

Creating the Future Together



National Minimum Curriculum



December 1999

Ministry of Education

FOREWORD

MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Education is the womb in which our society reproduces itself and re-creates itself for the future. In this process of nurturing and giving birth, there are three most important elements that shape the child of our hopes - the next generation. These are: the efforts of parents, the efforts of teachers, and the national curriculum that should guide them.

My colleagues and I are proud to present to you what you yourselves - experts, teachers, parents and other stakeholders - have wisely created. It is a holistic national minimum curriculum, the result of much consultation and much thought. As a reader of this document you will find in it the instruments for making sure that there is continuity in our culture from the unique Maltese culture of the past to the Maltese culture of the future. This is because we do not wish to lose what is valuable in our character and outlook from one generation to the next. And you will also find in this document clear guidelines for making sure that there is adaptation and change in our whole culture. This is because the world of tomorrow - and the Maltese presence in it - is not the same as that of yesterday.

You will be pleased to find here elements that needed to be specially emphasised because of what our own society has learnt, sometimes painfully, in our own past, and of what consequently requires change in the way we are and in the way we act. Those elements are a bit like medicine for our national illnesses, and vaccines to protect against clear and present dangers such as intolerance, impracticality, economic irrelevance, sexism, gender-based career limitations, the emargination of those with special needs, social and personal apathy, and ignorance.

But you will also find in this document that which is universal: elements that are relevant to the education of all people everywhere, and elements that are a crucial priority for the coming Millennium. These are universal priorities for the nurturing and development of what is truly human. Thus you will find an emphasis on self-understanding and emotional development, on values such as respect for differences among people, on the development of social and personal commitment, and so on. There is also, for the first time, an important emphasis on creative thinking, reasoning, decision-making, and problem solving and a sense of curiosity. These are catalysts for the development and economic viability of our society and of the individual girl and boy.

While it would be almost impossible for a key document such as this to correspond in all details exactly to everyone's opinions, I was relieved to see a broad consensus among teachers and other stakeholders, and in Parliament, building up around this document. This augurs well for the future, because the enthusiasm of teachers and parents is now essential for the next phase of this work. You see, in a very real sense this Curriculum is not the end but the beginning of an important process of change.

That process will be one of creative changes in each school and with each teacher - as they develop their own more detailed syllabus, resources, and methods guided and inspired by this National Minimum Curriculum. You will recognise in this Curriculum a fresh approach to guiding the education of our next generation. This is an approach based less on specifying at national level the detailed content of teaching and more on specifying and emphasising outcomes - results required in the learners. It is thus an approach that requires new thinking and new skills from those of you involved in school-based and class-based curriculum development. My Ministry and the Division of Education will support you in this challenging work that still has to be done.

It has been one of my most satisfying tasks to participate in the creation and revision of this document. I urge you to use it as a flexible springboard and reach great heights with your school, with your class, with your child.

This document helps us to create stimulating learning environments in which all students have the opportunity to reach their full learning potential. It also helps them to use their learning for the fulfilment of their humanity and the creation of our future.

Louis Galea

MESSAGE

DIRECTOR GENERAL OF EDUCATION

The new National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) is the breaking of a new dawn in the field of Maltese Education. The document is truly national because it is applicable to all State, Church and Independent schools alike. The document is also national because of the broad based support that it has received from major stakeholders in the educational fields during the process of formulation and final approval. Support and approval has also been forthcoming from both sides of the House of Representatives. Recalling that education in Malta has, for years, been the centre of political controversy one cannot but conclude that the achievement of national consensus on a common educational vision has indeed been a historical feat.

This document is the outcome of generous contributions from a varied array of persons who inputted their time, energy, resources and creativity in a participatory process. Such a collective effort will, in due course, certainly promote positive results. While the process of open and direct consultation might have appeared long and tedious, the broad consensus that has been attained augurs well for its implementation.

The National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) is a framework establishing parameters within which every school will be empowered to design and propose an educational provision that meets its particular curricular needs. This is meant to eventually lead to a more ambitious objective, namely that of providing an educational provision that caters for the particular needs of every individual student.

It is essential that the NMC does not end up as a dormant document and that great effort is given to translate its vision into reality. The contribution of such a wide spectrum of stakeholders on its formulation was invaluable. Even more crucial will be the commitment and consensus of the same participants during the stage of implementation. One augurs that this phase will proceed with the same enthusiasm that has been generated hitherto.

Another significant feature of the NMC is its recognition that curricular development is a dynamic process. The document does not evince any pretension that it is the last and final word on the matter. On the contrary, the document projects for itself a lifespan of seven years with the last couple of years being devoted towards the formulation of another NMC. Furthermore, during the next seven years, there has to be a systematic and continuous development of the proposed measures. The implementation of the measures should take place against a backdrop of on-going research pitched at two levels - that undertaken by the

schools themselves and that undertaken by other agencies - so that the true impact of the proposed measures on the educational landscape is objectively gauged. The successful adoption of such a strategy is the only viable option toward our achieving the set goal of providing a high quality educational provision to each and every student attending school in the Maltese Islands.

Charles Mizzi

MESSAGE DIRECTOR - CURRICULUM

Our society like many others feels the need to periodically examine the guidelines governing the purpose and content of its Education. The National Minimum Curriculum document is the fruit of such a review. The document constitutes a binding foundation for the development of separate curricula, at three different levels of education: pre-primary, primary and secondary and forms the common core for the Maltese Educational System.

One main characteristic of this document is that it places the needs of the learner before everything else. It is the child, the boy and girl and the adolescent who are at the centre of all the vision, the planning and the provision. The whole document throbs with this commitment.

Equally interwoven in its aims and provision is the celebration of diversity. The holistic spirit of the document not only includes every aspect of human development and every phase of it but it also embraces the diversity of learning styles as well as the whole range of abilities, backgrounds, specific learning difficulties, and special needs that are bound to exist among the community of learners. This is why the document spares no effort to make clear its vision of inclusion.

Such a document cannot fail to look as well at the needs of society within which every child, adolescent and adult is not merely a member but an active participant. Dominant features of present-day society are globalisation and change. In this scenario it is important that the National Minimum Curriculum provides the breadth and balance of educational experiences that equip learners not only with the capability to take charge of themselves and their lives but also with the vigour and will to stand by others.

Like previous documents the new National Minimum Curriculum looks also at the needs of knowledge and shows the commitment to safeguard standards. Where it may differ quite markedly from previous documents is in its great emphasis on the importance of skills, competences, attitudes and values and not merely on knowledge and information.

It is also hoped that these changes in the way we view learning extend to include a change in the way we look at assessment.

In the new culture,

- (i) the primary aim of assessment will be to feed back into our teaching and learning strategies and methods;
- (ii) we look out for what the learners are able to do rather than segregate and exclude them for what they don't know;
- (iii) the learners participate in self-assessment as they come to make more and more choices and decisions in their learning.

The three years of the National Minimum Curriculum review were characterised by a heightened interest in education and a truly participatory and collaborative spirit among players and stakeholders. These should also be the characteristics of the next stage, which is the implementation phase. The document emphasises the decisive roles that all educators, schools, parents and the community are to play. I think that the true success of the implementation can be built only on well planned structures and strategies that inspire and harness the highest and best collaborative spirit and action from everyone.

I am very aware that both the first and the final draft documents have been pronounced to be too visionary, too idealistic, too perfectionist, but should one be blamed for wanting the best quality education for our country? It now rests with us to make the vision a reality.

Mary Vella

MESSAGE
PRESIDENT - MALTA UNION OF TEACHERS

The Malta Union of Teachers has for a very long time been recommending a drastic improvement in the Curriculum and has been urging the authorities to be courageous enough to bring about all the necessary changes in the best interest of our students and children.

This Curriculum is encouraging all schools in Malta to take the initiative to determine ways of teaching and is also aiming at giving a clear direction to the particular needs of every student. It is hoped that the autonomy and identity of every school in Malta be enhanced. The curriculum must have the child at the centre of the National Educational System in all its different forms.

In the educational sphere the challenges are great and diverse. Teachers are being expected to carry the brunt and are being given added and new responsibilities which will eventually bring about new working conditions, hopefully to be negotiated with the Malta Union of Teachers.

Hopefully this new Minimum Curriculum will change the mentality of our community so that our schools will not be merely places of instruction but also places from where our students and children are given sound and ethic values and character formation in a pleasant and welcoming environment surrounded by teachers who are happy in their vocation, so that together we may move forward towards the new millennium with courage and determination.

John Bencini

MESSAGE
PRESIDENT - ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS COUNCILS

The Association of School Councils (AKS) welcomes the new National Minimum Curriculum and its underlying principles and concepts of putting the child at the centre of all educational activity, shifting authority to the school site and increasing parental and community involvement. Teachers, parents, and community members can thus become more committed to improving the schools and more supportive of the new curriculum that is bound to become closer to the needs of each particular school and the needs of its students.

AKS believes that successful education requires co-operative partnership among the school, the home and the community, and that effective relationships between the education system and the communities are promoted through consultation, collaboration and strong communication programmes. AKS acknowledges that this document stipulates that each school is to include parental participation and education when planning the school development plan.

AKS is also of the opinion that site-based decision making and curriculum development place the school at the centre of planning, goal setting, and budgeting for school improvement. This also provides additional opportunities for the school to be more innovative and creative. Site-based curriculum development also allows teachers and administrators to work with parents and the community to become more responsive to the needs of a particular school's population.

AKS strongly believes that the new National Minimum Curriculum and the underlying principles and objectives will eventually be the means of improving student learning and school effectiveness.

Frans Borg

PREAMBLE

The process of reviewing and strengthening the National Minimum Curriculum that had been established for the first time in 1989 was set in motion in 1995 with the publication of *Tomorrow's Schools: developing effective learning cultures*, and continued with the 1998 publication of a new draft national minimum curriculum². This document spearheaded a dialogue process involving major stakeholders in the educational field that eventually resulted in the formulation of this final document.

For all those directly involved in the educational process such as teachers, parents and pupils, the current 1999/2000 scholastic year should serve as a period of reflection, self-preparation and planning for the implementation of this curriculum with effect from October 2000. The on-going development and strengthening of the curriculum should be the outcome of a sustained dialogue process in which stakeholders need to positively engage to ensure an effective implementation. Such a process will ease the mandated review of the curriculum after a period five years from the adoption of this document.

The National Minimum Curriculum provides an educational vision for all schools in Malta and Gozo. This vision reflects the needs and aspirations of all those who actively participated in and contributed to the renewal of the curriculum.

The vision, principles, broad aims, and educational strategies enunciated in this document should be a source of inspiration and stimulation to schools as they formulate and implement their own development plan and educational programme. The espousal and implementation of the ideas contained in the curriculum by every school ensures quality provision in education and acceptable standards throughout the educational systems. This document therefore guarantees the safeguarding of the basic educational rights of all students, from kindergarten till the end of schooling.

The process of curriculum development is an ongoing and dynamic one. This document therefore does not signal the end of the process but another chapter in a never ending story. Continuing curriculum development ensures that our schools remain relevant institutions within the community.

BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW PROCESS

The Legal Framework of the Maltese National Minimum Curriculum

The legal basis for the Maltese National Minimum Curriculum can be found in the Education Act (Chap. 327.) that was established by the Maltese Parliament in 1988 to consolidate and amend the law concerning education in Malta.

Among the 'General Provisions' contained in Part 1 of the Education Act we find:

- Entitlement to education (3):

"It is the right of every citizen of the Republic of Malta to receive education and instruction without any distinction of age, sex, belief or economic means".

- State duties (4):

"It is the duty of the State -

(a) to promote education and instruction;

(b) to ensure the existence of a system of schools and institutions accessible to all Maltese citizens catering for the full development of the whole personality including the ability of every person to work; and

(c) to provide for such schools and institutions where these do not exist".

- Right of the State to regulate education (7):

"It shall be the right of the State -

(a) to establish a national minimum curriculum of studies for all schools;

(b) to establish the national minimum conditions for all schools; and

(c) to secure compliance with the national minimum curriculum of studies and the national minimum conditions for all schools".

Part III of the Act deals with 'State Schools' and states that:

- Minister's Right to establish curriculum (20):

(1) "Without any detriment to the dispositions in sub-article (2) of this article, it is the duty of the Minister to establish the curriculum for state schools and to establish different curricula for different state schools.

(2) It is the Minister's duty to provide for the teaching of the Catholic Religion in the State schools and to establish a curriculum for the teaching of this religion in these schools, according to the wishes of the Bishops of these islands in this regard.

(3) A school council can ask the Minister to include in the curriculum of their school courses of study which are in addition to those established by the Minister, and the Minister can accede to this request.

(4) The parents of minors have the right to decide that the minors are not exposed to any teaching in the Catholic Religion".

• The power to make regulations (47):

"The Minister may make regulations to give effect to any of the foregoing provisions of this Act and in particular, but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, for any of the following purposes:

(c) to determine a national curriculum of studies without prejudice to the specific religious nature of any school".

Following the publication of the Education Act (Chap.327.) in 1988, and through the powers vested in him through Article 47 of the same Act, the Minister of Education established these regulations:

- Regulations that establish a National Minimum Curriculum at Kindergarten level (L.N. 76 of 1989). These regulations came into effect on 1 September, 1989.
- Regulations that establish a National Minimum Curriculum at Primary level (L.N. 73 of 1989). These regulations came into effect on 1 September, 1989.
- Regulations that establish a National Minimum Curriculum at Secondary level (L.N. 103 of 1990). These regulations came into effect on 1 September, 1990.

These regulations became the Maltese National Minimum Curriculum on the date in which they came into effect.

The Process of Curriculum Review

The Initial Stages

On the Minister's instructions, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, on the 13th March 1996, wrote to the Director General (Education) on the required review of the National Minimum Curriculum. In his letter, the Permanent Secretary informed the Director General that after five years from the publication of the National Minimum Curriculum, the Director General (Education) should ask the Department of Curriculum Development, Implementation & Review to plan and develop a process leading to the submission of a draft new national curriculum by 31 March, 1998.

It was the Minister's wish that this document would be the outcome of a broad process of consultation involving the social partners and the general public. With reference to the three regulations establishing the national minimum curriculum from kindergarten to the secondary level, the Minister requested that these regulations be incorporated into one document. This was intended to drive home the point that education from 3 to 16 years is a continuous experience.

By virtue of a note written on the 27th March, 1996, the Director General (Education) requested the Director of the Department of Curriculum Development, Implementation & Review to initiate a curriculum review exercise, in accordance with the Permanent Secretary's directives.

Establishment of Working Committees

The Director of the Department of Curriculum Development, Implementation and Review established a committee, composed of its own personnel. This committee, known as the Strategy Building Team, was entrusted with the responsibility of proposing a curriculum review strategy and to set in motion a consultation process. A Steering Committee was subsequently set up to implement the review strategy. This committee met for the first time on the 14th February 1997.

