

FOR ALL CHILDREN TO SUCCEED

A NEW NETWORK ORGANISATION
FOR QUALITY EDUCATION IN MALTA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT

28th JUNE, 2005



FOR ALL CHILDREN TO SUCCEED
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Louis Galea
Minister of Education, Youth & Employment
Chair, Policy Unit, MEYE



SERVICE TO OUR CHILDREN

“...the Education Division will move away from its role as the operator of government schools, and evolve into a regulator of the entire sector, which includes all public, Church and private schools; helping all of these, as all are of service to our children.

In the same vein, decentralisation in the public sector will proceed with added impetus. Aided by administrative support and the development of managerial skills, State schools will acquire greater autonomy and will be in a position to nurture their own identities. In this way, each school will adapt the national curriculum to its own needs.

As already happens with most Church and private schools, Government primary schools will pair up with secondary schools in order that the passage from one to the other may be smoother. Likewise, though by different means, the passage from school to employment will be rendered easier, including for people with special needs....”¹

**H.E. Prof Guido de Marco
President of Malta
House of Representatives
24 May, 2003**

¹ From the Government's Programme as outlined in the Address by HE Prof Guido de Marco, President of Malta, on the occasion of the opening of the Tenth Parliament, 24th May, 2003.



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FOREWORD

QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

Over the past fifty years we have been delivering education for all: Malta's strong educational roots now seek a new space, freedom, and the tools to ensure **quality education for all** in the coming years. Only a quality leap forward guarantees to present and future generations a full and equitable participation in a healthy democracy and an economy replete of challenges and opportunities.

That explains the growing use of transformation as a goal and why it is now so important. Recent reforms have shown that improvements in key areas such as numeracy and literacy scores are possible. However, raising expectations and performance permanently in our education system means changing 'whole systems', often radically, and equipping them better to effectively face change.

Transformation will only occur by shaping and stimulating disciplined processes of innovation within the school system, and by building an infrastructure capable of laterally transferring ideas, knowledge and new practices.

Huge amounts of money, time and effort are spent trying to spread good practice between different schools. Most of that effort is wasted. The little we know about how this happens (which is not enough) is not used to design more effective dissemination strategies. The basis for improvements is already moving from an emphasis on 'informed prescription' towards 'informed professionalism'. But who will inform and challenge the professionals to adapt?

A familiar reply to this question has always suggested government should 'trust the professionals'. Some education stakeholders still feel that if they could be left to get on with the job, they would perform successfully. Unfortunately, this is not the case. As in any other reform process, it is natural that people involved are likely to protect themselves against change as they are likely to embrace new and better practices. One of our main challenges is to build new professional identities and new professional learning communities that are oriented towards adaptation and bring about radical innovation.

The network is the main organisational form which can give depth and scale to this process of transformation. With the right leadership and governance, the formation of networks, driven by collaborative and competitive endeavour, can play a vital role in creating a first class system of education and of schools. This makes knowledge-based networks an essential component, not the alternative for the way we provide public education. Rather than being represented by a new government agency or a single policy lever, transformation becomes an 'emergent property' of the whole education system as it begins to generate, incorporate and adapt to the best new ideas and practices that develop around it.

During the last decade we became familiar with the emphasis placed on such subjects as the national curriculum, school development plans, inclusion, literacy programmes, ICT in schools, standards and quality, level descriptors, and teachers and school accountability as drivers for school improvement. The different initiatives we embarked upon in the recent past brought in their wake important developments in all areas and levels of educational services in Malta and Gozo. In terms of long term educational development, these remain important strategies. New educational research and the far reaching technological developments changing the world around us, however, make it clear the education system as we know it has reached its limits. It urgently needs renewal to remain relevant.

As we move into a new phase of educational reform, more creative and responsive structures for supporting the work of students, schools and parents are needed. We believe that networks are the new essential units of organisation to replace the questionable dichotomy of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches to educational change.²

² See for example: Hargreaves, D.H. (2003). *Working laterally: how innovation networks make an education epidemic*. DfES Publications and Huberman, M. (1995) Networks that alter teaching: conceptualisations, exchanges and experiments, *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*. Vol. 1, No. 2 pp.193-211.



To achieve this, we now need to strengthen our education system by transforming it into a new framework that will make it respond in a more relevant, effective and timely manner to the needs of our children, our families and our country.

It is for this reason that the Ministry of Education has embarked on a comprehensive process of educational review. This covers the following areas:

1. Early childhood education provision
2. Inclusive education policies, structures and services
3. School attendance and absenteeism
4. State primary and secondary schools
5. Education Division restructuring
6. Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC)
7. Adult basic skills
8. Career guidance
9. Higher and tertiary levels of education
10. Lifelong learning

The drafting of the reports and the accompanying recommendations in almost all these areas are now ready or quite advanced and the whole process is expected to be completed this year. Eventually, each report will form part of this comprehensive educational review. This will lead a new network organisation to provide improved quality education in Malta.

The present document focuses on areas 4 and 5 of the education review, namely the creation of new networks at State primary and secondary education levels, and the restructuring of the Education Division. We are here first identifying the ten interlinked developments that provide a backdrop for the vision to strengthen and improve the quality of education in Malta and the direction this takes. Then, we are proposing a new way on how to deliver improved and better managed education services.

This document, which raises important issues for the future of Malta's education system, is intended as a sound basis for a focused, intense, informed, objective and widespread discussion and dialogue, with all stakeholders particularly and the general public. It is not the intention to take a big bang approach in implementing the proposed reforms. Precautions will be taken to phase-in the reforms and the widest possible consensus will be sought.

In all cases there is a need for careful preparation, piloting, gradual implementation, periodic evaluation, training and effective dialogue with stakeholders, including proper information campaigns and negotiations, where necessary, with the unions concerned. As we shall see, different models are likely to be introduced in different areas according to the availability of secondary school buildings, their size and quality of facilities in relation to the primary schools. To match the building stock required by the school networking exercise, strategic planning for the refurbishment and building of State schools now needs to be redirected.

In the 21st Century Nation-states and many other entities survive better through securing partnerships based on shared responsibilities. Schools are amongst such entities and can only prosper and flourish if they form and gain strengths through new alliances. The intensification of networking based on communication is the way learning communities can free themselves from unnecessary stifling central control and bureaucracy without, however, suffering from weak direction, lack of accountability and an absence of quality assurance.

The emergence of an increasingly shared architecture for our educational system will in itself be of utmost value for the development of the individual and of society. Only when people share in shaping the changes around them will they enable and empower others to do the same.

The proposals put forward in this document have been drawn as a result of an in-depth reflection on the workings of the present system and in the light of how schools network in other countries. The intention is not to replicate any one particular form of organisation or network design. Rather, it is an opportunity to share learning that has already been generated in order that it can inform planning and implementation strategy.



It needs to be made clear at the very outset that this document is not an end in itself nor is it necessarily all-exhaustive. The document intends to spur a critically constructive and mature debate and an implementation process that aims at radically improving the quality of education in Malta where the child remains the central hub of all our plans. Our focus in this restructuring and renewal process is the child who will benefit from enhanced teaching–learning process. The expectations of all of us in the education system are high; we expect standards to be raised; we expect the quality of education to heighten; we expect people in every community to experience a refreshing change and to take an active role in the process.

Each and every one of us must engage in a conscious, untiring effort and commitment to this change process. I know that change will not be easy. However, if we do not embark on this journey with an open mind and a well defined strategy, the repercussions will be regrettable.

I am sure we all want to give each and every child in Malta the best possible chance to develop properly into a happy, healthy, creative and productive person. Each child is unique and has a right to an excellent learning environment that nurtures one’s potential, talents and abilities. Every child has the right to succeed in life, irrespective of one’s socio-economic background. Children with any disadvantage also have an equal right to be empowered and this is something that we want to address.

Let us all together embark on this exciting and challenging journey - for all children to succeed.

Louis Galea

Minister of Education, Youth & Employment



MESSAGE BY THE PERMANENT SECRETARY MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT

May and June seem to be happy months as far as the hatching of conceptual development in Maltese Educational praxis is concerned.

I have happy recollections of May/June 1996, when I was requested by the Malta Union of Teachers to draw up a keynote paper for their biennial general conference entitled “A Quality Education for Malta”. It is a term that has come to stay. That paper was written in the first heady days of my appointment as the first ever incumbent of the position of Director (Curriculum Management) and was basically an exhortation to change the outer aspects of Maltese Educational provision through changing the inner attitudes of our minds.

On the 2nd May, 1997, a conference was held for head teachers which set the first steps towards translating the concept of “Quality Education” from theory into practice. The conference introduced the concept of School Development Planning in Maltese Schools and was followed by a gamut of inter-related projects over the next eight years. That process is documented in my contribution to the publication “Knowing Our School” published by the Department of Operations, Education Division in May 2004. School Development Planning was followed by the publication, following a wide ranging consultation process, of the National Minimum Curriculum; the formulation of a strategic plan for the implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum; the sustained implementation of the various objectives outlined in the NMC (vide Chapter I of this publication); the development of the Performance Management Programme for each teacher; and, the setting up of the position of Principal Education Officers in order to enable a system of external audit of schools to take off in the near future.

And that brings me to May 2005. Several references are made in this document to a milestone conference that was organised by the Education Division, being the EXCEL Network National Conference that was held between the 17th and 18th May 2005. EXCEL Network, launched in May 2003, is a forum which networks Maltese school leaders with their counterparts in the UK, in order to share ideas and good practice. The conference was a celebration of good practice in various member schools hailing from both national contexts. It was a pleasure to sit back and relish what a long way we have come in the past decade.

Yet, there was more to the conference than that. The keynote speech delivered by Professor David Hopkins was an excellent mental spur for us to chart the next stage in the way forward towards a quality education that will further ensure that each and every child will succeed in what he called “a modern social democrat education settlement”.

Professor Hopkins made two basic points. Quality Education can better be realised by introducing policies to drive school improvement through two separate strands, namely, “High Challenge” and “High Support”. Quality Education can better be realised if at both micro and macro level, educational provision aims at achieving simultaneously a “high excellence, high equity education system”.

I believe that the proposals in this document can enable the system better to translate Professor Hopkins’ two basic tenets into practice. To my mind they are also a natural extension of the reformation process that we have collaboratively undertaken over the past ten years.

At chapter 2, the proposed Malta Education Directorate and the Educational Services Directorate will focus on the “High Challenge” and “High Support” aspects (as referred to earlier on), respectively.

At chapter 3, the proposed college networks is an apt framework for attaining a “high excellence education system” through the pooling of resources and the sharing of ideas and good practice. The guiding principle here is that “none of us is smarter than all of us”. Furthermore, the present day paradigm of networking as the most important organisational form of our time, being a brainchild of the World Wide Web zeitgeist is explained in an illuminating way at pages 23 and 24 of this document. Personally, I found it very persuasive.



Beyond the more effective and efficient work practice that will be inspired by the proposed college network, there is the effect on the client of the system – the “be all” of all our endeavours, the child. It is being posited that within a college network of schools each and every child will have a better claim to equity of provision within the educational ecology. No child who will be a “citizen” of a particular college network will be out of sight and out of mind. No child will be “somebody else’s responsibility”. At the same time, a college is a network of schools and not a merger. The proposed structure will still allow enough internal diversity to enable the stretching of all abilities to the “highest excellence” possible. It will safeguard against a debilitating leveling down of all provision.

