported, we work, the students are happier, they learn more and so threats disappear!

PAA: *Could you tell me something about your school's projects for the physical and educational environment of your school?*

MC: We are doing whatever I can to have a clean, well-equipped school so that the teaching staff and students feel healthier in such an environment. We are trying to furnish every block with a video, small library, study room, a computer, so that every minute will be used by the students to learn more. We want to make learning enjoyable... students need to look forward to coming to school, they have to work as a team, they have to appreciate the fact that this environment is not found in all places of work, so they have to work hard to keep it the way it is, at all times. We wish that in our school we have all modern visual aids, and equipment to make us compete with other students, in Malta and abroad, and help us to face the next millennium

PAA: *Carlo Diacono Girls' Junior Lyceum has been successful. To what do you ascribe the school's success over the years?*

MC: Good Heads of School (modesty apart!). Discipline, good communication and understanding, teamwork rather than giving orders, a give-and-take attitude, parents' strong support, qualified staff, resources, mutual support, extra curricular activities, financial support from the Education Division, good management, dedicated staff, a sense of belonging, being considered as an individual and not a number ...

PAA: *I wish you, your staff, students and parents, greater success in the future.*

> **"We wish to have all modern visual aids, and equipment to make us compete with other students, in Malta and abroad, and help us to face the next millennium"**

Sports activities form part of the daily curriculum of the school

Changing Uniforms

The Teaching and Learning of English in the Transition Phase

Anthea Pisani & Isabelle Tonna

The authors have conducted a study in two primary schools and four secondary schools which brought to light:
● the concerns and the difficulties encountered by pupils in two primary schools and four secondary schools before and after the transfer to the secondary level of education,
● the teaching and learning processes in English.

> **It was clear that despite the provision of pastoral care liaison among secondary schools and their feeder primary schools, pupils still faced difficulties when they changed schools**

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It was clear that despite the provision of pastoral care liaison among secondary schools and their feeder primary schools, pupils still faced difficulties when they changed schools. These were mostly caused by such practices as the introduction of specialised teaching and of new subjects, and the new school environment. Difficulties were also encountered in the case of English learning. Sharp discontinuity between the two stages was observed, and any achieved continuity was rather incidental. This affected the pupils and their performance negatively, as they had problems to cope with the new methodologies and content taught. This applied most strongly to low ability pupils, who lacked basic skills.

Some general recommendations regarding transition procedures within the educational system, and the teaching and learning of English during this phase will be forwarded, in the hope that teachers, policy-makers and parents become more aware of the importance of this stage, and thus be in a better position to facilitate this transition.

Suggestions concerning transfer procedures

Teacher and pupil familiarisation and parental involvement should be taken into account, when considering successful transfer procedures.

Teacher familiarisation

Teachers are already aware of the intensity and the kinds of worries children experienced at this stage, and their possible negative effects on the pupils' performance. Ideally such awareness could be increased if the teacher-training program also contains pastoral care techniques. Consequently teachers would be better equipped to handle the pupils' transfer difficulties and to guide and prepare their pupils for facing transfer.

However, in helping pupils to build a positive attitude to the next stage, the primary teacher should also be allowed time and resources to initiate discussion and to familiarise the pupils with the new school and its facilities. This should not be left up to the teachers' discretion, as is often the case.

Pupil familiarisation

Inter-school liaison is very important here. Presently it is the guidance teacher in charge of the new pupils in the secondary school who makes contact with the primary schools. Although this has its benefits, the study showed that it may be insufficient.

The familiarisation process of Year 6 pupils would improve if the primary school pupils meet with the Form 1 teachers in the receiving secondary schools. Apart from viewing the school facilities, such visits to the secondary school could also include a day's work with their own class teacher and other secondary school teachers and could involve the use of secondary school resources (craft room, laboratories, etc.) when secondary pupils are not present (e.g. on a public holiday).