The fourteen member committee was led by the Assistant Director for Curriculum Development, Implementation and Review. Its members were drawn from different sectors of the educational system. In fact, the committee was composed of representatives of the following bodies: the Education Division within the Ministry of Education, the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta, the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT), state schools, the Association of Private Schools, the Association of School Councils, and the National Youth Council. The Committee met regularly and constantly kept contact with stakeholders.

Consultations

The Committee engaged in a broad and continuous process of consultation. It sent out around 330 formal invitations for submissions and the invitation was subsequently extended to the general public at a press conference. The feedback received from around 300 individuals and bodies was very encouraging. The majority of written submissions were from teachers, school administrators, Faculty of Education members and officials from the Education Division.

Initiatives that illustrate the nature and extent of public participation in the curriculum review consultation process included one-off or series of seminars and workshops organised by interest groups as well as working committees set up by government departments, parastatal bodies and voluntary organisations. Responses generally reflected the specific interests and specialist areas of the sending bodies. In comparison, the number of responses received from individuals was actually quite limited.

Analysis and Discussion

The process of analysing and vetting each and every written submission enabled the Steering Committee to gain a broad perspective of diverging stakeholder views. Moreover, the Committee engaged in consultations with specialists, administrators and practitioners. Decisions covering a wide range of curricular fields were reached after meticulous research and long discussions.

Publication of the Draft Document

Following a detailed analysis and exploration of various possibilities, the Committee reached an agreement on the majority of points mentioned in the document it submitted to the Minister of Education and National Culture on the 30 March, 1998. This date marked the end of the Committee's work.

On April 2 of the same year, 8,000 published copies of the document were distributed among the social partners.

Immediate Reaction

All teachers received a copy of the published draft National Curriculum. Two copies were also sent to every school council; to all public libraries: central, district and local; and to every Local Council. An immediate public reaction was registered. Themes provoking most reaction were: the removal of streaming at primary level; the abolition of the tripartite system at secondary level; the new method of assessment; and the policy concerning the official languages. These topics continued to dominate the national debate till the end of the second round of consultations with the stakeholders.

The Department of Planning and Development within the Education Division embarked on a number of initiatives aimed at generating public awareness. This Department organised meetings for school heads and distributed questionnaires among teachers and parents. Many schools held meetings for teachers before filling in the questionnaire. A large number of schools organised meetings for parents.

Between November 1998 and January 1999, the Minister of Education carried out several meetings with special interest groups. These meetings focused on the official languages, church schools and the world of work.

The Media also provided its own contribution. Greater awareness of the draft document's content was generated, between April 1998 and March 1999, by newspapers (articles, letters to the editor and editorials) as well as radio and television stations.

As with the first round of consultations, several organisations and individuals submitted their reactions in writing. A few organisations, such as the Association of School Councils, organised public seminars during which their proposals were discussed.

Formulation of the Final Document

Towards the end of March 1999, the second round of consultations was brought to an end with a meeting for teachers of hearing impaired students. This month marked the beginning of the process of writing up the final document. The Minister received the first draft of the final document on the 12th April, 1999. Subsequently, this second draft of the National Minimum Curriculum, together with a summary, was sent to the Director General of Education, the MUT, Church school and independent school representatives and the Opposition in Parliament. The individuals and organisations that had been consulted were given up to 5th July to submit their feedback in writing. During this period, the Minister of Education vetted the final draft of the National Minimum Curriculum as well as the final comments concerning it. He did so together with the Director General of Education, the Director for Curriculum Development, Professor Kenneth Wain and Dr Carmel Borg, the last mentioned two persons from the Faculty of Education, of the University of Malta. Following other changes to this draft document, the final version, approved by the Minister of Education, was presented to the Government Cabinet on Monday 20 September, 1999. The Cabinet discussed the document and formally decided to adopt it and to forward it to the Parliamentary Social Affairs Committee for its consideration prior to the final publication. The Parliamentary Social Affairs Committee dedicated nine of its October sessions to hearings on the final draft of the curriculum to which were invited stakeholder representatives. Suggestions were subsequently integrated into this final text.

RECOGNISING THE CHALLENGES

On the threshold of the new millennium, the people of Malta must continue to engage in critical reflection and training that will enable them to confront the socio-cultural, economic, industrial and political challenges that characterise a small island state in a world that is evolving into a global village.

The world of the new millennium will remain one that is characterised by continuous and rapid change. Among the recurrent challenges that the Curriculum must strategically address are: developments in science and technology; the ability to make use of the recent developments in these areas; digital processing of information and knowledge; developments in the cognitive sciences, with an emphasis on individual learning styles and their effects on pedagogical approaches, and the impact of the media.

With respect to the Maltese context, the National Minimum Curriculum must tackle specific issues that arise as a result of the role of our country in the Euro-Mediterranean region and its progression towards full EU membership. In order that the country can participate and compete in this political and socio-economic milieu, the Euro-Mediterranean dimension must be strengthened at all levels of the educational system. The educational system must also address the responsibilities connected with the prospect of European citizenship and the political and economic realities which full EU membership entails.

Our country must look not only towards the North, in the direction of Europe, but also towards the Mediterranean, the cradle of some of the oldest cultures, that has helped to form us and to enrich us with its diversity. The challenges and tensions in these regions should not only capture our imagination but should also enhance Malta's presence in the process of Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.

The socio-economic evolution that took place in recent years is characterised in particular by the decentralisation and globalisation of ideas, by the emergence of an information society, by an intensification of the process of secularisation, by a crisis of values and traditional lifestyles, by the threat to the physical and social environment and the challenges posed by demographic shifts. These developments require a concrete response from all stakeholders in the educational enterprise.

The above challenges are of direct interest to those responsible for the planning of educational programmes, and to all those connected with the educational process. Particularly strong are the needs:

- for ongoing renewal of professional knowledge and skills. Only thus can we keep abreast of the ever-changing conditions of work and life occurring in a changing world that constantly threatens us with irrelevance;
- for our society to be always prepared for the challenges posed by a competitive global economic environment,

- for our country to move forward with an identity in a global scenario where the concepts of nation and national identity are constantly called into question through the process of globalisation and the emergence of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and pluralist societies. We must add to all this the need to provide satisfactory political responses to the tension arising from the confluence of two contemporary cultural trends: the trend of inclusion and the erosion of social barriers; and the strong emphasis on the affirmation of identity and difference;
- for our country to provide an appropriate response to social forces that unsettle individuals. In a social context characterised by consumerism and the erosion of the traditional value of solidarity, one encounters problems concerning identity, meaning and values;
- for the people of Malta to be able to understand and tackle the threats posed by contemporary societies to the stability of careers, work, relationships, values, national culture, and environment.

THE EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CULTURAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

The validity of the curricular experience can be judged from the extent to which the educational system succeeds in responding to the realities and challenges that have emerged in Maltese society, in a world that is becoming ever more complex, global and interdependent. It appears, from the process of consultation, that there is agreement among the educational community regarding what should be the parameters of an educational system that prepares students to live and work in a world that is changing rapidly.

The educational community generally agrees that a dynamic curriculum should provide an educational experience which:

- (1) promotes fundamental values among students;
- (2) facilitates their holistic development;
- (3) motivates and prepares them to be lifelong learners;
- (4) enables them to live a full and productive life in a shrinking global village;
- (5) prepares them for the world of work, where change is a fact of life.

Values and Socialisation

The fundamental values of love, family, respect, inclusion, social justice, solidarity, democracy, commitment and responsibility should constitute the foundations of the compulsory educational process. These values should be woven into every aspect of this process.

Several studies have shown that the family is a key feature of the Maltese identity. From its early stages, education should affirm the value of the Maltese family that is adapting itself to different ways of life. The school should help children and youngsters understand the impact that information technology is having on the organisation of work, an impact that affects Maltese family life. The family lies at the heart of the process of solidarity. One of the important aims of education should be the preparation and sound formation for marriage and family life. This National Minimum Curriculum recognises that knowledge of Religion is in itself essential for the moral and spiritual development of a society around values that lie at the heart of social conviviality and understanding.

The schools should serve as a testing ground for democracy in keeping with the declarations and treaties signed by Malta in the past, and with the constitutional obligations of the country. As key institutions within civil society, schools should foster among their students respect for others, and for the right of other people to enjoy freedom, peace, security and the benefits of a society governed by law and order.

In a society that is increasingly becoming multi-cultural, the educational system should enable students to develop a sense of respect, co-operation, and solidarity among cultures.

Security and peace in the region depend on the ability of people to co-exist despite their differences. The educational system should help students better understand individual, local and regional differences and should enable them to live a productive and meaningful life in a context characterised by socio-cultural diversity.

Intellectual freedom is an important feature of a healthy democracy. Political, ethical, social and religious discussions between students and teachers should reflect this particular feature of democratic life. This does not imply that all voices should be celebrated uncritically. Intellectual freedom is fostered in a context governed by specific values.

In a democratic society, all voices are not only heard but also respected. The educational community must ensure equality of access to the educational system without discrimination on the grounds of ability, gender, religion, race or socio-cultural and economic background. The educational process should cultivate within students a sense of social justice and solidarity. The educational community should actively oppose all forms of discrimination by promoting the corresponding attitudes and readiness to act.

The democratic spirit is enhanced by the school's ability to arouse curiosity and stimulate critical and creative thinking among children. This curriculum is intended to develop citizens who are independent, creative and critical thinkers. The vehicles for the development of critical and independent thinking are: questions, systematic investigation and the exchange of ideas with others.

Technology has to be made into a democratic tool, a force that generates social change and creates new forms of knowledge. Both locally and internationally, those who have no access to technology cannot develop their socio-economic potential, as a result of which the international socio-economic gap is taking on a technological dimension. It is imperative, therefore, that the educational system ensures that all students, including children of different abilities, gain access to and training in technology and the new means of communication. In this way, citizens will be equipped to live in a technological, electronic and cybernetic society, and will be capable of making intelligent use of this technology for the benefit of everyone.

Aesthetic experience, as expressed through forms of art and architecture, should be given priority in the educational agenda. The school should expose students to the local, regional, continental and world cultural traditions and experiences. The educational system should encourage students to express themselves creatively in different situations and contexts. It

should inspire students and show them how human beings, individually and collectively, develop their environment, society and culture.

Finally, change causes doubts, instability and stress. The educational system should prepare students to believe in themselves, and to manage stress. It should empower them to take risks and to respond, in a constructive manner, to social, cultural and economic change.

Holistic Development

The concept of the holistic development of the person places the student at the centre of the system. The Curriculum should therefore be at the service of the students and not the other way round.

Holistic education acknowledges the interdependence of psychomotor, intellectual, affective, social and cultural learning. The educational community would be selling students short if it privileges one of these aspects of the learning process at the expense of others.

Underlying the concept of the holistic development of students are humanistic principles. The basic tenets of this model are:

- human beings are capable of attaining maximum development when placed in an appropriate and stimulating environment which conveys a strong sense of love;
- although small children require continuous adult support, they will, in future, be capable of learning on their own;
- self esteem is crucial to learning. In this respect:
- the teacher's main contribution is to facilitate the child's development at all levels;
- the knowledge, experiences, needs, interests, emotions, fears and errors of the students are to be considered important factors in an effective learning process and
- self-criticism, reflection and co-operative effort are tools for human development.

An effective educational system provides society with persons who are aware of their own potential and are keen to develop further. Such a system seeks to eliminate human waste throughout the entire educational process.

Lifelong Education

In a world that is changing rapidly, the educational community must realise that the idea that students can emerge from the compulsory educational system with a body of knowledge that can serve them for the rest of their lives is simply unrealistic. This idea is at odds with the reality of a continuously changing world. An educational system that promotes this idea is not capable of satisfying one's personal and social needs beyond the compulsory schooling period. For this reason, the obligatory educational system should be regarded as the start of a lifelong process of education.

The concept of lifelong education entails that students emerge from the obligatory curricular experience with skills and attitudes that enable them to continue to learn and live effectively and productively in a world which, though exciting, is unpredictable.

The skills associated with this concept are those of research and inquiry. To be a lifelong learner, one must:

- be aware of one's educational needs and the limitations of one's skills;
- know where to look for information;
- avail oneself of existent resources to satisfy these needs;
- be capable of evaluating one's learning progress and outcomes;
- be capable of making productive use of new learning.

These skills should be complemented by attitudes that are appropriate for such learning. The educational system can be an effective agent of lifelong education if it enables children and youths to gain greater independence and self-confidence, and to transform their fear of continuous change into willingness to embrace its opportunities and challenges.

Global Perspective

In a world in which people are becoming more interdependent, it is no longer possible to plan our present and future without viewing decisions and choices from a global perspective.

An education with a global perspective would allow students to realise that much of what is taking place in our country is conditioned by external events. One ought also to promote the view that the sustainability of life on earth is contingent on our everyday choices.

Communications technology and information technology can help draw our students closer to other students located in different parts of the world. The idea of a global classroom is thus no longer merely a dream.

The World of Work

Education must respond to the world of work in the same way that it responds to the requirements of democratic citizenship. In the context of a global economy, our country faces the difficult task of competing in a market that is characterised by uncertainty. Our economic future depends to a large extent on the degree of investment in our children.

An education that prepares students for a global economy should:

- be based on a model that promotes a diversity of ideas rather than conformity;
- be closely connected to the real world of work;
- enable students to develop their skills and to transfer them to new job contexts whenever necessary;
- prepare students to solve problems by drawing on their intellectual abilities;
- prepare students to be flexible and creative;
- enable students to gain a better understanding of the global economy;
- prepare students to recognise the need for new learning whenever personal and economic circumstances change; and

- help students to become aware of their rights and responsibilities.

For all this to occur, it is important that the school and the world of work draw closer together. The educational system should equip all individuals with a balanced mix of wisdom, knowledge, skills and attitudes in order for them to operate effectively in today's, and particularly, tomorrow's world of work. It can do so by providing hands-on experience so that students can gain some early knowledge of the work environment, the world of business, the world of co-operatives and the management of firms. Among qualities that should constantly be developed in our students are those of management and leadership, teamwork, time-management, communication, and so on. Experiences being gained through such schemes as Young Enterprise, Scoops, the President's Award, and through voluntary organisations should be encouraged and should complement work in the classroom.

For these goals to be attained, agencies connected with the world of work should recognise their duty to be actively engaged in and should invest in the educational system.

THE CURRICULAR PRINCIPLES

The principles that shape this document are inspired by the belief in social justice. Each of the principles described below is indispensable for the implementation of this socio-educational project.

Principle 1:

Quality Education for All

The ultimate aim of the National Minimum Curriculum is to develop an educational ethos that stimulates the development of students' potential without undermining the principles of solidarity and co-operation.

The National Minimum Curriculum recognises the right to quality education as the main aim of this process of curricular review. Grounded in the present, quality education has wider and future impact and is based on respect for all the other curricular principles.

Although the legal structures are intended to guarantee access to the educational system, the National Minimum Curriculum should provide the context wherein all children, without any exception, participate in the continuous enhancement of personal and collective knowledge and the development of those attitudes and skills which the community regards as basic and necessary for a person's holistic development.

Principle 2:

Respect for Diversity

The National Minimum Curriculum commits the State to ensure that all students are provided with the best possible educational experiences, irrespective of their social realities and abilities.