I enthusiastically await the onset of this reform and like any educator who is sincerely interested in the development of our nation, look forward to active participation in the discussion during the coming months. It is evident that a successful outcome to the implementation of the reforms will deepen our commitment to a quality education wherein every child will succeed.

Charles Mizzi



MESSAGE BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL EDUCATION DIVISION

Malta has always aimed high and achieved results where Education is concerned. Local leaders in Education have never lived in isolated contentment but have systematically looked beyond our shores to ensure that what was taking place in our schools was comparable with the latest happenings and trends internationally.

The present proposed way forward is the expected result of what has been taking place during the last years. This is not an invitation to work harder but one to work smarter. The change from a Department to a Division in 1994 was the first cultural face lift required to get education out of the twentieth century into the modern age. The audit of the present situation has shown that a reform was due, to bring the central structure in line with present day requirements and realities.

On the other hand while schools have been vested with a number of responsibilities, the need has been evident to schools themselves that further changes were needed. The importance of the learner as the principal client is always central. Any Education structure, in spite of all its complexities and requirements, cannot lose sight of this fundamental fact which lies at the very core of its existence. This particular client consistently requires a quality service. Exigencies are continually changing and need updating to keep in line with current trends, yet the focus on the central character remains constant.

Undoubtedly, this is the very basis of ***For all Children to Succeed*** where the idea of networking among schools is being advocated. The results of the Excel project have shown that schools tend to gain through networking. Each school still requires its individual strong leadership to achieve. The direction of a strong central authority to monitor development plans and to audit progress cannot however be underestimated. Networking, on the other hand, whilst allowing each school to hold to its identity, mission and ethos, gives strength to initiatives. The required commitment assures that progress is achieved and the sharing of ideas, talents and efforts results in better achievement for the learner.

Having been directly involved in this micro networking project, I am aware of the implications of the proposed changes on the Education Division. It is a fact that there is no change without pain, yet I have no doubt that education in Malta stands to gain by this proposed way forward. I am sure that all those of us directly involved in education are able to overcome the difficulties that such changes naturally give rise to and achieve the aims that are being proposed.

As professional educators we will all be able to rise to the challenge.

Cecilia Borg



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- *The Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment is close to completing a review of the education system, from early childhood education to higher education. The objective is to reform the whole system of lifelong learning into one which is smoother and seamless.*
- *This document addresses the issue of the governance of the education system and of the autonomy and decentralization of State schools. Challenges faced by other areas in the field of education will shortly be addressed once reports by working groups set up by the Ministry are completed.*
- *The key challenge for Malta is to invest seriously, heavily and continuously in human capital in ways that affect life changes. We want all children to succeed. The next phase in Malta's education development is to ensure **quality** education for all.*
- *The network is being accepted as the main organisational form which can give depth and scale to this process of transformation. The education system, like all other societal systems, faces the challenge of having to change the way it functions – from a hierarchical, apex-governed structure to a new network organisation that can achieve quality education in Malta.*
- *“Networks are now the most important organisational form of our time, reshaping the activities of families, governments and businesses. They are increasingly fundamental to successful enterprise and they challenge our notions of leadership.” (Hannon, 2004)*
- *In accordance with the Government's declared programme, the Education Division will be restructured into two distinct yet complementary juridical entities. The **Malta Education Directorate** (MED) will regulate, generate policies, set standards, and monitor the whole system to assure quality in all State and non-State schools. The **Educational Services Directorate** (ESD) will act as operator and will coordinate those services which can be more effectively and economically rendered centrally.*
- *The 1988 Education Act provides that the regulatory and policy-making authority is vested in and exercised by the Minister for Education. Legislation will enable the Minister to delegate authority to MED and ESD to carry out specific functions and in specific sector and to agencies set up for specific purposes.*
- *The Minister of Education will chair a small Standing Committee to ensure direction, coherence, synergy and coordination throughout the whole system.*
- *The shift from centralisation to decentralisation necessitates that schools network together. This will empower schools further in that they may be able to take decisions as suits to the needs of their students. Moreover, schools will become more autonomous operating within a stipulated, agreed framework which also ensures accountability.*
- *In this way, through networking, schools will be in a better and stronger position to meet the needs of students. They will work in partnership with one another, share resources, will jointly solve problems and create new practices within the specific and particular context of a group of schools forming one whole unit. Networks will ensure a smoother flow from one level of education to another, as well as provide schools with the required space to develop their curriculum as laid down by the National Curriculum, and, also, according to the needs of their students.*
- *In a schools network system, children will still attend the primary school in their town or village and will proceed to a secondary school within that particular network. Each school will have its own Head of School and staff. However, each school will form part of a network with other schools and the whole network will be called a College. Each College will have a Principal who will lead the whole network and who will chair a Council of Heads of schools, again within that network. A College Board will provide direction to the whole network.*
- *The ideal network would include a number of primary schools. These would then feed students into a number of secondary schools. The current schools building stock limits the simultaneous introduction of the*



ideal structure on a national level. Whilst therefore schools are being built, refurbished and extended, different forms of school networks will be introduced to demonstrate the benefits networking provides. This document proposes the phased-in introduction of the following Colleges:

1. One College will absorb the Cottonera State schools - the Cospicua, Kalkara, Senglea and Vittoriosa primary schools, the Boys' Area Secondary school, the Girls' Area Secondary school and the Boys' Junior Lyceum. Discussions will also be held to encourage Church and Independent schools in this area to enter into a partnership with the state schools network.
 2. Another College will take into it the eleven state primary schools in Gozo, the two State secondary schools (Junior Lyceum and Area Secondary), the Sannat Special Unit, and the Drama, Music and Art schools in Gozo.
 3. A third College will consist of the Birzebbugia, Ghaxaq, Gudja, Kirkop, Mqabba, Qrendi, Safi and Żurriq primary State schools and the new secondary level facility due to be completed shortly in Kirkop. For the moment this new campus can only be feasibly available for boys. Girls will continue to attend the Junior Lyceum and Secondary schools they currently attend. However, future building plans ought to take in consideration the requirement of a secondary level school for girls in this catchment's area.
 4. A number of Colleges will provide for the introduction of horizontal networks of schools all operating at the same level. There will be Colleges consisting of primary schools, Colleges consisting of both area secondary schools and Junior Lyceums, another College incorporating the boys' and girls' centres, as well as Mater Dei school and St. Patrick's Craft Centre.
 5. A special College will be made up of the schools of art, drama and music in Malta. The eventual aim of this network is to develop into a College consisting of specialist schools where students will follow the ordinary curriculum as they do in other schools but which will provide a special focus on music, drama and art, and possibly later, on dance and sport.
 6. Finally, one College will incorporate the four special schools in Malta. The aim here is to develop these schools into resource centres for all the other Colleges and to function as service providers to students who stand to benefit more from this type of educational provision. This will cover the initial phase. The ultimate objective is to see these schools individually networked with the mainstream Colleges.
- The present report proposes the retention of the Junior Lyceum examination, but with appropriate modifications being made (including a more graded paper) to cover the whole range of performance-based abilities of all students. This examination will be developed over time into a compulsory national benchmarking exercise. This will be taken at significant stages to test the educational development of all students of both primary and secondary schooling in the state and non-state sectors.
 - All necessary legally binding measures will be put in place to safeguard the vested rights of personnel currently serving with the Education Division, with other public educational institutions or other departments and public entities, and who will be detailed to carry out their duties with the newly proposed public educational entities and school networks.
 - This reform will create an environment where **children and students** will benefit from increased self-confidence, increased encouragement and opportunities and the on-going support they need to acquire to further their knowledge, competencies and attitudes that help develop their personalities. This will make them grow into active citizens capable of contributing towards their own well being, their families and society.
 - This same environment will provide teachers with greater job satisfaction and the support to help them acquire the space and opportunity to work flexibly in a task-and-needs oriented manner.
 - **Parents/carers** will benefit from the positive effect networking creates in the education of their child. Parents, as partners in this experience, will be able to engage in their child's educational journey, and to enhance their own lifelong learning process.



- *School networks will use the community resources in ways that step up the involvement of **the community** at large. In return, schools will increase their role as community learning and cultural centres.*
- *The task ahead is a mammoth one. It will involve collective commitment, discipline and effective network leadership. The task is equally stimulating, offering as it does a challenge to those involved in the task of improving the quality of education in Malta and Gozo. The demands around us are changing and this makes it crucial for our educational system to undergo a planned, well thought-out change that enables each and every child to be provided with a learning experience that not only imparts knowledge, but, more importantly, helps them acquire the skills they need to approach future learning in and out of school. Successful networking will ensure much more successful schools.*
- *In all cases there is a need for careful preparation, piloting, gradual implementation, periodic evaluation, training and effective dialogue with stakeholders, including negotiations, where necessary, with the unions concerned and the staging of proper information campaigns.*
- *Networks of schools, together with other service providers, will respond creatively and collaboratively to the needs of each 'whole' learner. No single school can hope to provide the diversity, flexibility or an economy of service that the creation of networks involves*



CHAPTER I

TEN ACHIEVEMENTS AND TEN CHALLENGES

A notable observation made by the Chalmers Report³ on higher education concerns the difficult challenges faced there. These are also the result of the successes achieved in past years. This may well be true of one part of the system, higher education, because it is, paradoxically, true of the whole education system.

Undoubtedly, our recent educational history is marked by achievements and successes that are reflected in the remarkable socio-economic progress and the improved quality of life the Maltese people have registered these past two decades. In time, however, a number of defects, weaknesses and deficiencies grew around the system and now pose challenges that must be urgently addressed. It is expected that in the course of the discussion and the implementation of proposals outlined in this document, all stakeholders will seize the moment and constructively contribute, in a determined national effort to achieve quality education for all, to a better understanding of the opportunities and the challenges that lie ahead.

There are at least ten major achievements that were registered in the last two decades or so. It is these that now present us with the same number of challenges which must be faced in the next decade. Every achievement made has inevitably led to new challenges.

I.1 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

An achievement perhaps worth considering first is the ICT revolution. It is now necessary for any society that wants to flourish to become a learning society. ICT is an essential feature of such a society. In 1994, the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) introduced the National Strategy for Information Technology (NSIT).⁴

Government's policy then, was to create an information knowledge society. It was to serve as the bedrock for prosperity, economic growth and social inclusion. In the education sector, Government made it clear this was by no means simply a matter of putting computers in every classroom to serve as an additional, entertaining piece of audiovisual equipment, or some sort of educational toy. The structural introduction of ICT in the education system implied the need of a new approach in teaching and learning. In short we sought to create a completely new mind-set.

It was therefore underlined that education was all about communication; the communication of knowledge, concepts, values, attitudes and skills as basic instruments for personal, as well as, socio-economic development.

In the past, in Malta, a vague feeling prevailed that the history of education in particular and of politics in general, had been to a great extent determined by the so-called pre-war 'language question'. Today we realise that to learn a language, in the widest context of the word, is to learn a way of life and to widen one's horizon. The prevalence of one system of communication over the other, even one as powerful as ICT, limits the possibility of a society developing. On the other hand, the dominating module of communication in a society, influences the cultural context within which that society develops. The advent of ICT as the dominant system of communication creates the possibility of a more open, dialogic, relational and flexible approach to all issues. This discourages any dogmatic, stand-alone, or rigid stance.

³ Chalmers, R et al, (2004), *State Higher Education Funding*, Report of the State Higher Education Funding Working Group to the Minister of Education, Youth and Employment (2004), Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment

⁴ Camilleri, J. ed. (1994a, b, c and d), *A National Strategy for Information Technology for Malta*. Office of the National Strategy for Information Technology, University of Malta.