Furthermore, some Form 1 teachers and pupils should accompany the guidance teachers during meetings with prospective pupils and parents in the primary setting. The Form 1 pupils could be invited to talk about the new school, hence being a source information and reassurance for the Year 6 pupils and even for parents. These secondary school pupils (then in Form 2) could also help in showing the new pupils around on the first day at secondary school.

Another initiative, which could prove to be quite beneficial, could be that of preparing a secondary school brochure, which would be made available to new form 1 pupils. This could be set up by the guidance unit within the secondary school together with the secondary school pupils and other teachers. This brochure should include a school map, for the new pupils' use. Although this idea is already being implemented in some of our schools, this does not seem to be the norm.

Considerations on better pupil familiarisation should also include suggestions for better teaching strategies. Currently primary school pupils have only one teacher, who teaches all the subjects put forward by the syllabus. After transfer they suddenly encounter specialised teaching, which involves

Curricular continuity in learning involves both the extension of established skills and knowledge and the continuity of content and learning style

❝ Pupils may also acquire fears and worries from their parents who may be as anxious about transfer as the pupils themselves ❞

ten or more teachers. Gradual introduction of specialised teaching, at least in the core subjects, would help pupil adjustment. This could be introduced after the age of 9, when there is an increase in the degree of difficulty of these subjects. Furthermore this approach would lead to more effective learning since specialised teachers, who would have a better understanding of the subject and of the essential methodologies for the teaching of the subject.

Parental involvement

Pupils may also acquire fears and worries from their parents who may be as anxious about transfer as the pupils themselves. Therefore a programme that ensures effective liaison with the parents will be of great benefit for the children themselves. As parents get to know those in charge of their children, trust and understanding between the two parts increases. This would be beneficial for the pupils themselves, since they feel a stronger bond between home and the new school. Apart from the usual talks held by guidance teachers to parents prior to and after transfer, this awareness could be increased, through activities held between parents associations and the secondary school. A meeting should be held at the primary school for a parents' question and answer session with the secondary staff. Other social functions could be held after transfer, to encourage new parents to become actively involved in the running of the school. Hence, parents would be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the staff of the new school, in the same way as they were with the

primary school staff. Parents should also be kept informed about their child's progress at the new school, and about developments in the school itself. This could be done by means of a letter regarding the progress and adjustment of each child sent to the parents by the form teachers after about four weeks from the beginning of the scholastic year.

Suggestions concerning curriculum continuity and English teaching

Curricular continuity in learning involves both the extension of established skills and knowledge and the continuity of content and learning style. The study showed that this was a missing key element in the teaching of English in the schools observed.

At this stage such continuity is only possible if good working relationships are established between the secondary and the primary schools. Ideally teachers of English in the secondary schools should meet Year 6 teachers in the feeder primary schools on a regular basis. Teachers' visits could include observation of English teaching in Year 6 and Form 1, followed by meetings, in which policies, problems and decisions, and their possible implications on the teaching and learning of English, are discussed. This would lead to the development of mutual esteem and trust among teachers, which are invaluable in establishing curriculum continuity liaison between schools, and an increase in joint planning of the English syllabus. Consequently teachers and schools would be in a more direct position of ensuring that there is not much repeated or new material presented. It is important that syllabuses are more complimentary and this could only be achieved if teachers are more directly involved in the curricular planning and are provided with the necessary resources, especially in the case of low ability teaching.

However, such initiatives need good management and organisational support from headteachers and the Education Division if they are to be fruitful. The primary and the secondary headteachers should also meet in each other's schools and discuss issues related to transfer, while the Education Division should ensure the provision of necessary resources both for the teaching and learning of English as well as for these meetings' coordination.

Hopefully, the changes being carried out within the Maltese education provision will lead to improvement. Awareness of the need for continuity across all the levels, but especially at this stage, is increasing. Therefore, authorities and educators must continue working for better coherence between the two levels of schooling, allowing the pupils to grow and learn more effectively as they change uniforms.