Each school is endowed with a vast repertoire of skills, experiences and needs. This diversity, allied with the individual and social differences evident in the student population, enables and requires a pedagogy based on respect for and the celebration of difference.

Local and international research drives home the point that whenever there has been an attempt to standardise knowledge, with the focus being on content rather than on the

learning outcome, numerous students feel marginalised by the system, viewing it as irrelevant to their needs. They end up socially excluded and without the necessary means to live fully and effectively in society.

To this end, the educational community must develop a system that identifies, from an early stage, the potential and needs of all students. As a result, programmes can be developed that maintain students on course to continuously achieve progress. The National Minimum Curriculum provides enough space for schools to tackle the educational realities of their students. Because of this relative autonomy, the educational provision of schools can be two pronged: a basic educational package for everyone and specialised provision catering to the particular needs of specific students.

The students come from different social contexts: the school environment is neither the children's first nor their only learning environment. Both research and the experience of those involved in early childhood education indicate that differences between children are apparent at an early stage. These differences are partly the result of the different experiences to which children are exposed before starting to attend school. Without adequate interventions by the school, these differences become more apparent as the years go by and as the educational challenges become more complex and demanding.

An effective educational system recognises the link between the home environment and differences between children. When possible, the education of children should be linked to educational and participatory programmes for their parents or guardians. Students who are denied a support system outside the school should be given special attention.

Students learn differently: different students learn differently what is being taught. There are those who learn best through concrete experiences; others who learn best through abstract thinking and concepts. Some students prefer didactic methods; others enjoy learning on their own; still others prefer to work in groups. Teachers should be aware of these differences and their pedagogical implications so that they can engage in a more effective pedagogical approach based on the provision of different learning experiences.

Students develop at a different rate: although research has indicated the norms of development, it is a well-established fact that not all students develop at the same rate. Students should be allowed time and be given the necessary support for their personal development.

Students go through different phases of development: several theories of human development consider the process involved as a series of phases that each individual must go through. The educational community must ensure that the materials and concepts developed at different levels of the educational system take into account the students' type and level of development. For example, the use of abstract concepts, when pupils are still in the concrete operational stage, will result in the students not being able to understand the basic elements of more complex material.

Principle 3:

Stimulation of Analytical, Critical and Creative Thinking Skills

Students learn by asking questions and by establishing connections. Learning is an active process involving an ongoing search. Students learn from their everyday experiences through observation, listening, investigation, experimentation and the comparison of what has been discovered with what is already known.

Learning is an organic process of invention and mental restructuring and not a mechanical process of gathering information. Those who are learning are in a process throughout which they are constantly changing and refining their present modes of knowing. Students need to change their modes of knowing in an active manner. Teachers or learning systems must facilitate this process. A healthy education therefore encourages:

- a pedagogy based on questioning and not a pedagogy based on answers; questions that lead to further questions rather than answers;
- *learning by doing*, which involves the creation by students of concrete and relevant objects, a process that involves looking at the problem.

The curriculum encourages a process of continuous search. Teachers should help students not only to establish the link between people, things, events, processes and ideas, but to continuously change or elaborate their structure of knowledge.

Students are not empty receptacles to be filled. Students are a flame to be set alight. The educational process is not a production line. Convenience, technocratic efficiency and mass production are not characteristics compatible with an educational process that places students at the centre of the curriculum. The National Minimum Curriculum recognises the interests, knowledge and student experiences, and reflects the understanding that students are capable of transforming and personalising new knowledge. In other words, the National Minimum Curriculum regards students not as passive recipients of static content but as critical and creative thinkers and producers of knowledge.

Principle 4:

Education Relevant for Life

Students consider the learning process to be relevant when they establish a link between school work and their personal experiences. When this relevance is not clear, teachers must establish the connection between what is being taught and its application and relevance for everyday life. Students develop a love of learning when they realise that learning, in terms of both content and method, helps them throughout their life.

In this context, the educational process must extend beyond the confines of the school. Historical monuments, museums, permanent and temporary exhibitions, the workplace,

institutions, and the natural surroundings offer an important educational context and should be an integral feature of the teachers' scheme of work.

Technology is a unique aspect of human life-experience. It forms part of our country's cultural heritage as do literature, science and art. For this reason, technology should be studied as an integral part of the educational system. The teaching of design and technology in schools ensures that today's pupils are suitably prepared to live and work in a technological world. This is fulfilled through the teaching of technical awareness, design methodologies, and the application of problem-solving skills to real life problems. The teaching of design and technology stimulates both intellectual and creative skills and develops the personal qualities necessary to ensure that a project is successfully developed from the conceptual stage through to the creation of the final product.

Principle 5:

Stable Learning Environment

Students learn best in a stable environment. Research has established the fact that a child's transition from one educational phase to another (from home to school, from kindergarten to primary school, from one class to the other, from primary school to secondary school) can constitute a very delicate moment in their educational development.

Students, especially those who lack support at home, can suffer as a result of a sudden change of expectations regarding their educational efforts and in their learning environment. Students require smooth transitions. A sense of continuity would enable students to realise that education is a process and not a series of disconnected episodes.

Throughout the period of applicability of this Curriculum, all those responsible for education in our country should adopt those measures that ensure the fulfilment of this principle. A more integrated organisational structure needs to be developed to ensure the child's smooth transition from one educational stage to another.

Importance should be attached not only to the reorganisation of schools but also to the strengthening and, where necessary, the setting up of resource centres and centres of specialisation. Such centres should provide communities of practice in different areas of knowledge, especially in those areas where practice is widespread and research is available. Teachers and students can benefit from the availability of resources that reflect recent developments in particular fields. The former can also avail themselves of these centres to undergo continuous professional development in their respective areas.

Principle 6:

Nurturing Commitment

Education requires commitment on the part of students. While the National Minimum Curriculum underlines the provision, throughout the educational system, of pleasant and stimulating learning environments, students must realise that there is a link between order and making good use of one's time, on the one hand, and personal discipline, continuous effort and success in education, on the other. A more humanistic education must therefore not be misconstrued as one that promotes laziness and a laissez-faire attitude. On the contrary, the educational process should ensure that the students understand the value of developing a sense of commitment if they want to enjoy a meaningful, happy and prosperous life.

Principle 7:

Holistic Education

While the organisation of content in terms of different subjects will remain as at present, the curriculum review should lead towards a greater integration of educational content in a way that reflects knowledge that has a basis in life experience. This integration helps students to establish a relationship between the different areas of knowledge and encourages an interdisciplinary application of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

One can gather, from the holistic policies underlying this document, that each area of human development is important. The educational community must therefore ensure that no aspect of this process of development is privileged or marginalised.

The holistic spirit of this document should be reflected in the social relations of education which teachers develop, through their pedagogy, in the classroom. The pedagogy of co-operation, based on group work, should transform the hitherto competitive and individualistic tendencies typical of Maltese classrooms, into a hive of synergetic collective endeavour. It is through discussion, exchange of ideas and collaboration with others that we clarify our thoughts, learn how to ask questions, change and elaborate our concepts and gain exposure to different modes of thinking and action.

Group work, one of many pedagogical tools, should provide a context wherein teachers stimulate the students' creative potential so that they can solve problems together and contribute to the production of knowledge. We should not labour under the illusion that, by simply placing tables next to each other, we are engaging in serious classroom work involving groups. Genuine group work implies that, the control over the production of knowledge does not remain in the hands of teachers but is shared among students. An educational context based on holistic principles is essentially a democratic context in which a balance between individual and participatory learning is achieved.

Holistic principles should also lie at the heart of the student-school relationship. A school which follows these principles:

- considers each student as special;
- trusts students;
- generates a spirit of co-operation among members of the learning community;
- enables students to feel a sense of ownership of the school;
- considers knowledge as not being separate from life and from the means by which it is explored, attained and used;
- ensures that learning is based on concrete life experience (and not only on abstract concepts) and on the modern means of acquiring information;
- provides students with a pleasant environment.

A holistic approach to education requires schools to develop close relations with the community. In another section, this document explains how schools can develop into community centres.

Through the Internet and links with foreign schools, the local school must be transformed into a global school. Students can thus engage in a transnational communicative relationship and, at the same time, gain experience in the area of international co-operation and solidarity.

Principle 8:

An Inclusive Education

An inclusive education is based on a commitment, on the part of the learning community, to fully acknowledge individual difference and to professing as well as implementing inclusionary politics. This concept recognises the full range of educational interests, potential and needs of students.

The implications of a commitment towards diversity extend beyond the educational domain. Society has a moral responsibility to affirm diversity, if it believes in the broadening of democratic boundaries, in the fostering of a participatory culture, in the defence of the basic rights of children, in the constant struggle against all those factors that prevent the students' different abilities from being brought to fruition and in the safeguarding and strengthening of our country's achievements in the social and cultural fields.

The reactions received by the Minister of Education, with respect to the draft Curriculum, clearly indicate that teachers do not feel sufficiently prepared and supported to address this great challenge. Therefore, while this document acknowledges the principle of inclusion as the one which should be followed throughout the Maltese educational system, the forthcoming years should be considered a transitional period. During this period, one should lay the necessary educational infrastructure, commence the necessary preparation of teachers for such a change and carry out an educational campaign among parents intended to bring about a change in the social perception of education.

During the period preceding the implementation of the project of full inclusion, the educational community must remain committed to social justice and invest most in those children who, for different reasons, risk repeating the school year, being absent from school, becoming school 'drop-outs' or completing their schooling period lacking the necessary skills and with low self-esteem.

The National Minimum Curriculum recognises that, in a scholastic environment characterised by diversity, the spoken language is not the only means of human communication. For example, some students communicate through sign language or through the use of the braille method. The educational system must ensure the availability of all the necessary facilities so that all those children whose first language is not the spoken language are not excluded from mainstream educational provision.

Principle 9:

A More Formative Assessment

An education which recognises diversity regards formative assessment as indispensable for the carrying out of a democratic agenda. This mode of assessment focuses on the individual student in a manner that is beneficial to her or him. In brief, modes of formative assessment have the following advantages:

- formative modes of assessment help students gradually develop a series of abilities. The situation regarding individual students, as revealed by this process, provides a clear picture regarding the stage the students have reached in their assimilation of a whole repertoire of skills;
- formative modes of assessment require a pedagogy based on the development of different abilities rather than on the memorisation of facts.

These modes of assessment do not discriminate among students.

On the contrary, their purpose is to indicate the stage at which students had started their present stage of learning and the stage or stages they can reach in their individual process of educational development. Formative modes are more accurate in their assessment than those of a summative nature. Formative modes give a holistic picture of the student's development in terms of (1) how much the student has learnt (2) the manner in which the student has learnt.

The National Minimum Curriculum consolidates the work that has already been accomplished in this respect with a view to rendering the mode of assessment more beneficial to the students. The accurate information gathered and carried forward from one year to another can guarantee continuity and development based on individual progress rather than on universal norms.

Principle 10

The Strengthening of Bilingualism in Schools

The National Minimum Curriculum considers bilingualism as the basis of the educational system. This document regards bilingualism as entailing the effective, precise and confident use of the country's two official languages: Maltese, the national language, and English. This goal must be reached by the students by the end of their entire schooling experience.

The practice encouraged by the National Minimum Curriculum is that which can be found in all the other European countries: knowledge of foreign languages is developed following one's knowledge of the native and national language, Maltese.

The process of strengthening Maltese, the language used by the majority of Maltese children in their home and community environment, contributes to their holistic development.

The development of the first language:

- provides a context for problem solving and the creation of knowledge;
- facilitates the formal teaching of the same language;
- maintains the linguistic tradition of Maltese society; and
- facilitates the development of other languages.

The National Minimum Curriculum, therefore, provides students with every opportunity to develop their first language. The country's communicative culture is thus strengthened, greater understanding is fostered and personal expression is enhanced.

While students are in the process of strengthening the first language, the school must ensure that the children are familiarising themselves with the second language. The process of familiarisation with the second language, prior to the start of formal teaching, can take longer than that which occurs with respect to the first language. The school could, after all, constitute the only source of learning in the second language.

The study of the sociology and psychology of languages demonstrates that students develop their linguistic skills in different environments, at a different rate and through different means. The educational community must realise that there is no uniform remedy for the difficulties encountered by students in the process of developing these languages. Each school must develop a linguistic strategy which reflects the particular linguistic needs of its students. In so doing, it should not overlook the fact that Maltese society has its own native language and recognises English as an official language that has also developed into an international lingua franca. Equal importance should be given to the teaching of the first and second languages at all levels.

Formative assessment provides the school with the opportunity to provide effective remedies to individual students to overcome their linguistic difficulties.

Principle 11:

Gender Equality

The educational system should be based on the principle of gender equality based on respect for gender difference. While recognising such differences and encouraging the affirmation of gender identity, this curriculum should strengthen the educational community's commitment to guaranteeing equal opportunities for everyone, irrespective of gender.

Because of this commitment, the Curriculum assigns to the educational community the responsibility of ensuring that boys and girls:

- follow the same curriculum;
- are catered for in a manner that ensures equal access to the same work opportunities;
- are exposed to the same educational experiences.

Boys and girls should have the opportunity to effectively choose the subjects they want to learn. Theirs should be an informed choice. For this to occur, the students:

- need to be aware of their academic inclinations and the fields for which they have an aptitude;
- need to know what various subjects entail, especially those subjects that are stereotypically associated with one gender or another;
- need to understand that both boys and girls can learn these subjects; and
- know what career opportunities are available to them after studying these subjects.

In this respect, the teachers' attitude, choice of language and guidance with respect to subject and career choices can have a very strong influence on the choices which students make.

Gender equality is not a theme that should be treated by the school in isolation, or during the teaching of a particular subject. Equality should be an interdisciplinary theme which teachers can develop within the context of their particular subject, confronting prejudice and promoting more gender inclusive alternatives.

Schools should ensure that the resources availed of by the educational community do not undermine the principle of equality. In choosing and producing resources, the schools should actively explore and create texts and visual representations that promote the principle of equality. One should examine such material in terms of what people of different gender are doing and saying, the spaces they are occupying and the amount of control being exerted on their lives.

Rather than discarding books and other teaching resources that do not reveal any sensitivity to issues concerning equity, schools should use these in discussions centring around such topics as gender discrimination, sexual abuse, and the creation of stereotypes.

Structural change should be complemented by ongoing renewal of the teachers' pedagogy. In co-educational schools, teachers should tackle such pedagogical and organisational themes as:

- gender interaction during group activities;
- the amount of attention devoted to people of different gender;
- expectations regarding people of different gender;
- responsibilities assigned to people of different gender.

It is an acknowledged fact that the school is not the only site where gender stereotypes are created. Schools should therefore adopt a holistic strategy in this regard. Those who are responsible for the upbringing of children should be informed of the different aspects of the concept of equity and, at the same time, be afforded the opportunity to reflect on their thoughts, attitudes and behaviour in this regard.

Principle 12:

Vocation and Competence

Competent and effective teachers are indispensable for the implementation of the project at hand, namely that of providing all children with the best possible educational experience.