It also means that the education system, like all other societal systems, faces the challenge of having to change the way it functions – from a hierarchical, apex-governed structure to a networking organisation.

In a nutshell, the essence of a net, whether it is a primitive fishing device or its contemporary analogue, the World Wide Web, is a light, flexible structure that is at the same time strong and resilient, even when damaged; and damage is certain to occur where there is diversity. Consequently, contrasting, even contradictory views are bound to evolve. In such cases, the strength of the net is essential to avoid the collapse of the system. In this sense, nets have the possibility of being extended and remodelled whilst still in use. Moreover, they can be laid one over the other. They weigh little, but their multiple-level structure adds to their strength. Finally, any network, however extensive, is the sum total of a multiplicity of subnets, welded together as tightly as a Gordian knot, without even jamming communications and degenerating into chaos. Connecting links will continue to develop and promote the widest range of exchanges possible.

In the context of a network – one that replaces a hierarchical pyramid - the principle of subsidiarity emerges not as an impediment to the efficiency achieved at superior levels, but as a domain for taking decisions at the place where the most relevant information is available and where the impact is most felt. **“Networks are now the most important organisational form of our time, reshaping the activities of families, governments and businesses. They are increasingly fundamental to successful enterprise and they challenge our notions of leadership.” (Hannon, 2004)⁵**

1.2 THE EUROPEAN UNION

A second achievement, and the challenge it has spawned, has been our accession to the European Union (EU). Here the education sector anticipated participation through the EU educational programmes even before official membership was secured. Education is intimately related to one’s sense of national identity. Membership within the European Union is nearly as great a conditioning factor of national self awareness as the global knowledge society made possible with the birth and evolution of information and communication technology. The frequent exchanges we are experiencing with other EU nations, from Italy to Scandinavia, from Ireland to Poland, have already proved significantly enriching in different areas and levels of the education system. The British education system will continue to be of particular interest and value to us for linguistic and cultural, and other valid reasons. Membership in the EU, however, allows us to benefit from a much wider network of knowledge and experiences, a talent for which the Maltese are renowned. The availability of multiple EU models re-enforces our challenge to put together several amalgamated variants in the field of education. These newly embraced elements moulded into a new whole will amount to yet another quality leap forward.

1.3 THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

A third achievement has been the launching of the National Curriculum for the year 2000⁶. This was a radical departure from the National Minimum Curriculum of the early nineties, which specified a number of elements teachers should teach and which were obligatory for students. The recent National Curriculum is in fact a Framework Curriculum. It stipulates what is educationally necessary for a person to grow up cherishing such values as democracy and solidarity. It also stipulates the development of dialogic and other skills and competences that help one to face better the challenges of an ever-changing world. Consensus achieved amongst all stakeholders on the content of this Framework Curriculum has brought about another challenge, the task to further implement it well at school level. This requires proper adaptation by introducing new structures and fresh approaches.⁷ In particular, the different schools need to co-operate, pool and share experiences and ideas in a systematic way – that is, to network and support each other to obtain (even more) satisfactory results.

⁵ Hannon, V, 2004 (June). *The Future Is Networked*. Speech delivered to the Networked Learning Communities Annual Conference, London

⁶ Ministry of Education (1999). *Creating the Future Together: National Minimum Curriculum*. Ministry of Education, Malta.

⁷ See also other documents related to curriculum policy such as: *Tomorrow’s Schools* (1995) and the *NMC Strategic Plan* (2001).



1.4 INCLUSION

A fourth major achievement has undoubtedly been the high rate of inclusion reached in education. In spite of such remaining lacunae as leftover illiteracy and integration problems of certain students, the aim of education for all has been successful. Quality education is however, still not yet equally distributed amongst students. Access to Junior Lyceums, Secondary Schools and Boys/Girls' Centres does not properly reflect the talents and potential of students since levels of ability are assessed at one standard set of tasks. These three different types of schools need to be transmuted into a system which provides quality education for all in line with the diverse talents and potential of each and every student. What we require is a system that reaches the learning modes of every boy and girl. In fact, a review of the inclusive and special education sectors has now been carried out by a working group and their report has been completed and forwarded to the Minister of Education.⁸

1.5 GOVERNANCE

A fifth achievement and challenge is the diversification of school ownership and the need for a new kind of governance and integration to cover the whole system. Over the years there have emerged, in addition to State schools, a number of State-subsidised Church schools, the more recently Parent (Foundation) schools, and a variety of other entrepreneur run schools.⁹ Demographic factors (in particular the declining birth rate) and the need to respond to parental demands and needs have made the challenge more complex. While all types of schools should retain their diverse characteristics, the system must achieve the same level playing field for all. This will enable parents to make choices from a variety of schools all of which offer quality education.

The current situation also makes it necessary to make fundamental changes that will deliver the heart of the reform. This implies a need to restructure the Education Division. A clear distinction must evolve between two different emerging bodies fulfilling complementary roles. The first body, the policy maker and regulator, will generally cater for policy development and coordination, standard setting and the monitoring of the whole system to assure quality. The second body will be the operator and will coordinate and supply pedagogical, managerial and ancillary services to be effectively and economically rendered centrally to all State-run schools. Where appropriate and financially feasible they will also feed all the other different types of schools.

1.6 AUTONOMY

The sixth achievement which has brought its own challenge is a taste of decentralisation experienced in recent years within the State-run sector. This has led to a correlative increase in autonomy, identity and style by individual schools. The operation of schools within the State system has been generally dependent on the decisions taken centrally at the Education Division. Except for sporadic instances, schools have had limited horizontal connections with schools at their level and hardly any vertical connections with schools operating at a lower or higher level. For decisions to be decentralised and schools to be better empowered, the forging of properly networked connections is necessary.

1.7 TRANSITION

A seventh major achievement was the increased access from one level of the education system to another, from the primary to secondary education for all and from the secondary to the higher education sectors. The challenge created by this achievement - how to eliminate the rather staccato if not abrupt

⁸ Spiteri, Lino et al. (May 2005), *Inclusive and Special Education: Review Report*. Working Group appointed in December 2004 by the Minister of Education, Youth & Employment.

⁹ All State and non-State schools (Kinder, Primary and Secondary) in Malta and Gozo cater for 70,000 students in all.



manner by which students move from primary to secondary schooling in the State system - is a predominant key issue which this reform wants to start addressing. There still is a need for further development of life-long learning, from the earliest stages (with the emphasis on learning how to learn) right up to the University of the Third Age and similar institutions. As with all the six previous achievements and the challenges they present, the answer also lies in the creation of school networks.

1.8 EARLY START

The eighth achievement we have experienced has been the extension downwards of the education system in the sphere of kindergarten education. Getting an early start is educationally and socially beneficial to the child. This extension has been an indispensable corollary to the highly desirable increase in the participation rate of women in productive employment. Early childhood education should buttress the education a child gets at home not replace it. This provides the foundations that shape the basic attitudes towards learning, deeply mark educational achievement, and address inequalities in the family background. All this becomes more important when viewed against the frequent difficulties and pressures borne by parents. The challenge of improving quality in this sector calls for the enhancement of the specific preparation of persons working there. In this regard, a document is currently being completed. It will serve as a basis for discussion of the main complex issues involved in this area.

1.9 HIGHER EDUCATION

A significant achievement made in recent years was the increased access to higher education. The establishment of the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST) today provides courses for students whose leaning towards vocational studies – as an alternative to university education – is being increasingly satisfied. Today, MCAST has a student population of nearly 4,000 students, a considerable achievement by any measure. In the last decade alone we have seen an enormous increase in access to tertiary education. As many as 10,000 students today attend the University of Malta. There is also the easier access to European Union Universities and to other foreign ones providing courses in Malta. The Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) feeds the local tourism industry with the professional personnel it requires.

The Chalmers Report¹⁰ covers extensively the financial aspects of higher education. The Government is in the process of setting up a National Commission for Higher Education that will ensure a more forward-looking, co-ordinated and rational functioning of higher education. The Commission will act as the government regulatory agency in the higher education sector and will be responsible for the creation of an operational milieu in which the various licensed institutions operating in this sector – be they private or public funded – will be required to conform to specific academic standards and subjected to systems of appraisal and accreditation programmes. This will facilitate the progression and mobility of students across institutions, to enhance their employability, and maximise their propensity to create value. This Commission will also monitor closely Malta's higher education institutions in the Bologna process.

1.10 THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The setting up of Local Councils brought about another sea change in the way this country is administered. This brought with it an awakening of popular interest in the way local communities are run and catered for. In particular, there has been increased interest in the state of educational facilities available at community level. Simultaneously, there has been an unprecedented parental involvement in School Councils. The National Curriculum already stipulates a need for schools to develop into cultural and

¹⁰ Chalmers, R, et al (2004), *State Higher Education Funding: Report of the State Higher Education Funding Working Group to the Minister of Education, Youth and Employment*. Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (2004)



learning centres for the entire community.¹¹ The challenge lies in fostering increased effective community involvement and for school resources to be administered better.¹² This will help local schools acquire a stronger and a sharper focused identity. As a result, the synergy between local and central educational institutions should flourish once the networking of schools on a regional basis takes place.

CONCLUSION

The rest of this document deals with a more detailed discussion on the restructuring of the Education Division through two key institutional reforms, namely, the creation of two new distinct but complementary central education entities and the networking of schools.

Given the achievements we have had in the field of education in recent years, the challenge now is to think global and act local. In very simple terms this means that our task is to provide smooth and seamless lifelong education that is of the highest calibre.

¹¹ After-school initiatives of the Foundation for Educational Services have already shown the way how state schools can develop into hubs for community learning.

¹² Projects of creating community-based lifelong learning centres have been undertaken by the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) (www.fes.org.mt) and by the Jesuits Paulo Freire Institute (www.jesuit.org.mt/justice/freire.html). These are two examples of how to address the challenge.



CHAPTER 2

CENTRAL EDUCATION ENTITIES

The ten challenges discussed earlier all require the improvement and enhancement of the central education system. One aspect concerns policy development and co-ordination, standard setting, monitoring and quality audit of the experience and performance of students in all State, Church and private schools. This is of key importance in a system that must ensure unity and diversity. The other requirement concerns quality and efficiency in the operation and in the supply of pedagogical, managerial and ancillary support services and of tools to all schools.

2.1 ROLE DISTINCTION

A major challenge which the present education system faces is the effective and efficient operation of the different educational entities. The system has grown to such an extent that it requires a more timely and effective delivery of services and support, clarity in the audit and accountability process, better information and communication, ongoing dialogue, planning and more consistent direction horizontally and vertically.

In a system where the autonomy of schools and the decentralisation of services are expected to assume an increasing profile, it is essential that there is a proper distinction between the functions related to regulation, to the development and implementation of the national curriculum framework, and to provide quality assurance, on the one hand, and the functions related to the operation and the administration of schools (provision of resources and services) on the other. In short, the regulatory and the operational functions need to be clearly distinguished to avoid role conflict and to achieve greater efficiency in promoting a quality educational service to all students.

2.1.1 AUTONOMY AND REGULATION

Research and experience show that a well-designed and an effective application of the principle of subsidiarity, through greater autonomy of schools and decentralisation of services, ought to better facilitate the improvement in the quality and standards of children's and students' educational experience and performance. One of the main objectives behind these proposals is to advance the planned process of autonomy and decentralisation.