Introducing assessments and examinations in Physical Education in Malta

Gemma van Vuuren-Cassar

> **S**econdary school physical education has fundamentally been a practical and non-examinable subject at school level. Its values to the school and the individual pupils has been seen to lie in its 'expressive' functions, in its intrinsic qualities or in 'instrumental' terms in relation to fitness and health. The humanistic, personal, emotional and social developments are often included in the goals of the programme too, , however, none of these objectives fall easily into the traditional academic pattern of examination. (Carroll, 1980)

> **❝ Gymnastics is an activity which in the opinion of some teachers should be given more importance ❞**

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In Malta physical education is a non-examinable subject yet an assessment mark or grade is still an integral part of the end of term / year report of the majority of schools in Malta (Cassar, 1995). The assessment of physical education is quantified in the local National Syllabus of Physical Education (1992), nevertheless, physical education was omitted from the school-leaving certificate of fifth formers in government schools in the early 1990s. This last action is not consistent with the local requirements of the National Syllabus of Physical Education (1992). Now that the task of introducing a Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) in physical education is rolling, it seems appropriate to appraise the provisions for content and assessments in the National Syllabus for Physical Education (1992) and to relate them to teacher's practices in secondary schools. The implementation of the activities recommended in the four areas of study of the local syllabus and the assessment practices will be discussed in the light of the requirements of an assessed and examined subject.

The National Syllabus of Physical Education (1992) includes an activity-based classification outlining the following content:

1. Gymnastics including Games of Low Organisation and Athletic Activity: *(modern educational gymnastics, agilities, vaulting, displays, rhythm (boys), fitness; running, jumping, throwing , skills through lead-up games)*

2.Team Sports *(fielding, court/net: volleyball, court/invasion: basketball, football (boys only), handball, hockey (boys only), netball (girls only))*

3.Individual Sports *(badminton, lawn tennis)*

4.Rhythm and Dancing *(square and folk dancing, creative dance (largely for girls)).*

This categorisation of activities provides for an exposure to a wide base of activities and experiences to pupils, however, why athletic activities (power optimisation) are included with gymnastics activities (a movement replication activity) is not essentially beneficial to a balanced programme. A new classification; athletic activities is useful to accommodate for a variety of experiences for the pupils. The category team sports includes fielding activities, however, there aren't any such activities in the national syllabus. It is interesting to observe that rounders and softball, which qualify as fielding activities, had been previously incorporated in the Nations Syllabus of Physical Education (1981).

Individual activities comprise racquet activities, which easily fall in the net/court game classification too. Martial arts, aquatics and conditioning activities are individual activities, which ought to be classifications in their own right, together with outdoor activities. This is recommended to widen the spectrum of activities, irrespective of the minimum number of classifications of activities to which pupils should be exposed to, which also ought to be stipulated.

For example the syllabus will stipulate that over the five years of secondary schooling, three/four from six/eight classifications of activities ought to be included in the programme. Writing classifications and activities off completely will never justify their inclusion in a physical education programme. The engendering of activities in this syllabus should be seriously reconsidered. A syllabus promoting and justifying lack of equalities of access and opportunities for no psychomotor reason is not acceptable.

Practical Coursework Activities

Our knowledge of what actually goes on in the name of physical education results primarily from activity surveys (Underwood, 1983). The evidence of curricular value orientations of physical education teachers suggests that the value orientations of teachers are often different from those valued in the physical education curriculum and instructional literature (Ennis, 1992).

An activity survey circulated amongst physical education teachers in Maltese secondary schools (Cassar & Borg, 1991), revealed that both male and female teachers structure their programme around a selection of team games, gymnastics and athletic activities and that the inclusion of individual

activities (racquet) and rhythm and dance is not popular. The team games most practised in boys' schools include football (96%), closely followed by basketball (87%) and volleyball (83%). In the girls' schools the most popular team games comprise volleyball (94%), netball (78%), and basketball (61%). Athletic activities are very popular in both girls' (94%) and boys' (91%) schools. Individual activities are not as prominent in the programme with badminton being included in (56%) of the girls' chools and (43%) of the boys' school; tennis is much less popular. Without excusing anyone one must observe that racquet activities are much more demanding to organise for a class of 25-30 pupils and require very conditioned practices in a school gymnasium or outdoor courts. Rhythm and dance is very negligible in the boys' diet of activities, (4%), yet relatively popular in girls' programmes (43%).