This document defines competent and effective teachers as persons who:

- are academically prepared for their profession;
- espouse democratic principles;
- are committed to safeguarding and promoting social justice;
- embody, through their action, the principles that they espouse;
- are committed to developing the potential of every individual and to preparing every individual to live and defend the principle of a caring society;
- consider themselves as cultural workers committed to ensuring that education is placed at the top of the country's political agenda;
- contribute, by means of research, writings and dialogue (within the school and in the public sphere), to the development of education in Malta;
- seek to collaborate with parents and other participants in the educational process;
- seek to continuously develop themselves through reading, reflection, exchange of ideas with colleagues, courses and ongoing experimentation.

Competent and effective teachers strive to foster among their students, both morally and intellectually, a sense of democracy and social justice. Teachers are democratic and just in their pedagogical practice when they choose to:

- treat students on an equal basis, irrespective of social background, gender, religious affiliation and ability or disability;
- make every effort to ensure equality of access to the educational provision inspired by this curriculum and that all students emerge from this educational experience with at least the basic skills mentioned in this document;
- spread knowledge of students' rights and duties;
- recognise student differences and project positive images of different people;
- encourage students to question and to think critically and analytically;
- encourage the kind of practice that stimulates co-operation and solidarity;

- allow space for students' personal narratives to be expressed;
- respect students' interests and different learning styles;
- incorporate the students' interests, styles and needs in their schemes of work and lesson plans;
- are conscious of their own style and do not impose it on others;
- generate practice that stimulates curiosity, investigation, logical and critical thought and problem solving;
- secure student consensus for the classroom behaviour code through dialogue.

One can identify competent and effective teachers through their personal qualities. These teachers develop a passion for teaching, reading, studying and moral commitment. This passion is born out of their love and respect for students, their love of knowledge and teaching and their conviction that their work is necessary.

Competent and effective teachers hope that the educational process contributes towards the transformation and improvement of existing social relations. These teachers believe that their dream can be realised through a collective effort. Competent and effective teachers are prepared to share their professional work with other participants in the educational process without compromising their identity as authoritative educators.

Competent and effective educators recognise the importance of the hidden curriculum. They understand that the students' development is being influenced by the teachers' decisions regarding their teaching methodology, classroom management, the amount and quality of time spent with different students, the quality of questions posed to the children and the quality and content of the resources they are preparing or using. Competent and effective teachers therefore are ready to scrutinise their practice to ensure that their decisions and choices reflect sound educational principles.

Human resources in schools: Each school should have the necessary human resources to guarantee high levels of education. The frequent and consistent contribution of specialists in schools should be one of the main features of the educational system in the forthcoming years.

Principle 13:

The Importance of Learning Environments

Learning environments are important features of the educational fabric. There is an intimate relationship between the physical conditions, the allocated space and the educational resources allowed by specific learning environments and the development of student attitudes and behaviour. The process of curricular renewal should confirm the fact that the educational challenges and the pedagogies involved have changed throughout the years. The school environments must be improved or changed. At the same time, the educational community should make a significant effort to explore pedagogical possibilities beyond the confines of the school and to continuously examine the school's relevance with respect to the other environments and realities one comes across in one's life.

The Schools' Physical Environment: the physical environment of our schools should be in good structural condition, accessible to all, clean, spacious, surrounded by fresh air, well-lit, well-equipped, safe and protected from the natural elements. Special importance should be attached to rendering the school physically accessible to persons with special needs.

Teaching Resources: learning should be supported by resources which are of good quality. Each school should have a resource room that serves as a store room for equipment; a depository for books and audio-visual aids; a professional library; and a place where resources can be created.

The educational system should ensure that the books used in schools are pedagogically of the best quality and are socially representative. It is the duty of the educational community to explore schemes that allow students to use the most up-to-date books on the market.

The educational system must also allow for the continuously planning and evaluation of the physical and infrastructural requirements brought about by the use of modern means of information. The computer is still being given lip service. Apart from a change in mentality, therefore, one must seriously consider which physical and organisational changes are required of a school which seriously regards the computer as an indispensable learning vehicle.

The holistic politics underlying the National Minimum Curriculum entails that all sectors of the school follow the aims and principles of this document. Each school must ensure that the educational spaces involved are free from all sorts of danger and are surrounded by resources which enable teachers to carry out their work properly.

The School's Social Environment: a physical environment that is of good quality should provide the basis for a positive social environment. Generally speaking, schools boasting a positive social environment are characterised thus:

- they have great expectations;
- there are dedicated teachers with high morale;
- there is a reciprocal positive attitude among all the participants in the life of the school;
- there is recognition of the success attained by individual students and by the school;
- there is recognition of the teachers' work and dedication;
- the accent is placed on personal esteem;
- there is wise leadership;
- there is continuous encouragement and support;
- there is a welcoming atmosphere;
- the school enjoys good relations and has effective channels of communication with community members;
- there is a continuous effort to render the school more effective;
- there is participation in discussions and administrative decision making.

Principle 14:

Increasing Participation in Curriculum Development

The process of curriculum development is intended to be two-pronged: an ongoing process of planning, development, implementation and review of the measures proposed in the present document and a two-year review of the present document that should take place following a five-year period of implementation.

The curriculum is public property. One should therefore strengthen the idea that people from different walks of life should participate in the entire process, that is to say, the planning, development, implementation and renewal of the curriculum.

At the community level, the parents are among the most important partners in the educational process. It is nowadays well known that parents who take little interest in their child's education are undermining that education. This document therefore regards parents as an important source of support for the curriculum. Parents can support the curriculum by:

- providing a stimulating and stable home environment;
- showing interest in the educational process;
- placing educational investment high on their priority list;
- engaging in dialogue with the teachers and educational authorities;
- participating in educational projects and in research which lead to an improvement in their children's educational services and curricular life;
- providing the school with information that can help their child's development;
- preparing themselves better to be able to provide their children with the best possible help and to be able to participate in a most effective manner in the educational process;
- being prepared to contribute their knowledge and skills, as well as dedicate some of their free time, to the school.

The process of curriculum development in the school should also benefit from the knowledge and skills of those community members who are prepared to dedicate some time to the school. This does not mean that community members will be replacing teachers. Community members should support the work that the teacher carries out during class hours.

Support can be extended to after official school hours with the setting up of specialised groups. The type of groups set up in a specific school will probably reflect the type of support offered by the community. An effort should be made, however, to ensure that the activities organised in the late afternoon and evening should cater to the needs which cannot be met by the teachers and school authorities during the official school hours.

Government and non-governmental organisations and associations should be regarded by the schools as important partners. These agencies offer specialised help and knowledge which is often missing from the immediate school environment.

Principle 15:

Decentralisation and Identity

The authorities should generate a culture of participation in the different areas of the curriculum by maintaining the policy of decentralisation and by helping schools to strengthen their identity and gain in autonomy. Though not by any means a smooth process, school autonomy can help generate a more humane education. It can lead to the development of new skills connected with greater participation and can help foster greater dialogue with the rest of the community.

The broadening of the democratic process necessitates the development of new skills. The participatory process can enable participants to learn how to work assiduously in the interest of community education. Preparation in different areas of participation should help develop the skills of all those who have the enthusiasm and determination to participate in this democratic process.

The educational authorities, together with the University and voluntary organisations, should engage in this area of preparation for a participatory democracy. They should do so to produce administrators, teachers and community members who can successfully avail themselves of the opportunities which decentralisation and autonomy offer schools to provide a high quality education that contributes to human development.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The educational objectives mentioned in this section reflect the educational aspirations of many of those who responded to the call of the educational authorities. These objectives confirm the educational principles and vision of this document that are mainly intended to contribute to the best possible formation of every person so that good Maltese and world citizens can be produced.

The list that follows does not signify some hierarchical list of educational priorities. The educational community must consider these general objectives as interdependent and of equal importance.

The following educational objectives can be realised through teaching and training that enable students to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes related to several areas of benefit to human development:

Objective 1:

Self-awareness and the Development of a System of Ethical and Moral Values

Knowledge/Information

Through the curricular experience, the students acquire knowledge/information in the following areas:

- the different dimensions of the human person: the spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, social and moral dimensions;
- the existential requirements of every dimension and how they are to be integrated in one's process of self-actualisation;
- the values and means they should use to gain complete maturity;
- their rights and responsibilities in relation to the Creator (for those who believe), to others, themselves, the community, the country, the natural environment and animals;
- the value of liberty and its limits;
- the inalienable right of all persons to be regarded and treated equally and without any discrimination, irrespective of race, country of origin, political views, colour, religious beliefs, gender, age and physical or mental ability.

Skills

Through the curricular experience, students develop the following skills:

- the ability to recognise the key contribution of every area of knowledge (religion, literature, philosophy etc.) to the person's holistic development;
- the ability to identify priorities and a scale of values;
- the ability to develop a strong character to be able to choose, decide and put into practice what they consider to be correct and just.

Attitudes

Through the curricular experience, the students develop the following attitudes:

- motivation to discover their personal identity, their goals in life and the means they must employ to attain full maturity;
- readiness to appreciate all areas of learning;
- belief that one should continue to engage in a quest for answers to the fundamental questions of human existence;
- ability to distinguish at all times the difference between choosing that which is wrong, that which is permissible, that which is required as a duty, and that which is better and more beautiful;
- readiness to perceive and minimise selfish motivations in oneself.

Objective 2:

The Development of Citizens and a Democratic Environment

Knowledge/Information

Through a curricular experience, that includes the experience of democratic schools and classrooms, the students acquire knowledge in the following areas:

- the concept of democracy with reference to the meaning of democracy in the information age;
- the history of democracy;
- the history of parliamentary democracy in our country;
- the Constitution of our country;
- democratic life in Malta, the country in general and particular localities;
- citizens' rights and duties;
- our country's democratic institutions;
- modes of participation in our country's democratic life;
- the emergence of interest groups;
- lobbying in a democratic contest.

Skills

Through a curricular experience, which includes the experience of democratic schools and classrooms, the students develop these skills:

- active participation in the classroom and the politics of the school;
- the development of critical acumen and investigative skills;
- the ability to discuss, engage in dialogue, debate, organise and work in groups;
- the ability to work in the community.

Attitudes

Through a curricular experience, which includes the experience of democratic schools and classrooms, the students develop these attitudes:

- appreciating the importance of a democratic environment;
- a critical view of all that occurs within a democratic environment;
- the defence of democracy within the country;

- respect for the country's Constitution and laws;
- respect for the country's institutions and highest authorities at all levels;
- respect for our country's cultural differences and diversity;
- respect for the basic rights of all citizens;
- appreciating the need for participation to generate a strong sense of democracy in the country;
- an appreciation of democratic values and procedures.

Objective 3:

Developing a Sense of Identity through Creative Expression

Knowledge/Information

The educational system should enable students to acquire knowledge and information in the following areas:

- Malta's identity through which the country finds its place in the international family of nations;
- the prehistory and history of Malta and the Maltese, including socio-economic and political aspects;
- Maltese language and literature;
- the religion of the Maltese people;
- Malta's folklore and other traditions;
- our country's history of art, architecture and music;
- the culture, history and different religions of the Mediterranean and Malta's history viewed within this regional context;
- the culture, history and different religions of Europe and the manner in which European institutions are developing a European identity;
- the process by which Malta, like other countries, maintains its character within the context of continental and global diversities.

Skills

By virtue of the curricular experience, the students develop skills in the following areas:

- fluency in the Maltese language as their native language;
- fluency in the English language as the country's official language and as an international language;
- grounding in research to further the study of different aspects of the Maltese identity;
- a strong artistic and aesthetic sensibility capable of being revealed during discussions focusing on different aspects of Maltese and international artistic production;
- an ability to describe the aesthetic value of Maltese and international artistic production;
- the ability to apply aesthetic criteria in one's own artistic production;
- the ability to fuse foreign and indigenous influences during artistic productions.

The foregoing should enable Malta to find its place in the world without any inferiority complex whatsoever with regard to other nations.

Attitudes

By virtue of a curricular experience, the students develop these attitudes:

- a critical appreciation of Malta's cultural heritage: its historical, linguistic, literary, artistic, architectural and other aspects;
- a belief in the importance of development of Maltese cultural production;
- an evaluation of cultural diversity as a desirable social phenomenon;
- an evaluation of xenophobia and racism as undesirable social phenomena;
- an appreciation of our affinities with other cultures and of our own distinctive traits.

Objective 4:

Religious Education

(Education in the Catholic faith is stipulated in the agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Malta regarding Education in the Catholic Religion in State schools.)

Knowledge/Information

Through experiences (individual and collective) and formal learning based on the main documents at the source of the Christian message, students shall acquire knowledge in the following areas:

- fundamental questions and experiences of life that call for a meaningful answer;
- such questions and experiences as: what is their place in Creation; what constitutes friendship, inner peace, happiness, suffering, injustices, self worth, death, the future, and so on;
- the sources of the Christian message (the Bible and the documents of the Magisterium) and its expression throughout history and through the testimony of those who experienced it;
- Jesus of Nazareth - the Person and His works (as revealed in the Bible and known through the Faith of the Church) - as the One who provides a full interpretation of human experience and who stands at the centre of the entire message;
- God and His salvation plan, and how this plan has been and is still being implemented throughout history, as seen through the teachings of Christ;
- the Christian community in which and through which Jesus is still carrying out His message through the power of the Spirit, the proclamation of the Word, the liturgical and sacramental celebrations and the rendering of service in love;
- the values and lifestyle proposed by Jesus Christ as the means of obtaining lasting and full maturity; the commandment of love lying at the heart of Christian morality and spirituality especially in the way it affects the life and development of the students through the various stages of their lives and in the various environments in which they live;
- the characteristics of the most important religions and how each one of them attempts to answer the same fundamental questions concerning human existence;
- the manner in which Christianity has helped develop Malta's culture and identity.

Skills

Through formal learning, individual, group or classroom experiences, through personal evaluation with the help of religious counsellors and teachers, the students shall develop these skills:

- providing solid arguments, substantiated by documentation, regarding one's belief and religious practice;
- searching for the religious dimension in the realities and experiences of life;
- finding time to discover and grow spiritually;
- developing means through which they become conscious of the power of the Spirit especially in times of great difficulty;
- participating actively and meaningfully in religious celebrations;
- seeking communion as the fundamental attitude to be adopted in solving those issues that can arise within the community and among its members;
- offering one's contribution to one's own country and to the world, especially in favour of those who are oppressed;
- analysing and enhancing one's own motivations and actions with regard to the way one practises Christian love in the concrete choices one makes in every sphere of life;
- accepting, understanding, and making dialogue with those who profess a different faith or adopt a different lifestyle.

Attitudes

Through formal learning, guided exchange of experiences, participation in planned celebrations and the help of religious counsellors, Christian students develop these attitudes:

- a more critical, mature and informed (through documentation) outlook on the Christian belief and practice;
- trust in and contact with God, the Creator of everything and Father of all;
- appreciation of Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life;
- courage through the power of the Spirit;
- conscious and active participation in celebrations of the Christian community;
- honesty and Christian love at the heart of all behaviour in every sphere of life, especially those spheres with which students are directly connected: behaviour at home, at school, in society, among friends, while studying, during entertainment, and with regard to sexuality, consumerism, the assistance of people in need, participation in voluntary work, etc;
- respect towards people who profess a different religion or choose not to profess any.