Autonomy is not to be confused with complete deregulation. On the contrary, autonomy and decentralisation predicate a grasp by the Education Ministry and the central education entities of the nation's priorities and strategies as adopted by the Government and their effective translation into a coherent and focussed framework of responsive education policies, strategies and objectives.

Autonomy and, therefore, a greater say by schools in determining their own management, can only be effective in delivering the relative results and outcomes if a) there is in place a strong central guiding and monitoring authority, b) autonomy consistently operates within such framework, and c) it is held accountable to it. National objectives, the State's responsibility to ensure a quality education for all its citizens, and the cost-effective maximisation of the available limited financial and other resources, make the process of proper regulation and accountability an absolute must.

Another aspect which the issue of autonomy raises is this. Is it wise to devolve all educational services and operations that are currently being handled, at the centre, by the Education Division? Common sense suggests that decentralising all current services to each and every school, or groups of schools, may prove wasteful both from a financial and human resources point of view. This is why, given the economies of scale, certain services are better provided and co-ordinated centrally.



The State has two main duties to fulfil:

- a) to ensure that the system of individual educational institutions operate within the parameters of a coherent national educational strategy, and to assure the quality of the educational provision that these increasingly autonomous institutions claim to be providing; and
- b) to support the educational institutions to provide, at the grass roots and at the national level, the various services that in this time and age are essential for true quality education.

A new network educational organisation, however light and flexible in structure, needs to have a firm and solid hub to hold together and prosper. In order to function properly, it needs an efficient regulatory directorate and a servicing directorate under the direction of the Minister responsible for education.

These two directorates will be:

- a) The **Malta Education Directorate (MED)**. This is a directorate for standards and quality in education, a central national policy maker and regulator for the whole Maltese educational network except for the higher education sector. This is the subject of a separate but parallel exercise suggested by the Chalmers' report.
- b) The **Educational Services Directorate (ESD)**. This directorate co-ordinates the operation of educational services and schools, and fulfils the role of a support and services resource centre.

In this way, the Education Division will be restructured so that the operation of all schools – State and non-State – will be subject to the regulation and monitoring of a central education entity, the MED. The MED will not be involved in the management of its own schools. The operation of and certain delivery of services to State schools will be entrusted to a different central education entity, the ESD. This separation of functions ensures better performance of the respective regulatory and operational aspects of the system as a whole.

2.2 MISSION STATEMENT

The keys to success here are unity and diversity, principles that underpin the fundamental scope of the education system as a whole. The objective remains the fulfilment of the potential of every person, and the satisfaction of the nation's needs with regard to sustainable development. This is the mission for which the Ministry of Education is ultimately responsible.

In matters related to education, the regulatory and policy-making authority is vested in and exercised by the Minister who is ultimately answerable to Parliament. New legislation will enable the Minister to better delegate specifically designed authority for different purposes and sectors to MED and ESD and to agencies set up for specific purposes. These will be empowered to perform a variety of functions within the parameters of the Education Act.¹³

2.3 THE MALTA EDUCATION DIRECTORATE (MED)

The basic aim of the MED is two-fold. The first is to be a quality and standard setter which ensures quality education for all and sponsors good practices right up to the compulsory school-leaving age. This will be achieved by providing clear and appropriate policies, strategies and initiatives, and co-operation together with other educational institutions involved in the lifelong learning process. Secondly,

¹³ Laws of Malta, Cap 327, *Education Act 1988*. Article 10 provides: "Wherever under the provisions of this Act a right or a duty is vested in or imposed on the State that right or duty shall be exercised or fulfilled by the Minister."



the MED will facilitate optimum diversity, collaborate on policies, activities and projects, for the system to operate effectively. The MED will carry out any other functions and administer any other services, units, and entities that may be assigned to it by the Minister for Education.

2.4 LEGAL STATUS - MED

MED will be endowed by legislation with its own distinct legal personality. It will be run by a Director General as its chief executive officer. S/he will be appointed by the Minister (in consultation with technical expertise) and will be accountable to him/her on the strength of a definite, renewable performance contract.

2.5 FUNCTIONS OF MALTA EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

For its essential aims to succeed, the MED will need to carry out the following main functions.

i. Curricular and Lifelong Learning Policies

The MED will:

- a) be responsible for the formulation of a National Framework Curriculum, for making submission to the Government, and for monitoring its implementation at every level. This will ensure that the relevant philosophy, principles, objectives, standards and benchmarks are followed and achieved;
- b) promote a national lifelong learning policy and strategy in collaboration with key stakeholders, in particular with reference to education and training beyond post-secondary and higher education to enhance the lifelong learning opportunities for adults;
- c) provide and monitor the implementation of guidelines for school development planning, syllabi, grading criteria, the achievement of targets, level descriptors, assessment performance, examinations (including the Junior Lyceum examination), and to provide the necessary curricular professional guidance and support to stakeholders for their implementation;
- d) ensure that all schools recognise, identify, and prioritise their educational training needs, and ensure these are provided through regular, continuous professional development and training programmes at the most effective level (national, network or school);
- e) propose as well as provide consultation on other national policies in the field of education.

ii. Informational

The MED will:

- a) facilitate the collection, compilation and analysis of all relevant data, in full collaboration with the National Statistics Office (NSO);
- b) commission and carry out research on education for the purpose of formulating educational plans, policies, strategies, guidelines and directives;
- c) make the relevant information readily, completely and comprehensibly available.



iii. Auditing and Quality Assurance

The MED will:

- a) operate, in addition to the schools' self-evaluation and internal audit, a regular process of monitoring, inspection, audit and external review of the operations and performance of every part of the system in its curricular, pedagogical and managerial dimension; this to promote quality education and to facilitate collaboration and exchanges between all the parts of the system;
- b) be responsible for the administration and the implementation of the laws and regulations in the field of establishing the equivalence and the recognition of qualifications and certificates obtained from educational institutions abroad;
- c) develop and support mechanisms that assist educational stakeholders in ascertaining the strengths and weaknesses of the system; this for providers to improve the quality of their output and to help children achieve set learning goals and key competencies;
- d) inform key stakeholders, in an ongoing manner, of the national educational priorities and strategies set from time to time by Government, and to assist the stakeholders to integrate these priorities in their programmes;
- e) identify and promote good practices and assist schools in tapping into effective technical resources for assistance;
- f) take the necessary steps to enforce the legal prescriptions that apply to educational establishments and to all participants in the system;
- g) advise the Government on all matters relating to the licensing, warranting and conditions of operation of collective or individual educators as well as educational institutions.

iv. Financial and Human Resource Management

The MED will:

- a) assess all aspects of the economic dimension of the educational system as a whole and in all its parts and will provide all technical assistance possible for the development of public-private partnerships and co-operative methods of school-management;
- b) prepare its own business plan and will evaluate the business plans of the different units within the education system, including that of the ESD, and will advise the Minister on their budgets and on the modalities to be used in procuring public funds to operate a cost-effective, inclusive and value-enhancing system;
- c) be responsible and accountable for its own administration, for the management of its human resources, financial accounting, and for compliance with financial and procurement regulations;
- d) ensure the fullest possible application and use by all concerned of the available information technology systems.

v. Dialogue – National and International

The MED will:

- a) maintain an effective, ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders in the education system. It will make every effort to achieve the widest possible consensus on all relevant matters. It will



utilise all available media to ensure effective communications with national and international stakeholders;

- b) co-operate with the relevant institutions to ensure there is full Maltese participation in international programmes, especially European, from where useful comparative knowledge and other benefits can be derived;
- c) in collaboration with the Ministry's European and International Affairs Directorate, be expected to monitor closely educational international developments, in particular, European Union recommendations on education, will examine in detail EU documentation, prepare best positions on issues concerned and will actively participate in the relevant EU institutions and programmes.

2.6 THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE (ESD)

For an educational network system to function properly, as we have already seen, it needs regulation, quality audit and strong monitoring procedures through a central entity, in this case, the MED. It also however needs the central supply of support services beyond those which are normally provided by and from the schools themselves, even when these enjoy a high level of autonomy.

2.6.1 AIM OF ESD

The ESD, a services and support entity, is needed to assist in different ways the different sectors such as State-run, State-assisted, non-profit or wholly private schools – excluding the higher education sector. The general aim of the ESD is to ensure the effective operation of and service delivery to State schools. As regards all other schools, it will provide as many services as possible that are available to State schools, this within the parameters of financial and human resources, and this to lessen the divide that exists between State and non-State schools.

2.6.2 LEGAL STATUS

As in the case of MED, ESD will be established by law and will be endowed with its own legal personality. It will also be run by a chief executive officer who will be its Director General. S/he will be appointed by the Minister (in consultation with technical expertise) and will be accountable to him/her on the basis of a definite, renewable, performance contract.

2.6.3 MAIN FUNCTIONS

The main function of the ESD will be the supply to all schools of pedagogical, managerial, operational and ancillary support services. This Directorate, and its specific agencies, will be the main tool with which to speed up the decentralisation of State school management by promoting and supporting the emergence of networks of schools. Within such networks, State schools will achieve the necessary economy of scale, and will allow for horizontal and vertical connections with other schools, as is explained in the next chapter.

2.6.4 SPECIFIC FUNCTIONS

The ESD will have the following specific functions.

i. Planning and Resources Allocation

The ESD will:

- a) develop operational strategic planning in line with Government policy for the State schools'



sector. Priority will be given to the services and support schools and their networks need to ensure the implementation of the National Framework Curriculum and the development of their identity and ethos;

- b) formulate plans for the development of physical resources and maintenance systems with regard to building stock of schools, set up appropriate units for the implementation of such plans; allocate buildings, including sports facilities, and other educational spaces, to individual schools or networks;
- c) strengthen the capacity for accurate, timely, and cost-effective preparation of tender documentation in connection with capital projects and for the regular acquisition of services and provide the necessary assistance to school networks in this regard;
- d) ensure the allocation of equipment chosen on the basis of cost-efficiency including, in particular, Information Technology software and hardware, as well as ensure the appropriate and extensive use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool;
- e) ensure, within the realm of educational possibilities and in collaboration with school networks and with parents, the placement of students according to students' needs and potential;
- f) anticipate staffing requirements in collaboration with schools and their networks; collaborate with the MED, the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta, the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology and other institutions to ensure the training of teachers, other school professionals and personnel as well as their continuous professional development;
- g) assist school networks in recruiting the professional, administrative and support personnel, taking into account students' needs, whilst considering also the programmes for establishing a distinctive identity for each school.
- h) promote, encourage and monitor the democratic governance of schools through school councils with the active participation of parents, teachers and students;

ii. Lifelong Learning Services

The ESD will:

- a) promote and coordinate life long learning initiatives, including community education and cultural initiatives, e-learning and distance learning, adult education, evening classes, and other initiatives provided under the current system;
- b) co-ordinate programmes such as those offered by the Complementary Education Service, the Foundation for Educational Services, the Specific Learning Difficulties Unit and others;
- c) support school networks in the promotion of school library services, as well as, sports, drama, music and other cultural activities for schools;
- d) promote the use of and organise programmes on Education Channel 22 within the context of lifelong learning.

iii. Students Support Services

The ESD will:

- a) ensure the provision of counselling services, psychological and social work intervention services, both with students and their families;



- b) support inclusive education programmes, special education, and other schemes related to disability and special individual educational needs;
- c) ensure the provision and the co-ordination of vocational and career guidance services, including the implementation of programmes aimed at achieving improved school-workplace correlation and assist in the main transition stages, including from school to work;
- d) ensure the provision of services related to develop good behaviour and discipline, deal with cases of child abuse, bullying and substance abuse, and to ensure safe school environments;
- e) ensure the health of students, by means of health promotion, screening, medical services, and healthy lifestyles programmes;
- f) ensure the provision of the appropriate programmes and services for a safe and secure environment in schools;
- g) support school networks in the organisation of special projects and initiatives, including summer schools.

