



MALTA

Focal Point: Mr. George Borg

Report presented by Mr. Ian B. Mifsud

Key Challenges and Opportunities

1. Launch of a Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta for 2014-2024.
2. Redesigning the School Curricula and introducing Learning Outcome Frameworks as required by the National Curriculum Framework for All (2012).
3. Introduce tablets initially in primary schools and further enhance the eLearning Platform in all schools.

Participation in COL activities

For the 2014 Commonwealth of Learning Meeting, Mr. Ian Mifsud will be representing Malta. Mr. Mifsud has just been appointed Director General for Quality and Standards in Education within the Ministry for Education and Employment.

Status of ODE in Malta

Policies

Open and Distance Education is still at its initial stages of development locally. Nonetheless, it is an area of great interest and offers great potential also for collaboration between countries.

The Ministry for Education and Employment has within its structures, a Department responsible for Curriculum Management and a Department for eLearning within DQSE. The eLearning Department offers online courses to teachers and collaborates with other agencies to promote and provide learning opportunities. The Directorate for Lifelong Learning (DLL) offers Government-sponsored scholarships through distance learning.

Initiatives

1. A Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024

This strategy has been launched so as to align all sectoral education strategies and policies. It sets four broad but measurable targets in line with European and world benchmarks and that will set the education agenda in Malta for the next decade. These may be summed up as follows: to reduce the gaps in educational outcomes; to decrease the number of low achievers and raise the bar in literacy, numeracy and science and technology competence; to support educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status, and reduce the relatively high incidence of early school-leavers; to raise levels of student

retention and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training; and to increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning.

2. The National Curriculum Framework for All (2012)

This is a reference document for action based on general consensus and the contribution of stakeholders as well as those committed to its implementation; a living framework, in such a way that allows for adjustments to new developments during implementation; a policy instrument as well as information on the implementation strategy, actions and benchmarks for implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and a response to the changing demands of individuals and society, rapid changes in our education system driven by globalisation, ICT development, competition, shift of traditional values and new paradigms.

3. Introduction of Tablets as an Educational Project

The scope of the pilot projects whereby tablets are introduced in schools is to evaluate the best way to introduce tablets in the primary classroom and maximise the benefits that this technology brings to teaching and learning. The educational focus during the Pilots will be literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, in line with the National Literacy Strategy and the National Curriculum Framework. Research and evaluation of tablets will be done with the support of the Faculty of Education and Faculty of ICT at the University of Malta and other experts and academics both local and from abroad.

4. Introducing Vocational Subjects in the Secondary Cycle

As part of the National Curriculum Framework, Education DQSE worked on the introduction of vocational subjects in the secondary school cycle. Four vocational subject areas (BTEC Engineering, BTEC Health and Social Care, BTEC Hospitality and BTEC Information Technology) were identified and scheduled to be piloted in six state colleges and four non-state schools from September 2011 onwards. These extended certificate qualifications are pegged at Level 3 on the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF).

As from scholastic year 2013-2014, the Curriculum Management Department and eLearning Department have offered a three-year Core-Curriculum Programme (CCP) in all secondary schools, spread over three years, starting in Form 3 until Form 5 (ending in June), to be delivered and managed with students who are at risk of becoming early school leavers.

While retaining part of the mainstream curriculum learning programme, CCP offers students practical learning programmes in the following Core Subjects: Maltese, English, Mathematics, Science with Design & Technology, Italian, Religion, PE, ICT (for ECDL), Social Studies, History, Geography. The Core-Curriculum Programme aims to support students in attaining the following Soft Competences: Learning to learn; Cultural Awareness and Expression; Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship, Social and Civic Competence.

The Programme is envisaged to give the opportunity to learners to reach MQF Levels 3, 2 and 1 according to the evidence they provide re the outcomes achieved. Presently, the programme enables these learners to reach Level 1 only.

5. e-Learning Platform for Primary Schools

Targets to be reached by teaching grades during scholastic year 2012-2013 include the following:

- Accessing circulars and information on the virtual staff noticeboard; accessing their ilearn email account; accessing the resource room/digital repository; recording student attendance; and recording teacher assessment twice yearly and results of Half Yearly and Annual Examinations.
- Teaching Grades will have the facility to back-up their classroom at the end of the scholastic year to safeguard their own resources and teaching materials, and able to seek support through the Ministry for Education and Employment and through the Online Support Section.

Throughout Scholastic Year 2012-2013:

- All state school teachers and SMTs were trained to use the available learning tools on the platform; all state school SMTs and clerical staff were trained to use the administrative arm of the platform, known as e1; and all state school students from kindergarten to higher secondary were given access to use their platform accounts through an individual user name and password.

All the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) subject documents created and currently in use include a dedicated section of open educational resources (OER) to which teachers and students are encouraged to refer to, to widen and deepen the learning experience of the subject under study.

Teacher Education

Presently, all classes in primary schools have access to the internet; computer lab connectivity is now fully established in all schools; all teaching staff is trained in the use of Interactive Whiteboards which have been installed in all teaching areas in Maltese Schools.

The eLearning platform is in place and training of teachers has been carried out. Over 5,000 teachers have been trained, with additional training to administrative staff on apposite software; and tablets will be introduced in schools as an educational pilot project. The educational focus during the Pilots will be literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, in line with the National Literacy Strategy and the National Curriculum Framework.

Higher Education

The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) is seeking to create Quality Assurance frameworks within which open and distance learning programmes which can be formally accredited against the Malta Qualifications Framework.

European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)

The Directorate for Lifelong Learning (DLL) within the Ministry for Education and Employment is presently exploring the possibility that the Ministry joins EADTU. The DLL is exploring the possibility of organising a conference in Malta on OERs in October 2014.

Infrastructure

Setting up infrastructure that is necessary for the introduction of tablets in schools; maintaining and expanding the eLearning Platform; and resourcing schools and providing facilities for the introduction of Vocational subjects at the Secondary Cycle.

TOP PRIORITIES FOR 2015-2018

1. Implementation of the **National Curriculum Framework for All**.
2. Setting up of a **Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024**.
3. **Introducing tablets in schools** and providing training and infrastructure.
4. Introducing **Vocational Subjects** in the Secondary Cycle.
5. Support in the development of a Policy on Open and Distance Learning.

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