Objective 5:

Strengthening of Gender Equality

Knowledge/Information

The knowledge that students should acquire in this regard should include:

- learning about all aspects of gender equality through every subject in the curriculum;
- national laws regarding equality, especially the Constitution and the Family Law as well as the laws governing conditions of work;
- the United Nations' Convention on the Abolition of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- the European Convention on Human Rights;
- recognising the effect of the hidden curriculum in this regard.

Skills

Through the curricular experience, students develop skills in the following areas:

- choosing well in every aspect of life, including their career and relations with others, both family and professional relations;
- recognising both their personal and other people's dignity;
- appreciating and accepting gender difference;
- recognising, resisting and criticising discriminatory attitudes and situations;
- proposing and carrying out according to one's circumstances the changes necessary for the country to move in the direction of genuine and effective equality between men and women.

Attitudes

Through the curricular experience, students develop the following attitudes:

- readiness to change negative attitudes; for example, prejudices regarding gender equality and equality between people of different sexual identities;
- belief in the necessity to abolish all types of negative discrimination;
- strong belief in social justice that includes the fundamental principle of equality between women and men, girls and boys;
- recognise that difference is not a threat but something to be valued.

Objective 6:

Education on Human Sexuality

Knowledge/Information

Through the curricular experience, students should acquire knowledge in the following areas:

- the link between sexuality and gender politics;
- stereotypes regarding sexuality;

- the range of sexual identities;
- the range of diseases associated with sexuality and information regarding how they can be prevented;
- sexual anatomy and physiology;
- different forms of contraception;
- sexuality and the media;
- sexuality and the law;
- censorship and sexuality;
- sexuality and religion;
- sexuality in different cultural contexts;
- different forms of sexual exploitation and abuse;
- agencies that offer help in this area.

Skills

Through the curricular experience, students should develop these skills:

- how to develop positive interpersonal relations;
- how to make responsible choices connected with sexual activity;
- how to protect themselves against sexual abuse;
- the ability to recognise and report sexual abuse;
- empathy with persons experiencing difficulties related to sexuality or their sexual activity;
- how to avoid talk and action that discriminate against or hurt people of different sexual orientation;
- how to engage in a mature debate concerning sexuality.

Attitudes

Through the curricular experience, the students should develop these attitudes:

- understand and appreciate the human body and respect the body of people of different gender;
- have an open mind about sexuality and act responsibly and positively in this regard;
- respect persons with a different sexual identity.

When dealing with this topic, the teachers must keep in mind the context of moral and religious values of the students and their parents.

Objective 7:

Preparing Educated Consumers

Knowledge/Information

Through the curricular experience in this field, students acquire knowledge in the following areas:

- the free market economy: meaning of the concept; the Euro-Mediterranean and global contexts; distinction between need and desire; consumer choices; the value of money spent; the price system;
- legislation concerning the consumer: knowledge of the laws and other provisions dealing with the consumer's rights and responsibilities; knowledge of general regulations

concerning contracts and other types of agreement; regulations concerning labelling and price tags; information and advice which should be given to the consumer; knowledge regarding how consumers can seek redress in the event of an unsatisfactory product or service;

- advertising: the social function of the means of communication; subtle advertisements; the difference between advertising and genuine information;

critical knowledge of the way advertisements are done; the way the media constructs new lifestyles and their effect on the life of different categories of people;

- consumer associations: their importance in defending consumer rights; their function as sources of information; consumer associations as representing the citizen's interests in a democratic environment; consumer associations as organisers of consumers;

- financial services: knowledge of local and international consumer services that assist people in their consumption activities;

- security: knowledge of products that can prove dangerous.

Skills

By means of consumer education, students should be granted the opportunity to develop these skills:

- ability to budget; to carefully plan their finance; keeping an account of expenses and revenue; comparing prices and judging price in terms of quality; planning one's spending and earning; making good use of available income;

- ability to communicate effectively with providers of services or products, with the Department of Consumer Affairs or with consumer associations; registering one's complaints either verbally or in writing;

- ability to ensure good use of dangerous products or substances; correct interpretation of information provided by the manufacturers;

- ability to analyse critically the advice or information provided by producers, sellers, catalogues, fliers and other sources.

Attitudes

Through the curricular experience in this field, students should also develop these attitudes:

- awareness of the conflict of interest between consumers, producers and sellers;

- critical appraisal of the value attributed to the product or service by advertisements;

- awareness of the consumer's responsibilities to the environment and society;

- appreciation of the importance of consumer co-operation and solidarity.

Objective 8:

Media Education

Knowledge/Information

Through the curricular experience, students should acquire knowledge in the following areas:

- the Media and Society: basic knowledge of the different sectors of the media; knowledge of the media's social function; the media's relations with political and economic institutions;

the symbiotic relationship between the media and society; how the school and the media influence each other; the Press Act and Censorship; the media and democracy;

- the organisation of the media: knowledge of the media's different property structures and of the media as a transnational industry; recognising the importance of the social impact on the consumption of media products; knowledge of the different roles of people working in the media; knowledge of the different systems concerning the financing of the media;
- media content and language: knowledge of the different genres found within different media systems, their differences and relevance for the audience; knowledge of the media's interpretative aspect (eg. media stereotypes); knowledge of the history of the most important media sectors; knowledge of the Internet;
- the media as an educative agent: the educational possibilities provided by the media; different modes of participatory and individual learning that have become possible; the media as a catalyst of change and transformation in education;
- issues concerning the way the media operates: the invasion of privacy, the distortion of truth, slanted views and propaganda, partisan bias, etc;
- understanding conventions concerning the media.

Skills

Through the curricular experience in this field, students develop skills in the following areas:

- language of the media: basic skill in using equipment, techniques and materials connected with different aspects of the media; the production of simple media items; use of the computer and Internet facilities as: (1) a vehicle for using the media, (2) a unique medium in itself;
- media content: the development of basic skills in writing letters, reports and investigative stories; writing simple TV and radio scripts; expressing oneself through the use of the computer; sifting through and analysing what appears in the media, including advertisements; striking a balance in one's choice between educational programmes and others which provide entertainment;
- society and the media: an analysis of the media's role in society and in our specific culture; working to render information technology accessible to everyone, including children with disabilities or different abilities;
- media organisation: analysis of the product bearing in mind the limitations of the organisation which produces the product; familiarisation with the process of production by different media, including different forms such as sign language, the Braille method, subtitles, etc.

Attitudes

Through the curricular experiences in this field, students develop these attitudes:

- language of the media: the development of a critical attitude towards the media; appreciation of the aesthetic value and the cultural impact of the media's different sectors;
- media content: development of a critical attitude based on a system of personal values; the development of a selective attitude regarding media consumption;
- society and the media: readiness to defend freedom of speech; a critical attitude towards the media;

- media organisation: development of a critical attitude in connection with the organisational need of production.

Objective 9:

Effective and Productive Participation in the World of Work

Knowledge/Information

In this area, the pedagogical strategy involved is much more important than the content. It is important that the tools for learning (the lesson, hand-outs, memory tests, etc.) do not render the learning process removed from the reality of work and that the teaching is not rendered abstract and irrelevant. It is desirable that the approach is 'case based' and that the students are exposed to direct work experience.

The educational system should prepare students for the world of work by helping them to develop knowledge and acquire information about:

- the different sectors of the Maltese economy;
- the global economy and how this affects the Maltese economy;
- the changing work environment in an information society;
- different workplaces and the required skills;
- the work ethic;
- the system of taxation;
- the sociology of work;
- workers' organisations;
- employers' organisations;
- the social and political history of Maltese workers;
- the Maltese cooperative movement;
- the search for employment;
- adult training agencies;
- the laws and regulations governing security at the workplace;
- the laws governing the rights and duties of Maltese workers;
- the system of social benefits for different categories of workers (full-time/part-time/unemployed) and support for persons with a disability;
- the systems of financial assistance in the area of work;
- the European Union as an economy and labour market;
- knowledge of international labour conventions;
- the European Union's economic institutions.

Skills

Through the curricular experience, students shall acquire the following skills:

- ability to develop interpersonal skills, including the ability to work in groups and to control emotions in difficult circumstances;
- planning, organisation and evaluation;
- awareness of one's potential and the development of such potential in the best personal and social interests;
- discussion and negotiation skills;

- effective time management;
- ability to carry out the basic requirements of effective planning, presentation, implementation and evaluation of a project;
- ability to solve problems related to the world of work;
- ability to concentrate at work;
- awareness of occupational hazards and the ability to eliminate them;
- ability to interpret regulations, orders, directives and instructions;
- ability to choose a career in an informed and responsible manner;
- knowledge of how to prepare oneself for an interview for a job and of what such interviews entail;
- ability to write a C.V. and to prepare a portfolio;
- ability to manage one's income;
- ability to keep abreast of developments in the chosen area of work;
- ability to prepare oneself for a possible period of unemployment;
- good and confident use of information technology;
- proficiency in all aspects of literacy and numeracy.

Attitudes

Through the curricular experience, students shall develop an attitude of appreciation of:

- different types of work;
- the need for workers to join work organisations;
- the need for workers to follow the work ethic;
- the importance of accountability and initiative;
- the importance of education not as a time-conditioned state which stops at the end of the compulsory schooling period, but as a lifelong process;
- the importance of creative thinking as a key element for success in each area of work.

In addition students should become aware that:

- certain types of work require long term preparation;
- a lack of interest in one's education can result in unemployment;
- the work content in each trade and profession is constantly changing.

Objective 10:

Education for Leisure

Knowledge/Information

Through the curricular experience, students acquire knowledge in the following areas:

- different possibilities for making use of one's free time;
- the implication of one's choices in this respect;
- the educational value of many leisure activities;
- the valid contribution to the community which can be provided through one's engagement in social work during one's free time;
- leisure as an industry;
- possibilities for employment linked to leisure time;
- sport, voluntary organisations, cultural activities and places of cultural interest.

Skills

Through the curricular experience, students shall develop the following skills:

- how to evaluate well-known leisure possibilities;
- how to choose well from among a number of possibilities;
- how to plan and make effective and disciplined use of one's free time;
- how to organise group or mass activities.

Attitudes

Through the curricular experience, students develop the following attitudes:

- appreciation of the importance of one's free time;
- appreciation of the importance of constructive use of one's free time;
- recognising that everyone has a right to free time.

Objective 11:

Wise Choices in the Field of Health

Knowledge/Information

The curricular experience in this area should lead students to acquire basic knowledge/information about:

- human anatomy and physiology;
- different aspects of human development;
- the nutritional value of different food;
- choice, preparation and preservation of food;
- the production of different food;
- the personal harm caused through certain choices in the area of health;
- basic principles of hygiene;
- the connection between health and environment;
- the country's health system;
- how one can avail oneself of the system of health services;
- the agencies that provide help in the various areas of health;
- the citizens' rights and duties in the area of health;
- how one can be altruistic in the area of health;
- local and international sociology and politics of health;
- the Maltese medical history;
- changes in lifestyle and health services brought about by information technology; and technology in general.

Skills

The curricular experience should enable students to develop the following skills:

- reflect on the consequences of the range of choices in the area of health;
- make informed and responsible choices and decisions about personal health;
- contribute to the improvement of health services in the country in order to safeguard the health of people in different localities and at different workplaces in Malta;
- nurture and develop an altruistic spirit for the benefit of persons who are sick or elderly, persons with a disability, and others who may be at risk or involved in an accident;
- participate in environmental protection initiatives.

Attitudes

Through the curricular experience, students develop the following attitudes:

- respect for life and for the quality of human life;
- respect for one's health and that of others;
- appreciation of the importance of a healthy life;
- awareness of the need for continuous action so that health provision in Malta would meet the highest standards.

Objective 12:

Greater Awareness of the Role of Science and Technology in Everyday Life

Knowledge/Information

The science and technology curriculum should:

- be based on an evolutionary model and on the idea of conceptual change. At every level of the educational process, one should establish the knowledge of concepts, regarding specific themes that students have assimilated at that stage. The educational process would thus entail the changing, evolution and elaboration of the concepts being discussed (students must continuously deepen their understanding of science and of the way scientific processes take place, their knowledge of the application and effects of science on everyday life and their understanding of particular concepts in the different branches of science);
- arouse curiosity concerning natural phenomena and stimulate the asking of questions about them;
- present science as a systematic means of asking and attempting to answer questions arising from observations;
- provide models of persons from past and present times who have distinguished themselves in this area, placing the emphasis on the way they solved problems, the tools they used and their means of communication;
- lead students to understand that the scientific process manifests itself in a web of different areas of specialisation - physical sciences, natural sciences, medicine, technology and so on, which are interconnected in reality despite the fact that they are studied separately;
- indicate the connection that exists between science, technology and society and that this should be made apparent both in the way science is learnt as well as in the curriculum content, textbooks, other educational materials and the mode of assessment;
- recognise that different students can experience science differently;

- bear in mind that information technology plays a key role in the scientific process and the teaching of science;
- provide basic information regarding the duties and ethics that scientists and technologists should observe, including the obligation to inform everyone about their activity.

Skills

Through the curricular experience in science and technology, students develop these skills:

- the ability to develop and strengthen their cognitive skills, for example: the ability to recognise concepts; acquire scientific language; observe; measure; analyse; solve problems; gather and interpret data; make generalisations; create models; communicate; work in a team; and design experiments;
- the ability to apply scientific knowledge in their everyday life;
- the ability to make effective use of scientific and technological apparatus (in laboratory settings and in normal environments) and of computers, audio-visual means, security devices and so on;
- the ability to avail themselves of the tools of information technology to acquire, analyse, classify and communicate information and data;
- safeguarding the natural environment in a sensitive manner.

Attitudes

The learning of the knowledge and skills related to science and technology should enable students to develop these attitudes:

- changing the perception that science is a mass of clear truths, without any conflict whatsoever, which can provide clear answers for every problem that arises and which involves the learning of information and truths which others have discovered;
- readiness to appreciate that the scientific process is one of the means through which one can appreciate life inside and outside the school;
- appreciating the importance of science and technology and their importance in our life;
- appreciating the effect that science and technology have on society with which they are intimately related;
- developing a positive and critical attitude towards scientific and technological developments;
- recognising the limitations of science and scientific methods;
- being ready to engage in experimentation in different aspects of science and technology without undue fear;
- being ready to work to ensure that everyone benefits from the positive results of science and technology.

Objective 13:

Competence in Communication

Knowledge/Information

By means of psycho-linguistic development, socio-linguistic experiences, and formal and non-formal teaching, students understand and learn about:

- the importance of knowing how to communicate so that they can function as full citizens in both Maltese society as well as part of the international community;
- different ways of self-expression and of communicating with people in different situations;
- the different tools and modes of human communication, including the conventional, traditional, and alternative ones;
- the creative and conventional aspects of human communication;
- the meta-linguistic aspect through which they learn to express themselves about the development and use of the language;
- the diversity of human expression in the social, political, and religious spheres and others, used by people with different needs.