iv. Finance and Administration

The ESD will:

- a) within the context of its business plan, consider and negotiate with State schools their development plans, which facilitate formal budgeting and allocate the necessary finances. ESD will also ensure that, the allocation of funds finances identified priorities. The ESD central business plan will be forwarded to MED for evaluation and in turn MED will ensure its compliance with established national educational policy decisions and priorities. The ESD business plan will to be forwarded to the Minister for approval;
- b) be ultimately responsible to ensure the necessary compliance with financial and procurement regulations, business planning and financial audit procedures by schools and school networks;
- c) ensure maintenance and management of assets and procurement of material needed by schools, including transport;
- d) provide the framework and guidelines for the contractual conditions of personnel, professional or otherwise, employed in schools and school networks and will keep records and a complete documentation of financial transactions including those related to the payment of salaries;
- e) administer State aid to non-State schools;
- f) be responsible and accountable for its own administration, the management of its human resources, financial accounting, and compliance with financial and procurement regulations;
- g) ensure the fullest possible application and use by all concerned of the available information technology systems.

v. International Affairs

In collaboration with the relevant Ministry Directorate responsible for European and International Affairs the ESD will:

- a) encourage, facilitate and ensure the schools' maximum participation in European Union and International education programmes;



- b) administer bursaries and scholarships;
- c) facilitate student and staff exchanges;
- d) contribute to the formation and implementation of cultural agreements with other countries;
- e) actively encourage schools to pursue and benefit from the European and International educational programmes, and to ensure compliance with Government and Ministry of Education policy commitments.

vi. Customer Care Services

- a) provide a clear and transparent complaints' procedure for State and non-State schools and ensure that complaints are effectively handled at the proper level of the whole system, and are given particular attention at school and school network level;
- b) provide a customer care service to education sector personnel;
- c) provide a customer care service to students' parents.

CONCLUSION – STANDING COMMITTEE

It is crucial to emphasise that the role of the MED and ESD is to clarify and eliminate currently conflicting roles, whilst ensuring that the best quality service is provided. This exercise entails a restructuring of the current Education Division into two distinct but complimentary bodies that will increase efficiency by delivering a better quality service to children.

In order to ensure coherence, synergy and co-ordination between the two bodies, the Minister of Education will chair a Standing Committee consisting of the Permanent Secretary, as Deputy Chairperson, the MED and the ESD Directors General, and the Ministry's Policy Co-ordinator. Other officials will be invited to attend whenever particular items on the agenda require. This Standing Committee will meet once a month as a minimum and will keep a formal record of its proceedings.

The different phases of implementation of this restructuring will make clearer what kind of autonomy schools and school networks need to achieve in order to do their job properly, to successfully adapt to the challenges of a world which calls for dynamic and self-sufficient operations that guarantee accountability, value for money and justice in practices. Greater autonomy and increasing responsibilities will gradually and progressively devolve on the school networks as they mature and assume more duties, effectively and efficiently.

This chapter does not cover the whole range of issues the proposed restructuring of the Education Division raises. Further clarifications will be needed. Questions will be asked that will need to be answered satisfactorily. This chapter does not presume to have worked out all the eventualities that will emerge in evolving the present state of affairs to the new education network organisation. The Ministry is determined to discuss with all the stakeholders, and negotiate where appropriate, to ensure that the final decisions take into consideration all possible critical analysis, suggestions and recommendations that can improve and add value to the direction being proposed.



CHAPTER 3

NETWORKING OF SCHOOLS

Our knowledge of school networks and their power to innovate and change perceptions and practice comes not just from education, but also from trends and practices adopted by a wider society. Our expectations of services, from banking to hospitals, from shopping to local councils, are for a service which increasingly fits our personalised needs. Services are no longer structured around organisational expectations or institutional needs. They revolve around individuals. The same has to be with education.

3.1 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NETWORKS IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

Networks are an increasingly important feature of contemporary life. Modern organisations understand their importance for innovation and knowledge exchange. Across all sectors, networks are becoming an organisational principle of choice. In the field of education, we now understand that organisational isolation inhibits learning.

There are various interpretations of the word 'network'; it is a concept open to a high degree of conceptual pluralism. We are adopting here a working definition developed by Professor David Hopkins for the type of network in education that has a chance of realising the aspirations many have for them: "Networks are purposeful social entities characterised by a commitment to quality, rigour, and a focus on standards and student learning. They are also an effective means of supporting innovation in times of change. In education, networks promote the dissemination development of teachers, support capacity building in schools, mediate between centralised and decentralised structures, and assist in the process of re-structuring and re-culturing educational organisations and systems."¹⁴

In education, schools will only be able to meet the needs of all learners if they work in partnership with one another, sharing resources and assembling the right mix and range of education for each individual learner.¹⁵ Networks of schools also enable joint problem-solving and the creation of new practices that are particular to a specific context or group of schools.¹⁶

Networks enable us to meet the needs of individual learners in our schools. They also enable us to formalise collaborative arrangements and to investigate new forms of leadership. They provide the mechanism for us to learn from our peers and the space to develop effective and innovative practice.¹⁷ Networks increase access to good ideas and they allow groups of professionals to take collective responsibility for children. It is within this context of understanding and aspiration, that the proposals in this document for better schools and for the success of all children, has been shaped.

3.2 FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL NETWORKS

As pointed out at the 'Excel Network National Conference'¹⁸ there is no blueprint for an effective network. No one set of arrangements is necessarily better than another. In fact, one of the most important things to acknowledge as schools begin their journey together as a network, is that schools, staff and children will be the guides. Their context, their histories, their strengths and needs, their aspirations and the ways of working in their schools, will all influence the design of their network and its activities.

¹⁴ Hopkins, D. (2005). *Making Sense of Networks*, in Tom Bentley, David Hopkins & David Jackson *Developing a Network Perspective*. Networked Learning Communities, National College for School Leadership.

¹⁵ Leadbeater, C. (2004). *Learning about personalisation: how can we put the learner at the heart of the education system?* DfES. London.

¹⁶ Hannon, V. (2004). *The Future Is Networked*. Speech delivered to the Networked Learning Communities Annual Conference. London.

¹⁷ Fullan, M. (2004). *Leadership and Sustainability*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, California.

¹⁸ Excel Network National Conference. *Learning Through Peer Collaboration*. Education Division, Mgarr Primary School, Malta, 17th – 18th, May, 2005.



We do know about what seems to work. There are now many schools, both in the U.K. and internationally, that benefit from working together as a network. From their experience and from the range of research that has been undertaken, it is possible to identify factors that successful networks have in common.

3.2.1 DESIGN AROUND A COMPELLING IDEA OR ASPIRATIONAL PURPOSE AND AN APPROPRIATE FORM AND STRUCTURE.

Effective networks are designed around a compelling idea or an inspirational purpose. They have an appropriate form and structure. Successful networks manage to unite all their school communities around a purpose which is relevant and compelling, irrespective of context or current circumstances. The purpose has at its core improving achievement by students.

However diverse the schools in one's network, it is safe to assume that all of them wish to improve the student experience. That explains why they have committed to the network. Adults who work there want to engage with new ideas if they see in this a direct benefit to students. Those who lead the network will want to work in partnership with the other head teachers to identify and adopt a common learning focus.

3.2.2 FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING

A core principle of School Networks is the importance and centrality of a clear focus on student learning. It is this that provides the impetus for wide participation and drives active learning. Providing for students' needs on a wider horizon than one school provides the unifying moral purpose that underpins successful learning networks.

School networks are designed around adding a value to students' learning that would not be possible where one to work in isolation. Teachers are motivated by purposes that act themselves out in classrooms – and they draw energy from connecting with each other's work and schools.

A shared student learning focus is important to the effectiveness of the network. If all members of the network can answer the question as to 'what difference does what we do in schools likely to make to our children?' the network activity has the greatest chance of success.

3.2.3 CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULT LEARNING

Effective school-to-school networks create new opportunities for adult learning. Whilst student learning focus provides the network activity with a unifying purpose, what is likely to make it sustainable, and a real force for improvement, is the engagement of adults in the schools. Adult learning needs to be purposeful, focused and informed. Ultimately it is teachers and adults doing things differently (or doing different things) in classrooms that affect positively students' learning.

Networks generate the capacity to create new and powerful opportunities for adult learning, allowing practices to cross the boundaries of individual schools and place innovative ideas in the marketplace of knowledge exchange. Here they can be traded, refined and verified.

3.2.4 PLAN AND HAVE DEDICATED LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Effective networks require planning, dedicated leadership and proper management. Leadership and management of the network are crucial to its development. The success of a network (particularly in its early stages) is almost uniquely dependent on the vision, energy and effort of those who take on leadership roles. All organisational structures require tending, and networks are no different. As network structures are more fluid, the leadership of the network will start and shape the activity, guide reflection and adaptation and help refocus. This ensures it remains purposeful.



Networked learning communities have demonstrated the significance of shared or co-leadership arrangements.¹⁹ Not only does this spread the load and help build leadership succession, it also distributes the leadership function across more than one school location within a given network. Shared leadership creates a capacity for healthy dialogue and debate that will foster a satisfying and fruitful team spirit.

One of the most powerful aspects of networked learning is also the most difficult to plan for. Network activity will generate greater knowledge about the schools but this will not come only from senior leaders in schools, but from all those working and learning within the network. Systems within the network must encourage everybody to contribute and to feel that their contributions are valued. Successful networks show that leadership may not necessarily come from the places traditionally found in the past. It is important to ensure that all adults within the network take responsibility for creating, validating and spreading knowledge about what works and of what does not. Those networks which report the best progress during their first year or so are generally the ones that will have planned for distributed leadership from the earliest stages.

This does not mean that no role exists for senior leaders in networks. The involvement of head teachers and senior managers in the schools is in fact crucial to the development of the network, both in terms of priority and the profile network activity is given in schools. Distributed leadership only thrives where there is effective senior leadership. Planning for this distributed leadership means giving staff in each school clear roles, providing them with proper and effective support structures. It also means developing teachers and others into leaders, trainers and enquirers.

¹⁹ Anderson, M. & Thomas, N. (September, 2004). *Facilitating Leadership Development For Learning Networks*. Paper presented to the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference. Manchester.



CHAPTER 4

CREATING A SHIFT – FROM CENTRALISATION TO DECENTRALISATION

An important element of a networking system is the marshalling of elements that enhance greater creative and critical communication and co-ordination. The constitution of school networks in Malta is an intrinsic shift from the current centralised system to a new network system. It amounts to the setting up of an intermediate connecting level between, on the one hand, the Ministry, the MED and the ESD, and, on the other, the different schools at the periphery which will form the basic components of the school network.

In the context of our State education system, an ideal school network would be a group of schools that cater from early childhood right through primary to secondary education. Whilst retaining their individual identities, the schools within the network would be co-ordinated by a leading facilitator who will be accountable to the school network Board. In this way, ideal school networking should lead to the development of autonomous educational institutions, working within an agreed framework of performance, accountability and outcomes. This will be done on the basis of delegated functions and responsibilities, each co-ordinating their efforts to provide a continuous education programme that offers entry at kindergarten level and exit at the end of secondary education.