It is also interesting to consider the rational of the teachers for giving more or less importance to particular physical activities prescribed in the secondary school syllabus. Athletics is regarded as an activity that should be given more importance since "it develops discipline in one's personality", "can be practised by everyone and involves competition and immediate rewards".

Gymnastics is an activity which in the opinion of some teachers should be given more importance because "it is the basis of all sport, co-ordination, strength and stamina" and is "an activity which develops all round motor skills". Other teachers feel that gymnastics should be given less importance because it is a sport for a selected few, and that a teacher must be very technically prepared". The challenge of teaching swimming and racquet activities has also received inconsistent support. Some teachers feel that the facilities for these activities are a "hopeless issue" while others feel that these activities should be given more importance to "increase variation and experience" for the pupils.

Activities for examined physical education

It would make teacher's life more easy if the classification of activities of an examined physical education syllabus is consistent with the requirements of the national syllabus. The six areas of studies (classification of activities) of the National Curriculum Physical Education (UK), (1991) were adopted by the examination boards as from the examination sitting of the summer of 1998. The difficulties experienced with inconsistency of classifications led to the creation of a gap between examined and non-examined physical education programmes within the school and the transition from National Curriculum to examined physical education was difficult for both teachers and students.

The London EDEXEL Foundation GCSE Physical Education syllabus (1999) includes all six areas of studies of the national syllabus:

Athletic activities (jumping, running and throwing)

Dance (Modern/contemporary, Ballet, tap, jazz, Folk/traditional, ethnic)

Games (court, invasion, striking)

Gymnastic activities (gymnastics, martial arts, trampolining),

Outdoor and adventurous activities (board sailing, climbing, canoeing/kayaking, orienteering, sailing, skiing),

Swimming

In GCSE physical education syllabi, the students are examined on 4 or 5 activities selected from a minimum of three of the six areas of activities. This accounts for 50-60% of the final mark. The rest of the marks are allocated to anatomy and physiology; health related fitness and factors affecting participation in physical activity. The practical coursework programme of the National Curriculum Physical Education is central to the success of the introduction of examined physical education. Aylett (1990) reported that schools had 'scrutinised and amended' the content and activities taught in the first three years of secondary schooling to equip students with higher standards and the versatility demanded at GCSE level. It makes sense to provide a wide and balanced programme of activities in National Curriculum Physical Education before going on to the depth required in performance and cognitive outcomes of an examined course.

Provisons for assessment

The local National Syllabus for Physical Education (1992) includes a section on assessment of physical education. The assessment procedure suggests that

"In the case of P.E. if we are to educate the child through the "physical", movement competence is to be given priority over theoretical knowledge. In the upper forms, however, theoretical knowledge may be assessed through oral and written modes but always alongside performance"

The assessments recommended above refer to both practical coursework, "movement competence" and theoretical knowledge, with priority, possibly in terms of weightings of marks given to the former.

The syllabus also recommends oral and written modes of assessment for the theoretical knowledge, however there isn't clear specification of this theoretical content in the syllabus. It is also clear that the structure outlined in this paragraph approximates the methods used for GCSE physical education, where the practical performance coursework and the theoretical components related to physical activities, sport science and factors affecting performance are examined through unseen written papers, oral examinations and project work.

Assessing National Curriculum Physical Education

Three suggestions for an effective system of assessment are recommended in the national Syllabus of Physical Education (1992), namely:

for every teaching unit (physical activity), aspects which will be assessed should be clearly pointed out to students;

as homework students must keep a diary of activities as "an opportunity for analysis and criticism"; and the compilation of a Practical Performance Profile (PPP), indicating a mark on a scale from (1 to 10) on a diagram for every activity type for each student, which will represent "the movement competence and the all round personality of the student".