Skills

Through the curricular experience in this area, students develop these skills:

- ability to express oneself effectively where the message is clear and easily understood;
- ability to discuss, write and use other forms of expression;
- ability to understand the written and spoken word and other forms of expression;
- ability to communicate effectively in different social situations depending on circumstances;
- ability to appreciate and to experiment with the creative, literary and artistic aspects of human expression.

Attitudes

Through the curricular experience in this area, students develop these attitudes:

- realise that there exists a wide range of human communication;
- recognise that communication can influence the way we think, behave and act and that this could lead to a better quality of life;
- appreciate the creative, literary and artistic aspects of human expression.

Objective 14:

Preparation for Change

Knowledge/Information

The educational system should prepare students for change by exposing them to experiences that enable them to develop knowledge and information about:

- the changes taking place around us;

- the personal and social implications, and the implications for the world of work, of the changes occurring within the country and beyond;
- the change agencies, notably those of science, technology and informatics, as well as the media and tourism;
- the importance of change in one's life;
- periods and episodes in the history of our country and other countries that brought about substantial technological, industrial, social, cultural, political and scientific changes;
- important moments of change in a person's life, such as birth, marriage, death, new relationships and new work commitments.

Skills

The educational system should prepare students for change by providing them with experiences and moments of reflection that enable them to develop these skills:

- the ability to anticipate as well as adapt to and understand change;
- the ability to evaluate changes taking place in one's personal and social life;
- the ability to recognise one's skills and limitations and to make good use of them;
- the ability to create, implement and evaluate an action plan that enables one to tackle change positively in changing circumstances;
- the ability to be creative in managing change.

Attitudes

The educational system should prepare students for change by providing experiences which help them develop these attitudes:

- fearlessness towards change, together with the ability to discriminate and to oppose or embrace change;
- developing confidence in an environment characterised by continuous change;
- enthusiasm about innovation and development;
- emotional and mental readiness to take calculated risks in the context of change.

THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Early Childhood Education

By the time the children start Kindergarten, they will have already attained some degree of independence and will have developed a repertoire of intellectual, social, physical and emotional skills. Many of them will have gained competence in the ability to talk, some of them in more than one language. The children bring to school their individual skills and talents. Some have particular needs which the school must cater for in the best possible manner.

The earliest form of learning occurs in the home or in the institutions where the children are being raised. It is therefore important that, from the start, the schools develop a positive relationship with the environment in which the children are being brought up. This relationship enables educators to gather the required information that enables them to carry out their duties better. The guardians of the school children will benefit from this relationship since they gain awareness of the requirements, goals and characteristics of early childhood education. As a result, they can provide better help, based on the necessary information, to the children at such an important period in their life.

Parent education undoubtedly provides an important foundation for the education of children. The National Minimum Curriculum not only encourages educational programmes for parents of children who are attending school but also urges schools to organise meetings and educational programmes for parents of children who have not reached kindergarten age. These early educational programmes are intended to minimise the differences among children that result from different socio-economic environments.

The main aim of the Curriculum at Kindergarten level is to enhance the holistic development of children. More specifically, the Curriculum at Kindergarten level has these aims:

Intellectual Development

In the area of intellectual development, the Curriculum should help children develop a positive attitude towards learning. *At this level, the Curriculum should stimulate curiosity, exploration, experimentation and the creative use of resources provided by the school. This should enable children to learn how to solve problems, understand better the relationship between cause and effect and prove capable of planning their own learning.*

More specifically, the aims in this area of development are:

- the development of a positive attitude towards learning: research and experience indicate that the educational context of the home is not always compatible with that of the school. One of the goals of early childhood education, therefore, is to socialise children into the school culture. This goal can be achieved in the context of an early education where the children would be experiencing success and learning through discovery and risk taking and without any fear of committing errors.

- the development of skills in the learning process: teachers can enable children to reach this goal by encouraging them to ask questions and to use their motor and perceptual skills (example: the ability to distinguish between a complete object and part of an object), as well as by offering the children opportunities to explore and investigate new things within the environment.

- the development of logical thinking skills: this goal can be reached, for example, by means of activities that enable children to compare and choose objects having common characteristics, and other activities which provide children with the opportunity to solve problems, establish cause and effect relations and organise events in sequential order.

- the development, among children, of concepts and information which lead to a greater awareness of the immediate world around them: this goal includes: consolidating the concept of time (today, yesterday, tomorrow); use of the concepts of quantity, volume and mass; identifying and attributing names to environmental species (plants, animals, people); use of the comparative (more/less, large/small, longer/shorter); the identification and use of words which describe an item's characteristics (eg. colours, shape, size); description of an object's location (down, up, inside); matching of objects.

- development of verbal communication: this goal can be reached during the early education period during which the emphasis is placed on storytelling, songs and rhymes. The kindergarten environment should encourage children to express their ideas and emotions, communicate with other children at play or during other daily activities, make effective use of their native language and begin to familiarise themselves with the second language.

- the first stages in the development of writing skills: the Kindergarten years should pave the way for the early stages of writing during the first years of primary school. One of the principal aims in this area of intellectual development is the confident use of the skills employed to write or to produce graphic signs. The Kindergarten years should make one become keen on writing and foster a love of books. Such interest should constitute the foundation for the production of symbols during the initial primary school years.

Socio-emotional Development

The kindergarten centres should provide the kind of emotional environment that supports learning. In an appropriate emotional environment, the children develop a sense of hope and security that enables them to strengthen their self-confidence. The confidence they acquire through learning in a positive emotional environment enables them to become more curious, active, creative and expressive. They use these skills during individual activities as well as during group play.

The specific goals with regard to the children's socio-emotional development are:

- the development of self-confidence: this goal can be achieved through an early educational programme that promotes confidence through the acquisition of success, the strengthening of the process of social independence and the development of a personal identity.
- the development of a positive attitude to life: at Kindergarten level, the curriculum must: arouse among children interest in and enthusiasm for the activities which take place during the day; help children try their hand at new activities; generate a sense of trust among children and between children and adults; enable children to become more independent; enable children to identify, appreciate and celebrate the physical, intellectual, emotional and social characteristics as well as their differences; enable children to develop a sense of co-operation; promote respect for human rights and the rights of other species.

Physical Development

At Kindergarten level, the Curriculum must enhance one's physical development. *Research concerning early physical development makes it clear that children must consider themselves physically comfortable and healthy to succeed in other areas of development.*

The specific goals for physical development are:

- the strengthening and confident use of the large muscles: by means of the children's controlled and creative movements, the curriculum should help them develop their muscles. These goals can be achieved in an environment equipped with the necessary apparatus and which does not pose any danger.
- the strengthening and confident use of the small muscles: this area includes: co-ordination of eye and hand movement; the use of small muscles during free and controlled activities; the use of small muscles for personal purposes; controlled manipulation of things; effective use of the tools for writing and similar activities.
- using one's senses as educational tools: through the Kindergarten curriculum, the children: strengthen their sense-related abilities; learn how to distinguish between different noises, tastes, smells, textures and appearances; develop a sense of balance; respond creatively to different rhythms; provide better co-ordination of eyes and hands; appreciate the importance of the senses in everyday life.

Moral Development

The Kindergarten curriculum should develop a sense of what is just and good. At this level, children must be made to realise that they have to live in a moral community that can distinguish between good and bad and between types of individual and collective action that either helps or results in hindering or hurting others.

Development of a Sense of Aesthetics and Creativity

The learning environment at Kindergarten level should provide opportunities for children to engage in symbolic representation, imaginative play, art and crafts, drama, movement and music. This process of aesthetic and creative sensibility should also include the appreciation of one's own creative work and that of others.

Religious Development (for those who believe)

Rather than teaching religious concepts or formulae, the learning environment at kindergarten level should create those conditions through which, together with the teachers, pupils can live those concrete experiences that provide the foundation for the spiritual/religious development that will follow.

In particular, the learning environment is to develop in the children:

- a sense of awe and joy in the face of the greatness and beauty of creation;
- a sense of joy, gratitude and security that derives from one's relationship with God;
- an ability to participate in celebrations (singing, sense of friendship, sense of joy, community spirit, symbolic activities) especially those surrounding events in the life of Christ;
- a positive exposure to some of the basic elements from everyday life such as bread, water, silence, listening and other gestures which constitute basic symbols in the Christian message.

Effective Tools that Facilitate the Holistic Development of Children

- A Physical Environment that is of good quality: the learning environment should be kept informal. Space permitting, the environment should be organised in such a way that it provides different small centres of interest. One would at least expect to find: space for the provision of water and sand; a book corner; an art corner; a corner for household items; access to the school yard.

Learning environments convey messages to children. Positive environments are those that are colourful, cheerful, likely to generate happiness, well lit, well equipped, well maintained, accessible, organised and free of danger.

- Educators as animators: the educators involved at this level must ensure that the learning environment satisfies the children's needs and interests. The educators should therefore help create a dynamic environment where children can continuously be exposed to new experiences and face up to new challenges.

When engaging in organised games, the educators must ensure that the activity continues to develop and that its goals are reached. This can occur through appropriate interventions and questioning on their part. In short, the educators must be present during the activity to facilitate the educational process involved.

- Resources: the provision of the necessary resources is crucial in kindergarten pedagogy. The educators must ensure that they not only provide quality resources but also observe the kind of material that the children are using and how they are using it. This observation should lead to concrete action to ensure that the children are using a broad range of educational material.

- Early assessment: the early assessment of children provides a clear picture of the level they have attained in their different levels of development. Formative assessment will start from Kindergarten level.

- Play as the key pedagogical means: the children's desire and enthusiasm for play, their eagerness and concentration during this activity and the intrinsic motivation involved guarantee an educational process that generates both enthusiasm and learning. For this reason, the Curriculum recognises this natural process as the main pedagogical approach during early childhood education.

Primary Education

Primary education is a two-pronged process. The first phase connects with the two-year kindergarten period while the second connects with the secondary school years. The National Minimum Curriculum must ensure a smooth transition from one level to another.

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

The four years that follow early childhood education, considered as the concrete operational phase, mark the beginning of a progression, at a faster rate, towards greater formality in education. This does not imply that one eschews creativity, spontaneity, exploration, play, experimentation, incidental learning, the integration of knowledge and flexibility in the planning and methodology of learning. Children should therefore remain active in their process of development.

The period from Year 3 till Year 6, constituting the second phase of primary education, involves a process in which children are encouraged to reflect, think, engage in creative thinking, ask questions, criticise, solve problems, observe, view information critically, carry

out research and assimilate new knowledge. In the light of this curricular framework primary schools must ensure that children develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable them to further their formal education.

The primary school programme should attach importance to the specific aims explained below.

Learning a Repertoire of Skills

At the end of primary education pupils should have the ability to explore knowledge and experiment with it and be able to communicate this knowledge by means of information technology. They can engage in this exploration of knowledge both individually and in groups. The educational experience involved should be based on an appreciation of the manner in which information technology is influencing language, the way we speak, write, listen, and observe and understand the world around us.

Strengthening of Personal and Social Education.

This can occur through:

- socialisation of pupils in respect to moral, aesthetic, social and spiritual values;
- the affirmation of personal identity, based on the notion that individuals have different ways of learning;
- the affirmation of a social identity and a Maltese identity which entails that individuals be conceived of as citizens and members of society; and
- the development of the basic life skills and learning skills. These abilities enable us to understand and face up to the challenge of a life characterised by continuous change.

Development of enhanced Skills, Knowledge and Attitudes linked to the basic Subjects

At primary level, the basic subjects are: Maltese, English, Mathematics, Religion, Social Studies, Media Education, Physical Education and Sport, Science, Technology, and Creative Expression.

At this level, the general goals in the areas of media and personal and social education can be integrated in the established subjects. This document regards the integration of knowledge, centring around themes, as the kind of pedagogical approach that comes closest to the idea of a holistic education. This methodology should be the dominant feature of our schools.

Fulfilling Principle of Education for Diversity

At the Primary level this should include:

- the continuation of the process of inclusion of pupils with a disability;
- the start of a training programme for teachers in the area of teaching/learning across difference;
- the strengthening of mixed ability teaching in the first four years of primary school;
- the strengthening of support systems in schools;
- early screening of children's needs and potential;
- parent education in the area of 'education for diversity'.

Linking Summative and Formative forms of Assessment

The politics of assessment at primary level must be in keeping with the general principles already outlined in this document. Importance should here be attached to the principles of a holistic education and education for diversity. To this end, the National Minimum Curriculum is introducing a mode of assessment that, between Year 4 and Year 6, will combine summative and formative assessments. During the first three years of Primary school, the process of assessment will be entirely formative.

The formative and summative assessments, together with examples of the children's work, will be kept in a portfolio. This portfolio will be carried forward by the children from one year to the next throughout the entire scholastic period. The portfolio will provide teachers with detailed information regarding different aspects of the children's development. This would enable teachers to address better the potential and needs of individual students and, at the same time, build upon the foundation provided by the work carried out in previous years.

During the fourth and fifth years, schools will be responsible for the summative assessments. In the absence of different arrangements that would be of greater educational benefit, in State schools the final examination at the end of the Primary school and Junior Lyceum Entrance examination will be set by the Education Division. The Education Division will also be responsible for external assessment at the end of the third year of the Primary school. The sole aim of this assessment will be to indicate to the school how the achievement of its students compares with national and international norms.

Implementing a Policy of Bilingualism

With regard to the official languages, all schools must adopt the policy of using two languages. Through its development plan, every school must specify the linguistic strategy which it will adopt over a period of time. The linguistic strategy must include:- a discussion regarding the linguistic methodology adopted by the school;

- information regarding the method of linguistic assessment;
- information regarding linguistic remedial programmes;
- information regarding the process of evaluation of the linguistic strategy.

The National Minimum Curriculum encourages teachers at this level to use English when teaching English, Mathematics, Science and Technology. In classroom situations when teaching these subjects in English poses difficulties, code switching can be used as a means of communication. These situations apart, the National Minimum Curriculum advocates consistency in the use of language during the teaching-learning process.

Primary schools should also recognise that, in the case of some children, the spoken language is not their first language. In view of this situation, the Education Division should continue its policy of setting up specialised centres in schools. These centres are intended to:

- provide support to teachers;
- prepare a number of teachers in alternative media of communication (such as sign language and use of the Braille method);
- create greater awareness, among teachers, of the reality of the situation;
- offer help to those in the community who want to improve their knowledge of and skills in this area.

The Teaching of Religion

Article I of the 1989 Agreement between the Holy See and the Republic of Malta regarding Teaching and Education in the Catholic Religion in State Schools stipulates that:

"the Republic of Malta guarantees the teaching and education in the Catholic Religion in all state schools, of all types and levels, except those at tertiary level, in the context of the school's aims and as an integral part of its work. Nobody, however, can be compelled to receive teaching and education in the Catholic Religion" (pp. 1-2).