4.1 BENEFITS OF NETWORKING

This reform will create an environment where children and students benefit from increased self-confidence, encouragement, opportunities and the on-going support they need to acquire and to further their knowledge, competencies and attitudes needed to help develop their personalities. This will make them grow into active citizens capable of contributing towards their own well being, their families and of society.

This same environment will provide teachers with greater job satisfaction and support will help them acquire the space and opportunity to work flexibly in a task-and-needs oriented manner. The system will be diversified to dove-tail with students' needs.

In addition, parents/carers will not only benefit from the positive effect networking creates on the education of their child. Parents, as partners in this experience, will be able to engage in their child's educational journey, and to partake in their own lifelong learning paths.

School networks will use the community resources and in ways that step up the involvement of the community at large. In return, they increase their role as community learning and cultural centres.

The coming together of schools to exchange experiences and to co-ordinate projects and activities will improve the quality of students' education in schools. This will not only generate more trust from parents, but will provide a more motivating environment for teachers. Such experiences should facilitate the decentralisation of the system and the empowerment of the schools themselves whilst improving the quality of education:

- a. By pooling of resources and by sharing experiences, it is much easier for a network of schools than for an individual school to establish a degree of autonomy. A network can provide a better environment, can encourage and foster more initiative and innovation, more team spirit, an increased shared sense of purpose and direction. The pooling of resources will yield an overall result that is greater than the sum of the individual inputs by the different participants in a variety of ways.



- b. The network's support to individual schools will help manage better their curricular development as fits their needs more so in the light of their exposure to the experiences and expertise of their fellow schools. It should eventually become possible for students to satisfy better the options that match their aspirations, talents and abilities and to acquire key competencies.
- c. The network ensures that Heads of School focus better on providing professional educational leadership, employing appropriate and qualified personnel to handle administrative, managerial and other issues which are of a strictly non-pedagogic nature.
- d. The network will also achieve cost-effectiveness through economies of scale and will make new initiatives and innovation more feasible.
- e. The sharing of best practices ensures that these will come to be better appreciated, known and disseminated amongst schools and the wider community.
- f. Networks will enable the better implementation of improved internal educational self-evaluation exercises, audit mechanisms and external quality assurance processes.
- g. Networking will encourage the formation of teams for the cross-school handling of common concerns and for other co-school-management initiatives, like psycho-social services in areas where the need or evaluation is felt.
- h. The talents, interests and motivations of teachers will be better appreciated and they will be more effectively deployed to serve student needs better and to reinforce corporate identity.
- i. Networking will facilitate horizontal and vertical linkages between schools from early childhood on to primary and then through to secondary education, in this way lessening one of the challenging problems of the existing system - that of a difficult transition from primary to secondary schooling.

4.2 FACTORS FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

Two factors that need to be given particular consideration in the strategic implementation of this new education network organisation in our country concern:

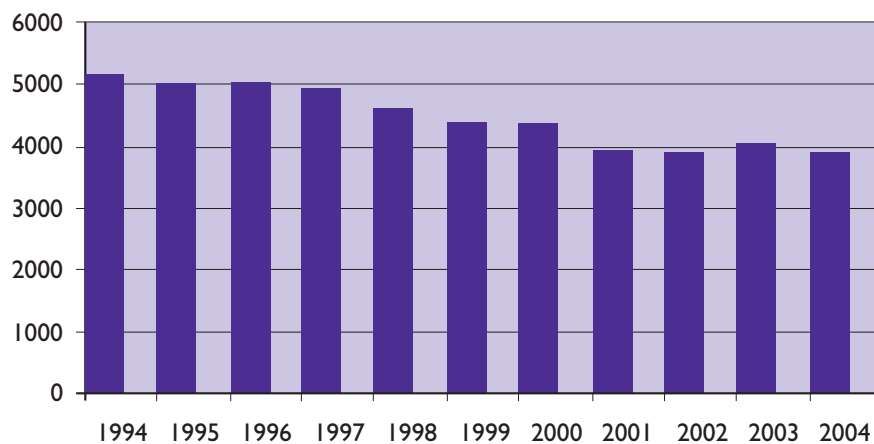
- a. the evolving demographic situation, and
- b. the mechanisms used to assure the learning gains made by students at different stages of their educational experience.

4.2.1 EVOLVING DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION

A particular issue emerges from an examination of demographic data. This concerns the movements in the national birth rate. These statistics are fundamental to any educational reform since they are a factor that spurs change. Birth rates have an immediate impact on school populations and therefore have to be taken into consideration when reforms to the educational system are needed. The table and graph below show a 24.5% decline in the number of live births in the Maltese islands over the last decade.

TABLE I: TOTAL LIVE BIRTHS 1994-2004²⁰

Year	Births
1994	5152
1995	5003
1996	5045
1997	4936
1998	4621
1999	4410
2000	4386
2001	3935
2002	3906
2003	4036
2004	3887



4.2.2 MECHANISMS ASSURING LEARNING ATTAINMENTS

Another important issue refers to ascertaining objectively standards achieved by students in the course of their educational experience. Presently, apart from the normal school examinations, students sit for two major national examinations that assess their educational achievement - at approximately age 11, the Junior Lyceum and/or Common Entrance examination²¹ and at approximately age 16, the Secondary Education Certificate examination.²² A significant number of students sit for neither, whilst others fail both.

²⁰ Statistics provided by NSO, 2005

²¹ The Junior Lyceum Examination is a qualifying examination, coordinated by the Education Division, taken at the end of the primary school course. All those who pass qualify for entry into a Junior Lyceum. The others continue their education in Area Secondary Schools. This examination is optional.

The Common Entrance Examination, co-ordinated by the Secretariat for Education within the Catholic Diocese of Malta, is taken at the same level solely by boys for entry into select Church secondary schools. Entrance is selective according to the number of places available. The MED will continue to be responsible for the Junior Lyceum examination, while discussions will be initiated with the Church school sector regarding the Common Entrance examination.

²² The Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) examinations are taken at the end of the secondary school course. The SEC is offered in a number of subjects at ordinary level. The Matriculation Secondary Education Certificate (MATSEC) is taken after two years of a post-secondary sixth form course. The MATSEC is offered in a number of subjects at advanced level. Both SEC and MATSEC are requisites for University entry. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment has launched a Working Group that is currently reviewing both SEC and MATSEC examinations.



The present report proposes the retention of the Junior Lyceum examination, but with appropriate modifications (including a more graded paper) to cover the whole range of performance based abilities of all students. This examination will be developed over time into a compulsory national benchmarking exercise which will be taken at significant stages to test the educational development of **all** students of both primary and secondary schooling in state and non-state sectors. Results will help recognise better the students' achievement and the support needed for those who do not reach the expected targets. This will lead to further inclusion of students in the same school. It is important to note that in any educational path, it is imperative to stop and take stock of progress and what next steps are needed. This is a main target with any national benchmarking exercise. It will also be possible to enhance the experience of setting together with that of streaming to suit the range required by the different students.

4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL NETWORKS IN MALTA

A school network would **ideally** be built around a secondary school that serves as a receiver from primary 'feeder' schools. The existing stock of secondary school buildings in Malta makes the application of this ideal school network logistically difficult to implement on a national level. Despite this, and in view of the intrinsic benefits awaiting students, teachers and schools in the networking process, different models and approaches are being proposed to overcome this hopefully temporary problem. The various models are fully explained in the next chapter.

In very basic terms each school network will be a College providing a range of co-ordinated educational facilities, resources and services. The different alternative network systems considered in this document will have a number of common elements. These include:

- a. Each will have the same managerial structure. There will be a College Board²³, a Principal²⁴, a Council of Heads²⁵, and a Head²⁶ for each school within the network;
- b. The professionals referred to in paragraph (i) will be drawn from existing qualified and experienced educators.
- c. Primary 'A' and 'B' schools will be phased into 'C' schools to ensure a smoother continuity throughout the primary education course. 'C' schools will host students from kindergarten to Year 6.²⁷
- d. Boys' and Girls' Centres (ex-Opportunity Centres) will be phased out. This reform will step up assistance to students who are not achieving expected learning targets in the class. In the case of the relative levels not improving as expected, new learning zones will be set up within the mainstream secondary school. Students still not achieving the desired results may attend an out of school learning centre where specifically designed short and long term educational programmes will be offered. These new facilities can also provide an education students showing significantly challenging behaviour. This reform will work towards the reintegration of students from learning zones and learning centres into the mainstream education system, and as soon as it remains beneficial for the student and the school community. This measure will further consolidate the principle of inclusion.
- e. The nomenclature of College. Each College will be managed by a College Board appointed by the Minister of Education. The Board will consist of not less than four members one of whom will be appointed Chairperson. The members of the Board will be appointed for three years, after which they may be reappointed. Board members will ideally be invited to serve as non-remunerated members. They will be chosen, on the basis of their expertise, skills, experiences and the valid contribution they can make to the College. Choice will be

²³ Vide Appendix I

²⁴ Vide Appendix II

²⁵ Vide Appendix III

²⁶ Vide Appendix IV

²⁷ Primary 'A' and Primary 'B' schools are found in the larger localities. Whilst Primary 'A' schools cater for kindergarten provision and the first three years of compulsory schooling, Primary 'B' schools cater for the last three years of primary education, Primary 'C' schools are found in smaller localities and cater for kindergarten provision and six years of primary education.



made from among a spectrum of people with a known track record in, among others, personal initiative, educational and community leadership, business acumen, civic spirit, and parental involvement in education. Each College will be endowed with its own distinct legal and juridical status. As regards relations with entities external to the College and the implementation of the statute for every College, the Board will have powers similar to those of a board of directors of a commercial company.

- f. The Principal will be appointed by the Minister of Education following a selection process carried out by a selection board made up of College Board members and a representative each of the Ministry of Education, the MED and the ESD. The Principal will be the educational leader of the College as a whole and will chair the Council of the Heads of Schools that form part of the College. The Principal will be expected to have the necessary professional educational leadership and managerial skills for the effective networking and co-ordination of the schools within the network. The Principal will provide guidance, direction, and support to the schools, through their Heads, in pursuit of their aims and functions and will facilitate the coordination and organisation of common activities, programmes, projects and specialisation at the level of the College or each individual school. The Principal will communicate the national policies or those of the College Board to the Council of Heads and ensure that these are carried out across the College.
- g. Each school within the College will be managed and led by a Head of School. All models are based on the premise that each school will have its own Head of School, Assistant Heads, teaching and non-teaching Staff, a School Council and a Student Council.
- h. The College, through the Principal, will procure, with the necessary assistance from the ESD, a team of education, administrative, technical and maintenance personnel²⁸ as may be necessary to support the Heads of School in a timely and effective manner. Each College will have a College Administrator, a Precincts Officer and other officials to deal with school discipline, psycho-social issues, and curricular activities outside school hours. The technical, maintenance and cleaning personnel will be under the charge of a Precincts Officer who will be appointed to manage these services. The Precincts Officer and his/her team will form part of a unit set up within the remit of the ESD.
- i. The College Board and the Principal will draw on the services of the ESD and of other service providers for support in any priority development area that will have been identified by them.

All necessary legally binding measures will be put in place to safeguard the vested rights of personnel serving currently with the Education Division, other public educational institutions or other departments, and public entities and who will be detailed to carry out their duties with the newly proposed public educational entities and school networks.²⁹

²⁸ It is expected that such personnel would be redeployed from amongst existing personnel within the Education Division or other public entities.