When teachers were asked to identify the modes which have been adopted for assessments in their schools (Cassar, 1995) it transpired that a variety of procedures are applied in respect of assessing each teaching unit.

The most popular criteria for assessing teaching units of physical activities in local secondary schools are based on "motivation, general effort and abilities of pupils across different activities during a term".

This method was claimed to be implemented by 56% of the teachers. It is interesting to note that this mode was neither found to be significantly different across the various types of schools ($X2=8.355$ $p> 0.07$) nor to the gender of the teachers ($X2=2.202$ $p>0.137$). These findings imply that this method of assessment is conventional and is being implemented in government, church and private schools by both male and female teachers.

The practice of assessing every physical/

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> **A syllabus promoting and justifying lack of equalities of access and opportunities for no psychomotor reason is not acceptable**

"In the case of P.E. if we are to educate the child through the "physical", movement competence is to be given priority over theoretical knowledge..."

sports activity is gradually gaining popularity, however, the absence of standard assessment criteria renders teachers to adopt further varieties of approaches. The assessment on the general performance of the student throughout "every sports activity during that term" is compiled by 5% of the teachers while another 14% dedicated a lesson to the assessment of a particular sports activity after every block unit. Some teachers distribute their mark on the theoretical and the practical content of physical education (9%). Another group of teachers award marks on a combination of factors including the pupil's effort and motivation throughout the sessions and the level of performance competence at the end of the teaching unit (9%), while (5%) stated that it is not the school policy to assess physical education.

Other components awarded marks for the term/yearly report include regular participation, good and co-operative behaviour, bringing the school PE kit for every lesson and fitness tests. The implementation of assessments in local secondary physical education is based on effort and achievement. Veal (1988) argued that teachers find it confusing when requested to base their assessments solely on the achievement of performance coursework. Effort as an integral quality of performance, judged by specific behaviours such as working on a skill instead of talking during practice, improvement itself, and being energetic and enthusiastic are often given importance by teachers. It was further noted that teachers were unwilling to lower a grade for lack of ability, but they felt it justified to give lower marks for lack of effort.

There is a relatively high number of teachers (68%) who claimed to include a variety of written activities as homework. These included tasks such as asking students to keep a diary of lessons (15%), answering questions on sports activities (24%) and project/chart work (32%). The use of the (PPP) Practical Performance Profile is not implemented by any teacher. None of the teachers mentioned the use of videos to assess rules, techniques and tactics of the practical activities. In the era of examinations, the approaches to teach first and then decide what to assess, of norm referencing and the dominance of effort are inadequate (Carroll, 1994).

P.E. assessments have often been characterised by their vagueness and generality. The main feature of these assessments might easily fall into this description:

"lack of specific criteria, the lack of systematic observation and recording and the reliance on general impressions" (Carroll 1994 pg. 19)

An examined course in physical education requires of teachers to strictly adhere to a criterion-referenced model, where the criteria for assessments is set for every single activity, is precise, clearly identified and related to the teaching-learning objectives.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The provisions for content recommended in the local National Syllabus of Physical Education (1992), comprises a structured classification of activities which needs to be enlarged to provide for a broad and wide base of activities and experiences for the students, as well as bridge the gap between national curriculum and examined physical education. The activities which teachers select for their physical education programmes mainly include athletics, gymnastics and team games. This is more of a specialisation course and a wider coverage of activities should be considered for inclusion in National Curriculum Physical Education. The provisions for assessment as recommended in the national syllabus lack clarity and specificity and are not adhered to by most teachers. This implies that teachers will have to became involved in the ideologies of assessments, and some training in the application of assessing the performance coursework using criterion referenced system is recommended. The closer the content and the criteria for assessing National Curriculum P.E. and examining Secondary Education Certificate physical education, the more positive the benefit for the subject, the teachers and the pupils.

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