In the light of this Article, the National Minimum Curriculum will continue to guarantee the teaching of the Catholic religion in primary schools. Those children whose parents object to their receiving teaching and education in the Catholic Religion should be given a formation in those universal moral values which provide the foundation for civil conviviality. The time devoted to the teaching of Religion or the celebration of a religious event should be used by these pupils for other educational work.

Parent Education Programmes

As with the early years, the Primary sector should recognise the role of parents in the education of their children. The National Minimum Curriculum, therefore, encourages schools to include programmes of parental education and school involvement in their development plan.

Secondary Education

The National Minimum Curriculum encourages dialogue between those involved in the different levels of the educational process. This dialogue should guarantee:

- methodological continuity;
- the elimination of unnecessary repetition of content; and
- continuity in assessment policies.

The University's MATSEC Board should work closely with the Education Division to ensure that the ordinary level examinations (SEC) do not hinder the attainment of the goals set for the Secondary schools sector. The goals are listed below.

Strengthening and Refinement of the Skills developed at Primary Level

This ensures that, by the end of the secondary level, young people can further their education. They would be able to do this because, during their school years, they:

- would have developed the necessary confidence and independence to acquire and process information on their own or in groups;
- would have made productive use of information technology;
- have been given the opportunity to identify and plan their learning needs; and
- have been given the opportunity to evaluate the results of their educational choices.

Strengthening of Personal and Social Education

During the secondary school years, PSE should enable students to:

- reach advanced levels in critical reflection;
- continue the process of recognition and affirmation of personal identity; and
- successfully face up to the challenges of the contemporary world.

Implementation of the Broad Aims within the Curriculum Content

In terms of organising the educational content, one should follow the principle that all students are exposed to the same educational experiences. Through this basic educational package, the educational community ensures equal access to an educational provision that reflects the broad aims of this document.

The review of the curriculum for secondary schooling should lead students to acquire a greater range of skills. It is hoped that this curricular experience would provide students with greater flexibility and adaptability. The National Minimum Curriculum aims to ensure the provision of the necessary resources and teacher preparation.

The basic subjects at secondary level are: Religion, Maltese, English, Mathematics, Foreign Language, Environmental Studies (History, Geography and Social Studies), Physical Education and Sport, Computer Studies, Expressive Arts, Personal and Social Development (PSD), Technology and Design and Co-ordinated Science.

The educational authorities must prepare the necessary infrastructure so that Co-ordinated Science can replace the existing specialisation in this area of the curriculum. Co-ordinated Science includes themes from the different branches of science, technology, nature studies

and applied science. In establishing Co-ordinated Science as a basic subject from Form 1 till Form 5, the curriculum ensures a more widespread knowledge of science. This should lead to more students choosing scientific subjects at post-secondary level. For this to occur, the post-secondary institutions and the University of Malta should reform their programmes. Until this agreement translates into concrete reality, the Education Division will persist with the system of specialisation in Science that starts at Form 3.

Implementing a Policy for Language Teaching

With regard to language teaching, at Secondary level, one should continue with the strengthening of the students' knowledge of the two official languages and the introduction of teaching of foreign languages. This document obliges teachers of Maltese and English to teach in the language of their subject and recommends teachers of foreign languages to teach in the language of their particular subject.

This document recommends that:

- teachers of Maltese, Social Studies, History, Religion and PSD teach these subjects in Maltese;
- teachers of foreign languages teach in the language in question; and
- teachers of the remaining subjects teach in English.

Only in those cases where this poses great pedagogical problems, does the National Minimum Curriculum accept code switching as a means of communication.

This document stresses the need for flexibility so that those students who are weak in the official languages can avail themselves of consolidation programmes in this area. They can follow such consolidation programmes during the time that the other students are learning a new foreign language.

Apart from strengthening the teaching of European languages, namely Italian, French, German and Spanish, the Education Division must ensure that the country can avail itself of a nucleus of people who have a mastery of languages deemed strategically important. These include Chinese, Japanese, Russian and Arabic.

The Development Plan of every secondary school must lay down a policy on official languages. The development plan must provide a clear picture of the general situation concerning the school in this particular area and must indicate the strategies being adopted to improve language teaching in the school.

The secondary schools should continue to implement the Division's policy of setting up centres that enable schools to meet the needs of those children whose first language is not the spoken language.

Adopting Summative and Formative Forms of Assessment

At Secondary level, one should persist in adopting the summative and formative systems of assessment. This should apply to all years of secondary schooling. In State schools, in order that schools can really serve as centres that address children's needs, the half yearly examinations as well as the annual examinations at the end of the first, third and fourth year will be organised by the schools themselves. The annual examination at the end of the second year at secondary level will be organised by the Education Division. The sole aim of this examination will be to indicate to the school how the achievement of its students compares with national and international norms.

Again in these State schools, the school leaving examination will continue to be organised by the Education Division.

The University of Malta's MATSEC Board should continue to strengthen this assessment policy by applying it to every subject. The mode of assessment conditions the type of teaching. Exams which are based only on content can result in the teaching of facts to be memorised. This undermines the above proposals for formative assessment.

The Development of Projects revolving around Themes

In view of the principle of holistic education that underlies this document, it is expected that teachers of different subjects combine their efforts to plan projects centring around particular themes. This document encourages schools to engage students from different years within the secondary education continuum to work together in developing projects.

The Teaching of Religion

As with the Primary sector, this document guarantees the teaching of religion at secondary level. Those children of parents who object to their receiving teaching and education in the Catholic Religion should be given a formation in universal moral values which provide the foundation for civil conviviality. The time devoted to the teaching of Religion or the celebration of a religious event should be used by these pupils for other educational work.

Strengthening of Emotional Development

While there are high expectations regarding academic standards in this document, the educational community is reminded that emotional development is intimately tied to the quality of life provided by the school and the environment beyond it. It is also directly linked to what is occurring in other areas of development. For example, physical and sexual development associated with puberty bring about new experiences, a change in attitudes, the strengthening or lowering of one's self esteem, the strengthening of or doubts concerning personal identity, new psycho-sociological challenges and stress.

The strengthening of emotional development should be the responsibility of the entire educational community. At the same time, this document provides students with access to PSD from the first to the last year of secondary school.

This document encourages secondary schools to ensure that the transition from the beginning of secondary level till the end is a process based on respect for the needs associated with the different phases of human development. These phases together constitute the Secondary level of schooling.

Strengthening Parent Participation

Experience and research indicate that, generally speaking, parent participation in schools diminishes at secondary level. Secondary schools must see to it that this aspect of a holistic approach to education is consolidated through a parent education and participation programme.

SCHOOLS AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CURRICULUM

The educational community is bound by the prescribed educational aims to observe the students' basic educational rights.

The development plan of each school must clearly show that the school has a clear educational vision, clear educational goals and a concrete and realistic strategy regarding how these educational goals must be reached. In the processes of both creating and putting into practice this vision, the educational community of each school must seek to combine the spirit of this document with the particular realities and needs of its school.

The process of interpreting the National Minimum Curriculum should lead the school to:

- enable the different participants to put their heads together in a common effort to develop a curriculum and school development plan in the light of the principles and aims of the National Minimum Curriculum;
- achieve a community consensus regarding different aspects of the curriculum;
- democratise the educational process.

Heads of school must, more than ever before, focus on curriculum work. As educational leaders, the Heads of school must be given every help possible to carry out their work in this area.

The work of Heads of school in the area of curriculum development should include:

- creating a vision and the development of a strategy as part of the school's development plan;
- supervising the process of implementing the curricular vision;
- holding meetings with teachers concerning the different aspects of the curriculum;
- providing continuous moral and professional support to teachers;
- supervising teachers' work in class to ensure that what is taking place in class reflects the spirit of this document;
- providing help to new teachers as they become familiar with the curriculum;
- working to acquire the necessary resources to realise the aims of this document;
- continuously informing parents about the curricular developments taking place at school;
- working so that the community can invest time and work in the school;
- identifying themes and supervising action research.

Action research should constitute the fulcrum of curriculum development. Action research is intended to examine the situation concerning aspects of the school curriculum. Experts in the area of research can help the school identify the theme (eg. illiteracy at school; the teaching of English in early years; creativity throughout the curriculum). The schools should therefore be in possession of a directory listing specialised people and the services they offer.

Success in interpreting the curriculum depends on teachers' competence and effectiveness. The teachers' work should also be supported by the setting up of resource centres that, together with the existing ones, provide the context for the formation of educational communities.

Primary schools, as well as secondary schools, should have teachers who serve as subject co-ordinators. These subject co-ordinators are to serve as internal consultants concerning their particular area.

Throughout the lifespan of this curriculum, schools and all those who are responsible for education in our country should consider and carry out all those measures that are in keeping with the principle that students learn best in a stable environment. For this to take place, one must think of a new way of organising the different stages of state school education, one that allows the smooth transition from one stage to another.

The schools' success can be measured in relation to the principles mentioned in this document. By means of these principles, the educational community hopes that the schools gradually become centres of excellence and ideal preparatory grounds for prospective teachers.

THE SCHOOL AS A COMMUNITY CENTRE

Schools should serve as community learning centres that also cater for the education of adult members of the community. This principle combines the commitment of this Curriculum to a holistic education with the recognition of the importance of lifelong education and the need for stakeholder participation in the educational process.

This entails a new management structure for the use of schools after the traditional school hours. This management should be responsible for:

- the opening and closing of the school building after 2.30 pm;
- the administration of the educational calendar;
- the survey of the community's needs and interests;
- the upkeep of rooms and other school areas used in the evening;
- structural changes and the reorganisation of other parts of the school so that adult users would feel comfortable and respected;
- investment in furnishing and other resources that are required for the running of educational programmes;
- the security of the participants.

The community members have an important role to play in putting this principle into effect. The members can participate in all aspects of the project by:

- responding to management's survey regarding their needs and interests;
- forming educational interest groups;
- assisting in the administration of the projects;
- offering their interests and specialisation to the community;
- participating as students;
- providing help with school maintenance.

The Education Division must strengthen its Adult Education section to provide a support system for these initiatives. As part of this support system, the Division can identify a number of educators, who have undergone preparation as adult educators, to serve as consultants and animators for the educational programme.

This principle offers school and local councils the opportunity to collaborate and, in so doing, draw closer to each other. Local Councils should regard the school as their priority area with respect to investment in the locality. The use of such important assets in the community should be complemented by greater expenditure on the school.

CONCLUSION

Many factors, when viewed together, will prove crucial in the success or otherwise of the implementation of the vision expressed in this document. Successful outcomes depend, among other things, on:

- the provision of effective and timely support to teachers so that they can develop a school curriculum that is both commensurate with the development stage of pupils as well as reflecting their individual and particular needs;
- the teachers' motivation and possession of the required skills;
- the willingness of the Heads of school to join parents and local community members in working together and in a creative manner, for the holistic development of the children and youngsters and for the human development of adults in the community;
- the smooth transition towards decentralisation and the educators' enthusiastic acceptance of the challenge posed by autonomy in the administration of schools;
- the educational system's ability in evolving into a more flexible mechanism and in responding in an educational and dynamic manner to the children's needs and the country's new challenges.

We wish all our educators energy, motivation and enthusiasm so that we can continue to promote, in a participatory and cooperative manner, the process of human development in our country.

APPENDIX: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Minimum Curriculum

In accordance with the Education Act (Chap. 327.) of 1988, and by the power vested in the Minister of Education through article 45 of the same Act, the Minister is substituting the Regulations established through Legal Notices 73 and 76 of 1989, and 103 of 1990 by the document 'National Minimum Curriculum' that shall come into force on the 1st of October, 2000. The following is an executive summary.

Executive Summary

Each school in Malta is to develop its own curriculum. The school curriculum should:

- be governed by the principles and general aims expressed in the National Curriculum, and is intended to help realise those goals that contribute to the full educational development of each boy and girl between the ages of 3-16;
- reflect the specific aims for each level, as expressed in the National Curriculum, and is intended to help realise these aims at the different levels concerned: kindergarten, primary or secondary.

Each school has the duty to satisfy the Minister of Education that it is adopting the measures outlined in this document - those measures regarding the means to implement the curriculum.

To this end, the Minister of Education can request from each school a copy of the curriculum for the year in question, and information regarding its implementation.

The Minister can indicate, through a ministerial decree issued until not later than December of each year, the necessary changes, in the curriculum and in its process of implementation, so that it can conform to the requirements of the National Minimum Curriculum.

In the event that no agreement is reached, the required changes should start being put into effect not later than the start of the scholastic year in the following calendar year.

General Aims

What follows is not intended to be read as a hierarchical sequence of educational priorities. Given their interdependence, these general aims should be accorded equal importance by the educational community.

On completion of one's education in a Maltese school, one should:

1. Be capable of understanding oneself, the world around oneself and that which is deemed morally correct:

Attitudes:

- the different human dimensions as well as the values and means necessary for self-development and the attainment of full maturity;
- one's rights and one's responsibilities towards the Creator (for those who believe), towards others, oneself, the community, one's country, the natural environment, and animals;
- the value of liberty and its limits;
- that all persons have the same rights without any discrimination whatsoever on the grounds of political belief, race, country of origin, colour, religious belief, gender, age, and physical/mental ability.

Is capable of:

- identifying priorities and the scale of values; developing a strong character by being able to choose, decide and put into practice what one recognises as good and just.

Is ready to:

- engage in the search for one's identity, the meaning of one's life, the means by which one gradually attains maturity;
- recognise the difference between one's duty, what is permissible and what is not.

2. Be a democratic person, namely one that:

Attitudes:

- the meaning of democracy and the history of its development throughout the world and in our country; can identify the democratic institutions and the role of each person in democratic life; can identify the institutions or organisations representing the different interests in our country and knows how these operate to secure greater justice.

Is capable of:

- actively participating, through critical consciousness and enquiry (with emphasis on dialogue), in the country's political life, and, following one's exposure to a similar democratic experience in the classroom and the school, is capable of organising activities, working in groups and serving the community.

Is ready to:

- appreciate the benefits of a democratic environment; critically scrutinise all that occurs within such an environment, and defend the existence of such an environment; respect the Constitution, the Laws of the country, basic human rights and cultural diversity; contribute towards the safeguarding and strengthening of democratic values and procedures.

3. Be conscious of one's MALTESE identity, namely that one:

Attitudes:

- the history of our country, from prehistory to the present time; the moral, religious and cultural traditions; Maltese folklore; the history of art, the architecture, the music, the language and literature of our country;
- the history of the Mediterranean and of Europe; the cultures that evolved within these areas; the recent developments in the region and the world and our country's contribution to such developments.

Is capable of:

- expressing oneself well in both spoken and written Maltese; continuously exploring the Maltese identity; appreciating works of art, both Maltese and foreign; engaging in forms of cultural production that reflect the blending of local and foreign traditions.

Is ready to:

- critically appreciate our cultural heritage and contemporary artistic production; respect other cultures; appreciate the intermeshing of different cultures.

4. Understands the Catholic Worldview (for those who embrace Catholicism), namely that one :

Attitudes:

- the main precepts of the Christian message and the lifestyle it entails; how these precepts address the key issues of life; the vehicles for the transmission of this message (the Bible and the Church's Magisterium); the characteristics of the main religions; the affinity between the Christian and Maltese cultures.