²⁹ Vide Appendix IV










CHAPTER 5

SCHOOL NETWORKS MODELS

This report has so far defined the concept of creating a network of schools, how these will be run and their role in relation to the National Framework Curriculum. As seen earlier, school networks in the various localities have to be defined against the background of the current school population, existing school building stock and location, demographic trends and the relational fit between the feeder primary schools and the receiver Junior Lyceum/Secondary schools. The following are the different models which are considered by this report.

KEY

	STUDENTS
	PRIMARY SCHOOLS
	SECONDARY SCHOOLS / JUNIOR LYCEUMS
	PRIMARY SCHOOL HEAD
	SECONDARY SCHOOL HEAD
	PRINCIPAL & CHAIRPERSON OF THE COUNCIL OF HEADS
	COLLEGE BOARD MEMBER



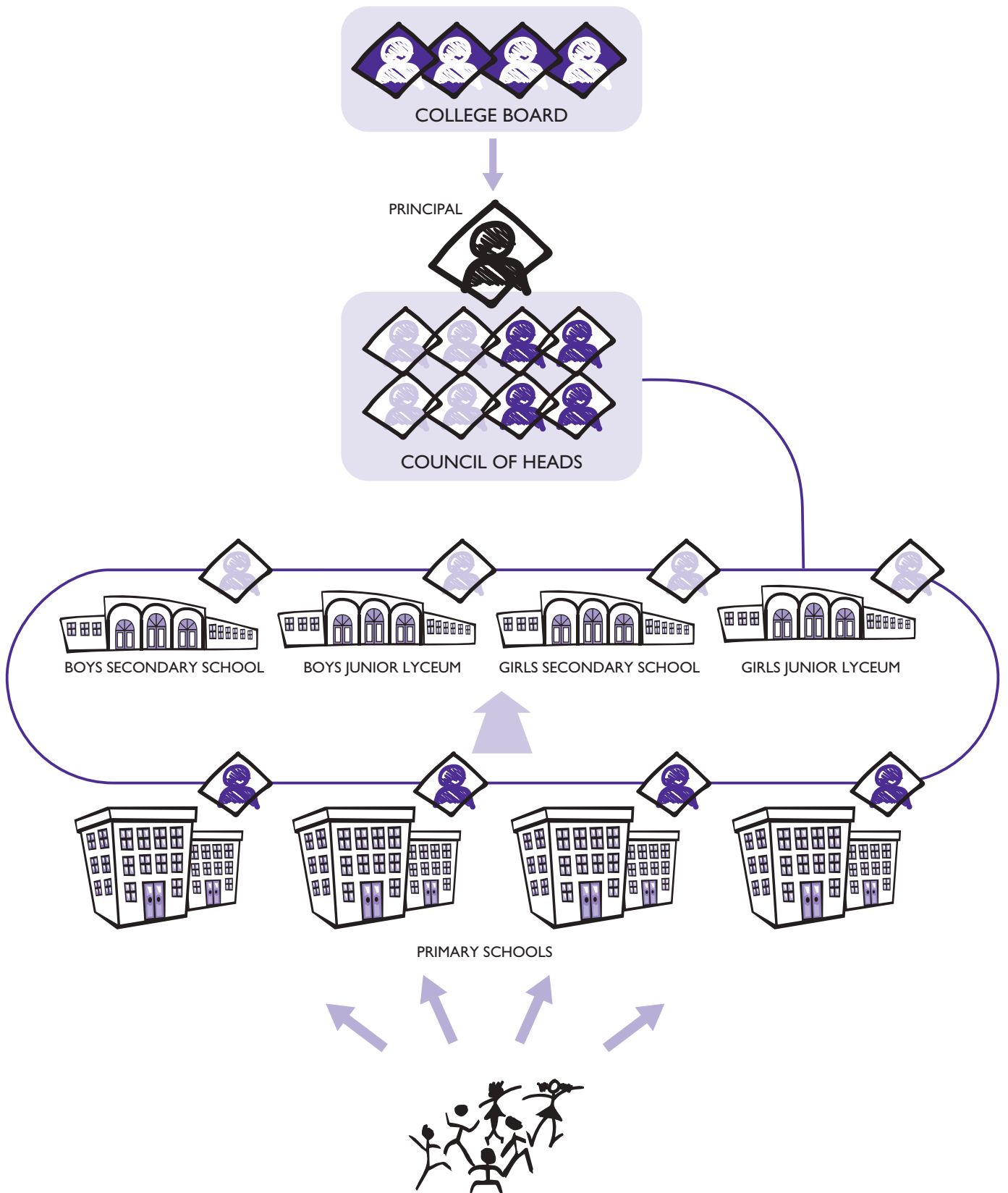
5.1 MODEL I

Model I would introduce the College Board, Principal and Council of Heads to the present structure of schools – with a group of primary schools feeding into a number of Boys and Girls Junior Lyceums and Secondary Schools. The problem with this model is that the existing school building stocks and their location offer no guarantee the objectives of networking can be easily achieved. In particular, it is difficult for students to remain within the same College when they move from the primary to the secondary sector. In this context, this report proposes a number of modifications to overcome some of the constraints this model presents.

It is therefore being proposed that the four primary schools in the Cottonera region will be in a first phase networked with the Boys Junior Lyceum and the two Secondary Schools in the same area. Discussions will be held with Church and Independent schools in the area to explore the possibility of such schools joining the network experience. This would provide an interesting mix of approaches and existing school identities. Girl students attending the Junior Lyceum located outside the Cottonera region will continue to do so until a time comes when a new and modern alternative set-up can be created. For the purposes of all State-sponsored students, this school network would have one College Board, one Principal, and a Council of all the Heads of all the schools involved.



FIGURE 1: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 1³⁰



³⁰ Given the logistics of the school building stocks and locations, the first phase of the implementation of this model will have to be as described in the text.



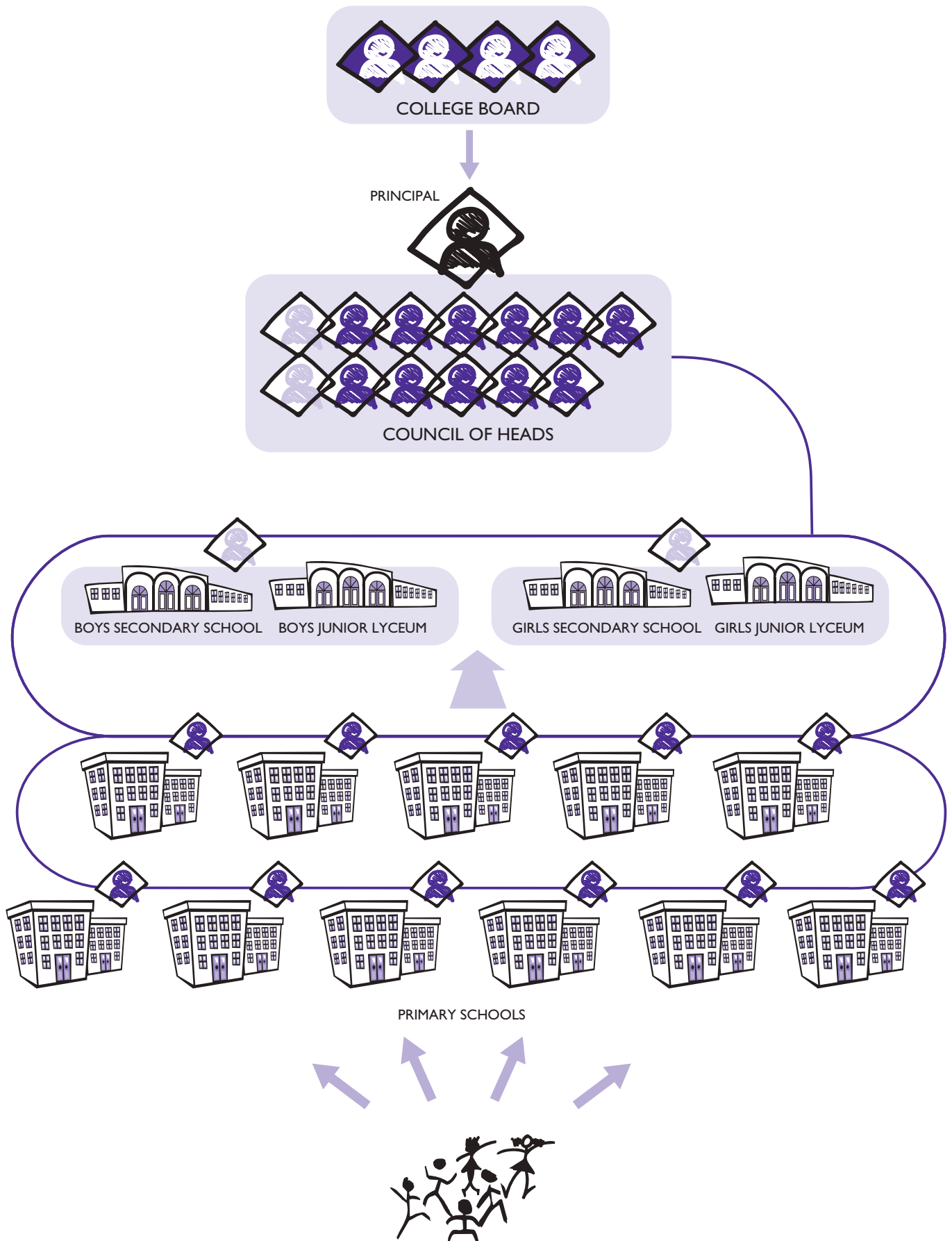
5.2 MODEL 2

Model 2 has been based on the experiences gained in Gozo, where each State secondary school provides for Junior Lyceum and Secondary School students. The two schools receive all of Gozo's primary school children, except for those who go to Church Secondary Schools. Classes for Junior Lyceum and Secondary Schools are separate, but there is one Head, one staff, teaching both Junior Lyceum and Secondary School students, wearing one uniform, using common spaces, facilities and services. While this experience retains modified syllabi, it lessens to a certain extent, the separation of Junior Lyceum and Secondary School students, and enhances the inclusion of the students in the secondary education experience. It is also interesting to note that a higher rate of Secondary School students pass the Junior Lyceum examination at the end of Form I in Gozo, in comparison with other students in Malta.

This model implies a simplified administration and, an easier transfer from Secondary Schools to Junior Lyceums. However, existing school building stocks in Malta makes this model difficult to implement on a large scale or throughout the entire state education system. The present state educational structure in Gozo will be consolidated through the school network process, presided by a College Board and a Principal who will phase in the proposed changes. The different Heads of primary and secondary schools will continue to lead their schools but will be working together as members of the Council of Heads. The Sannat Special Unit and the Art, Drama and Music schools in Gozo will also form part of this school network.