Is capable of:

- providing sound reasons, substantiated by documentation, to justify the Christian belief and practice; discovering the connection between human experience and the Christian message; developing spiritually; putting the Christian values into practice, both individually and collectively.

Is ready to:

- engage in a genuine enquiry into the real meaning of life; acknowledge the Christian message as an invaluable source of inspiration and values; develop a sense of faith in God,

friendship with Jesus Christ and empowerment through the Spirit; foster a sense of honesty and love in every sphere; show respect towards those who profess a different faith.

5. Consider Man and Woman as being equal, namely that one:

Attitudes:

- that this equality is entrenched in the Maltese Constitution and Laws, as well as in the European and United Nations Conventions; about the abolition of all forms of discrimination against women and about gender equity.

Is capable of:

- understanding the subtle ways by which such discrimination takes place; making one's choices in all spheres of life, including those of work and the family, without any prejudice whatsoever; accepting gender difference.

Is ready to:

- engage in action against all forms of discrimination and to promote real and effective equity with regard to people of different gender or sexual orientation.

6. Have a good understanding of human sexuality, namely that one:

Attitudes:

- that sexuality should be viewed within the context of truly responsible human relations; the basics of anatomy and physiology, the range of sexual orientations; sexually transmitted diseases and their prevention; the way sexuality is projected in the media and the law about censorship, sexual exploitation and abuse; how sexuality is perceived within the Christian religion and within different cultures; about the agencies that provide help in this regard.

Is capable of:

- relating sexuality to the issue of human dignity; developing positive interpersonal relationships; making responsible choices; guarding oneself against sexual abuse and of reporting such cases; understanding those who encounter difficulties of a sexual nature and preventing violence, in the broader sense of the term, from being perpetrated against people of different sexual orientation; discussing the subject carefully and with the utmost seriousness.

Is ready to:

- appreciate the human body and sexual differences in a positive, open and responsible manner.

7. Be an informed consumer, namely that one:

Attitudes:

- what constitutes a free market; the difference between basic needs and luxury; the difference between an item's intrinsic value and its market value; the laws concerning one's rights and responsibilities; about contracts and other types of agreement between seller and

buyer; about the use of shop signs and price tags; about consumer organisations and services; how to recognise dangerous products; how we are affected by overt and covert types of advertising in the media.

Is capable of:

- planning and maintaining an account of revenue and expenses; judging price in terms of quality and spending one's money well; airing complaints verbally and in writing; viewing critically the information and warnings provided by sellers and producers.

Is ready to:

- recognise the conflicts of interest that exist in this area and to understand the social and environmental effects of different patterns of consumption; appreciate the values of co-operation and solidarity.

8. Be media literate, namely that one:

Attitudes:

- how to choose between different types of programmes and the people whom they target; the history of development of different kinds of media, including the Internet; the social and political importance of such media; about persons who work in the media, how these media are financed and the laws governing them; how the media can be used for educational purposes; the types of problems the media pose in terms of invasion of privacy, abuse of truth and partisanship.

Is capable of:

- making use of the media and developing programmes; writing for the media; viewing critically the media's organisational set up and social function.

Is ready to:

- appreciate the social and aesthetic values of the media; choose the best programmes on air; engage in defence of freedom of speech.

9. Be a worker, namely that one:

Attitudes:

- the way the different sectors of the Maltese economy operate; the way the EU functions as an economic system and as a labour market; the skills and work ethic required for different types of work; the social and political history of Maltese workers, trade unions and employers' associations; the laws regarding the rights and duties of workers and safety at the workplace; the content of international labour conventions; about agencies providing adult vocational education; about co-operatives; about taxation and social benefits; about provision of financial aid to workers and the work ethic.

Is capable of:

- working with others in a spirit of co-operation and solidarity; planning and organising work; recognising the potential of workers and enabling this potential to develop; discussing and negotiating; careful time management; developing projects and presenting them well; understanding and solving problems in a creative manner; not losing one's

concentration; spotting and removing dangers; interpreting rules, orders and instructions; making a good choice of career; doing well during an interview; developing a c.v. and preparing a portfolio; financial management; keeping oneself abreast of developments in one's field of work; not falling into a rut if unemployed for a period of time; not to shy away from information technology; making good use of language and numeracy.

Is ready to:

- follow training courses of long duration required for various occupations and for one to attain perfection in what one is doing; recognise the strong link that exists between learning and work; recognise the dignity involved in all types of work; appreciate the importance of trade unions, and of the work ethic; recognise the importance of giving one's due at the place of work, of showing initiative and of engaging in continuing education related to the world of work; appreciate the value of private enterprise and self employment.

10. Make good use of one's free time, namely that one:

Attitudes:

- how to make good use of one's free time, by being involved in social organisations or by engaging in sporting activities, cultural work and artistic pursuits; the effects of different choices; the value of education and its social contribution, besides the economic possibilities that arise as a result of one's engagement in educational pursuits in one's free time.

Is capable of:

- choosing carefully from among the different existing possibilities; planning and making good use of one's time; organising activities in small and large groups.

Is ready to:

- appreciate the importance of free time, that it is the right of every person; and of using it constructively.

11. Care for one's health, namely that one:

Attitudes:

- the basics of anatomy and human physiology, including physical development; the nutritional value of different food and how one can cultivate, select, prepare and preserve such food; the damage to one's health that can result from bad choices; about the damage to one's health resulting from smoking and from alcohol and drug abuse; about cleanliness and the connection between health and the environment; about health services and the use one can make of them; about the rights and duties of the sick; how to care about other people's health; about the basic social, political and historical aspects of health in Malta and throughout the world.

Is capable of:

- making good and wise choices about one's health; adopting lifestyles that safeguard one's health; committing oneself to the generation of a healthy environment within one's own community, one's workplace and the natural surroundings.

Is ready to:

- appreciate the quality of one's life and that of others, besides the need for continuous improvement in the area of health.

12. Think scientifically and technically, namely that one:

Attitudes:

- that science belongs to everyone; that it has developed throughout the ages and was affected by historical circumstances; that there is a link between each of its sectors; that it is based on experiments and observation; that it is not value free; that there are different methodologies for different disciplines which are, nevertheless, human processes; that there exists a link between science and technology, and that the development of each has great effects on the quality of life and the natural environment; and that science, technology and art are complementary areas within a more holistic human experience.

Is capable of:

- understanding scientific language; classifying and describing; posing precise questions; drawing conclusions; interpreting and analysing; recognising the relationship between space and time; quantifying and formulating hypotheses; creating models, designing experiments and attaining the approval of others; observing systematically, measuring and controlling the conditions of variables; problem solving; using mathematical concepts; providing synthesis; using scientific apparatus, audio-visual means and the computer in an interactive and creative manner; doing odd jobs; observing the code of ethics governing science and technology and the norms with regard to security and the safeguarding of the natural environment.

Is ready to:

- appreciate critically scientific and technological knowledge, the value of experimentation and the need to render this area accessible to everyone.

13. Communicate, namely that one:

Attitudes:

- how to use words and numbers, languages and the system of symbols differently according to context and the type of persons with whom one is dealing; how to express oneself effectively and to understand what others are saying, both verbally and in writing; the rules, conventions and the stylistic aspects of language and human communication.

Is capable of:

- expressing oneself and communicating effectively orally and in writing (both graphically and through the use of information technology) as well as through other means of human communication; of understanding and reading the language in its different forms.

Is ready to:

- appreciate the conventional and creative aspects of language and human communication through one's recognition of the power of the written and spoken word in everyday life.

14. Welcome change, namely that one:

Attitudes:

- the significance of the changes occurring throughout the world and in our own country, particularly the changes brought about by science, technology, the media and tourism; why change is necessary; the effects of periods, throughout history, that were characterised by rapid change; how to tackle periods during which great changes occur in one's life and that of others.

Is capable of:

- preparing oneself in anticipation of changes likely to be faced; devising effective strategies to overcome such moments of change in a creative manner; contributing to bringing about positive change in one's surroundings.

Is ready to:

- react positively to change, viewing it critically; taking calculated risks in an environment characterised by continuous change.

The Specific Aims for Each of the Three Levels in the Maltese Educational System

KINDERGARTEN LEVEL

Children who attend Kindergarten must attain the broadest development possible. This includes (a) intellectual, (b) emotional and social, (c) physical, (d) moral, (e) aesthetic and creative, and (f) religious (for those who believe) development.

A. One would have developed intellectually when one attains:

i) the desire to learn: even when one does not develop this desire within the home. One can develop such a desire by learning how to discover things, take risks and do things without fear of committing errors, and by attaining success at kindergarten;

ii) learning skills: by being encouraged to ask questions, to use one's senses (eg. choosing between a complete item and one of its parts), and to discover new things in one's environment;

iii) logical thought: engaging in activities in which items with similar properties are chosen, by recognising connections in terms of cause and effect, and learning how to place one thing after the other;

iv) greater awareness of one's surrounding environment: arranging objects according to size, eg. plants, animals, people, etc.); awareness of the relations between them (eg. greater, smaller, shorter, taller etc); awareness of difference in quality (eg. colour, form etc.);

v) language proficiency: (eg. by means of story telling, songs and rhymes), so that one can express oneself, communicate with other children during playtime and throughout the rest of the day, make good use of the Maltese language and gain some exposure to English;

vi) writing skills: one becomes familiar with the tools of writing and begins to develop a love of books and other media involving graphic symbols. One is thus being prepared for the teaching of writing during the first years of primary school.

B. One would have developed emotionally and socially, through:

i) the development of self-esteem, through opportunities that would allow one to enjoy success, engage in independent activity and gain greater self-awareness;

ii) the development of a positive attitude towards life by being interested in daily activities, especially new activities, and through the ability to trust others, appreciate difference, co-operate and respect the rights of everyone.

C. One would have developed physically, through:

i) the development of the larger muscles, in an environment equipped with the facilities necessary for one to be able to engage in physical exercise;

ii) the development of the smaller muscles;

iii) effective sensory engagement.

D. One would have developed morally, through:

i) the development of a notion of what is good and just;

ii) the development of the idea of a community that can choose between good and bad;

iii) the development of the ability to distinguish between action that helps others and action that hinders them.

E. One would have developed one's creative potential and an aesthetic sensibility, through:

i) games involving use of one's imagination, art, crafts, drama, music, movement;

ii) activities that encourage one's appreciation of creative works.

F. One would have developed in a religious sense, through:

i) the development of one's sense of beauty, awe and wonder inspired by creation;

ii) the development of one's relation to God as Creator and Father; a sense of joy, gratitude and security;

iii) the development of the ability to participate in celebrations, especially those that recall the principal events in Christ's life;

iv) exposure to those realities, such as bread, water, light, silence and gestures, that are at the basis of those Christian symbols that one would later adopt in the religious community.

PRIMARY LEVEL

Every person should experience a smooth transition from kindergarten to primary school. The same applies to the transition to secondary school. For this purpose, one should:

A. Experience gradual changes in the methods of learning:

- i) during the first years, one continues to learn through the informal methods which are characteristic of kindergarten;
- ii) in subsequent years, one begins to learn through more formal methods of teaching, despite remaining active as a learner throughout. This ensures a smooth transition to secondary schooling.

B. Acquire the following skills:

- i) the ability to acquire knowledge, through the use of information technology and other means;
- ii) the ability to make appropriate choices in all spheres of life regarding:
 - a) moral, aesthetic, spiritual and social values;
 - b) the strengthening of the Maltese personal and social identity;
 - c) basic life skills and ways of learning.
- iii) the ability to forge a systematic link between the following subjects:
 - Maltese
 - English
 - Mathematics
 - Religion
 - Social Studies
 - Physical Education and Sport
 - Science and Technology
 - Creative Expressionby virtue of studies characterised by integrated themes rather than by compartmentalised knowledge.

At this level, as well as at other levels, those children whose parents object to their receiving an education in the Catholic faith, should be taught those universal moral values that underpin social conviviality. The time allotted to Religion and to religious activities carried out within the school should be utilised by these children for educative and productive work.

C. Be assessed in a variety of ways:

- i) formative assessment is to be used during the first three years;
 - ii) between the fourth and sixth years, summative assessment is also to be used.
- A portfolio is developed for this purpose and should include specimen work by the child. This should be carried from one class to the other to provide teachers with broad background information concerning the child.

D. Nurtured in the use of the two official Maltese languages:

Since each school chooses its own teaching strategy which incorporates:

- methodology;
- method of assessment;
- remedial programmes;
- evaluation of the chosen strategy;

It is recommended that:

1. English is used when teaching English, Mathematics, Science and Technology;
2. one should revert to code switching only in those cases where the use of English or Maltese poses problems.

SECONDARY LEVEL

On completion of secondary schooling, one should:

- have refined the skills developed at primary level;
- have attained an advanced level of critical reflection and personality development;
- have developed even further one's knowledge of subjects introduced during the primary years, preferably through themes that integrate different areas of knowledge;
- have been tested through a combination of formative and summative assessment procedures.

The National Minimum Curriculum aims to ensure that the necessary training of teachers and resources be provided.

The basic subjects at secondary level are:

- Maltese,
- English,
- Mathematics,
- Religion,
- A Foreign Language,
- Environmental Studies (History, Geography, Social Studies),
- Physical Education and Sport,
- Computer Literacy,
- Expressive Arts,
- Personal and Social Education,
- Technology and Design,
- Science.

Each school should adopt its own strategy for the teaching of languages. In this respect, it is recommended that pupils are taught in the very same language that they are learning. It is also recommended that, apart from Maltese, even Social Studies, History, Religion and PSD are taught in the native language, whereas the other subjects (except, of course, foreign languages) are to be taught in English. Code switching should only be used in situations when use of English poses problems. It is also recommended that, when necessary, there should be additional programmes that strengthen one's knowledge of Malta's two official languages.

It is important that schools have the necessary flexibility to allow pupils, who are weak in Maltese and English to follow programmes which enable them to gain proficiency in these languages, while their peers learn another foreign language.

Means to Implement the Curriculum

- i) Each school should draw up a plan to enable it to follow the Curriculum in a manner that takes into account the school's specific conditions. This plan of action must demonstrate that the school has a clear curricular vision, well defined curricular goals and a realistic and concrete strategy regarding how these curricular goals are to be attained.
- ii) In carrying out this curricular work, the school should draw on the ideas and commitment of all its members who, after reaching consensus, work together in developing and attaining their school's curricular goals.
- iii) Heads of school serve as leaders in the process of curriculum development and are to be given all the assistance necessary for them to carry out this task well.
- iv) Each school should have its own system of action research to monitor the process of curriculum development and propose the necessary amendments. In developing this system, the school can derive help and support from experts in the field.
- v) Teacher co-ordinators have an important role to play at all levels of the curriculum.
- vi) In following the curricular principles laid out in this document, schools will develop as centres of excellence and ideal places for the professional development of prospective teachers.
- vii) Schools are also to develop as community centres for the education of adult members of the locality.