FIGURE 2: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 2





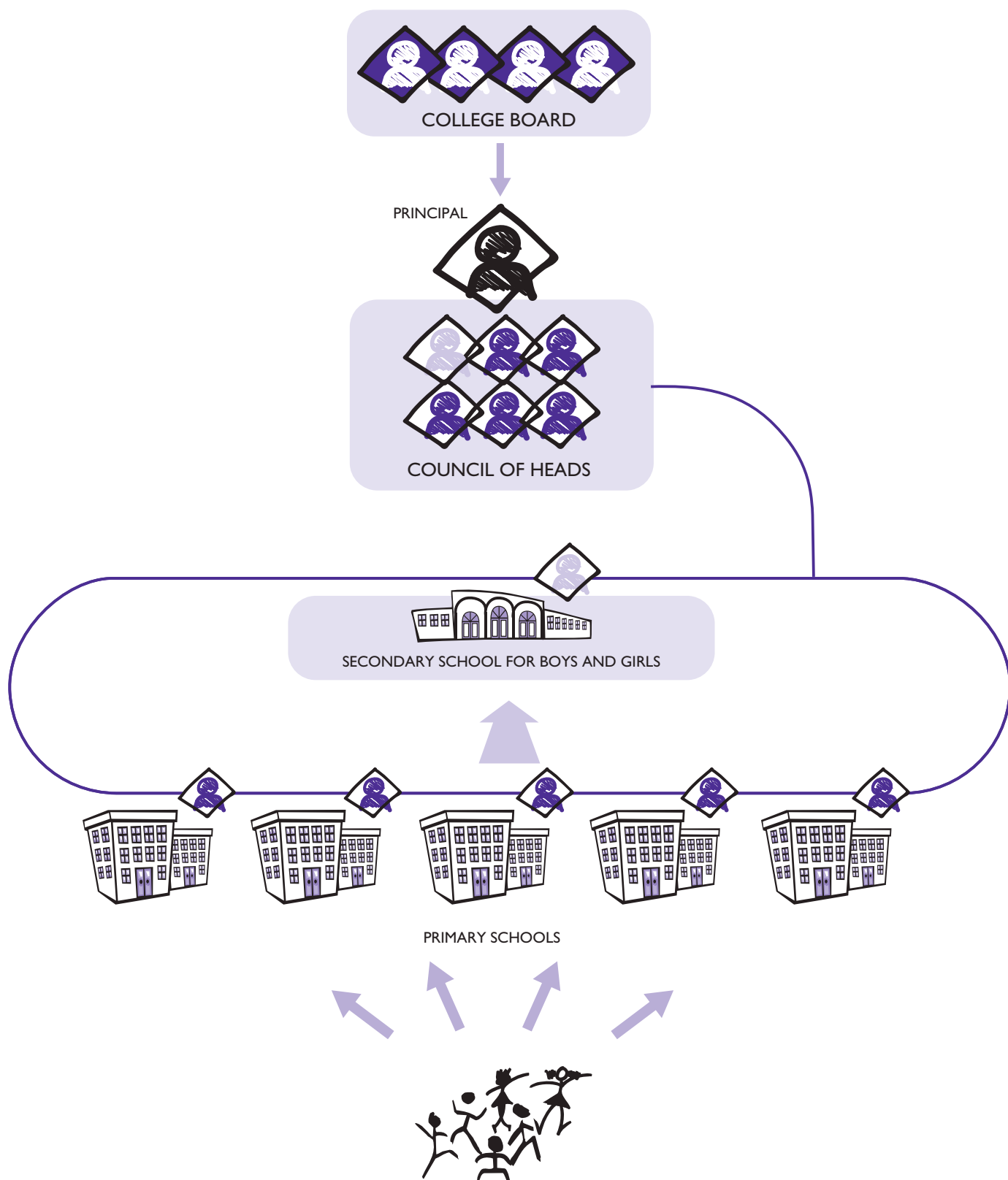
5.3 MODEL 3

Model 3 ensures that all students go to the secondary school in their catchment area at the end of their primary education. All classes in this network would host students with mixed learning abilities and would therefore provide different teaching methodologies for students with different abilities. This model allows for greater diversity, greater inclusion, a simpler administrative structure, and is shown to be the most cost-beneficial.

This model is the most challenging to teachers and administrators and may be challenged by those who do not support the comprehensive system. Again, given the small size and location of many of the existing secondary school buildings, this model presents several logistical problems. By continuing to invest in the extension, refurbishment and building of schools in the coming years, this model can possibly be further considered and developed further in the future, provided a change in popular perception and cultural attitudes also takes place.



FIGURE 3: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 3





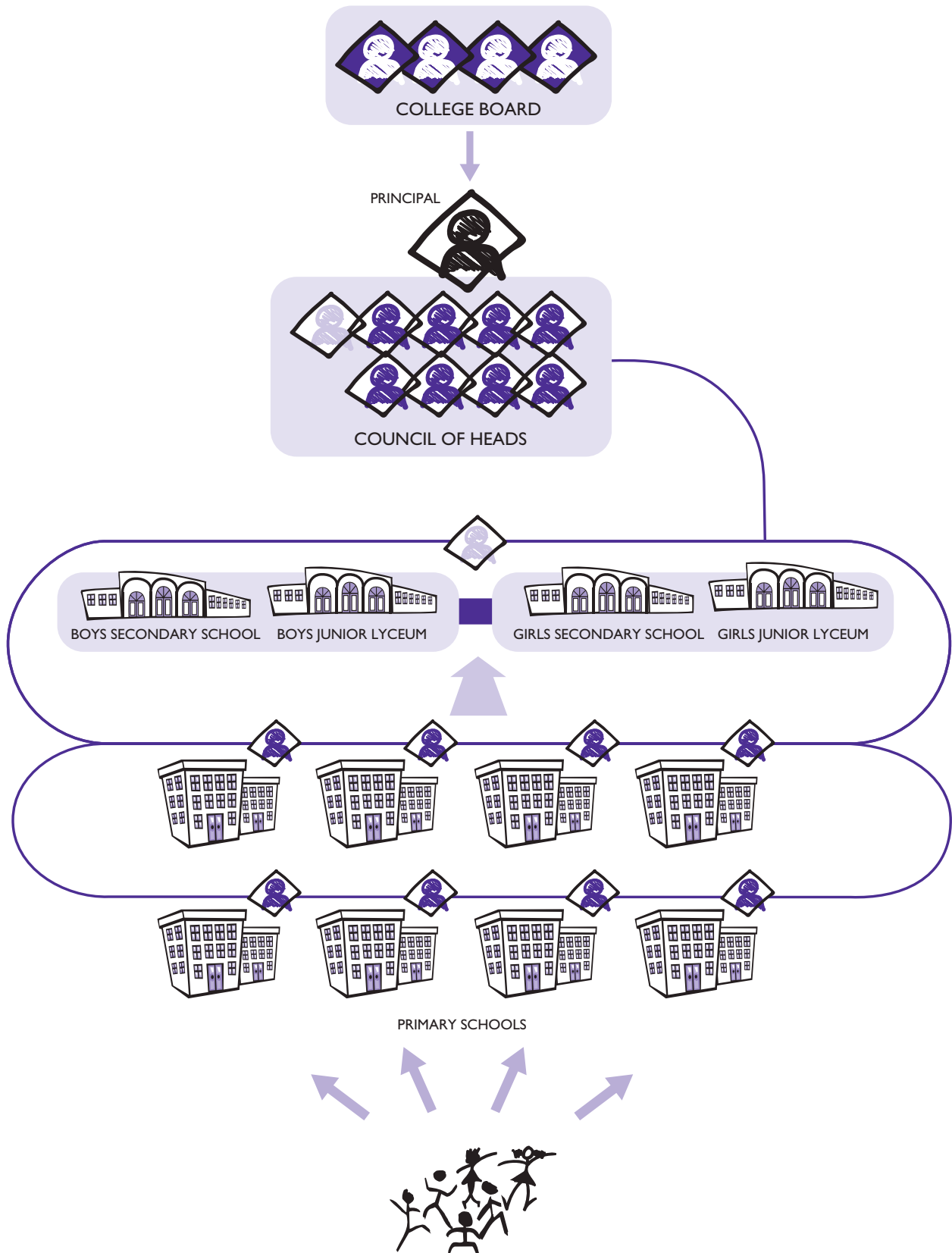
5.4 MODEL 4

Model 4 is an innovative model in Malta. What is being suggested here is a school network made up of a group of primary schools which will provide access to a secondary school level within the same College. This secondary school will host both a Junior Lyceum and a Secondary School on the same campus for boys. The school will have the same teachers, use the same resources, common spaces, facilities and services.

It is being proposed that the new secondary school being built in Kirkop be considered as a first step in the direction of the implementation of this model. The way it works out in reality is for Birżebbuġia, Għaxaq, Gudja, Kirkop, Mqabba, Qrendi, Safi and Żurrieq primary schools to become a part of the same College together with the new secondary level facility which is being built in Kirkop. The physical facilities on this new campus at Kirkop make the implementation of this model at this stage feasible only for boys. Girls will continue attending the Junior Lyceum and Secondary Schools as at present. Subsequent school building plans ought to take into consideration the requirements of school networking, so as to provide for school networks with a secondary level school for girls in this catchment area. Similar to all other models, this school network will have its College Board, Principal and Council of Heads.



FIGURE 4: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 4³¹



³¹ Given the logistics of the school building stocks and locations, the first phase of the implementation of this model will have to be as described in the text.



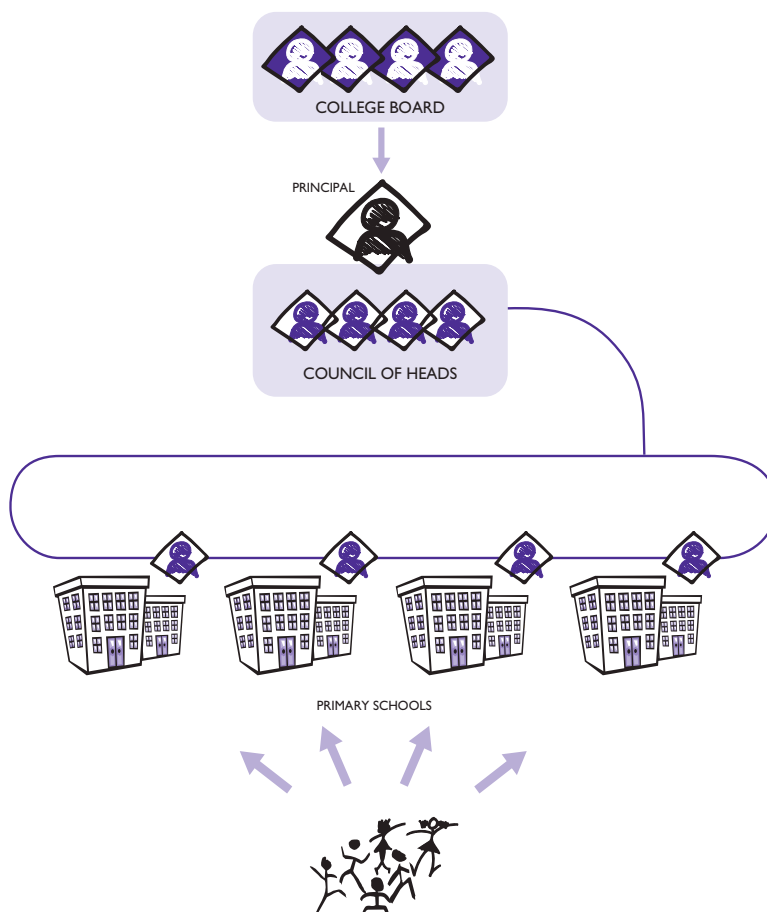
5.5 MODEL 5

Model 5 provides for a horizontal school network, where a group of schools at the same level (Primary or Secondary/Junior Lyceum) network together. The advantage here is that this model can be implemented in the short term throughout the existing State education system, enabling schools to start reaping the benefits of networking at a horizontal level. It is also a major preparatory stage towards vertical networking in order to eventually establish the required continuity between primary and secondary levels. It should further be considered whether an invitation to join such horizontal clusters ought to be extended to non-State schools of the same level as the network.

This model proposes that primary State schools start networking, whilst other networks would include both Junior Lyceums and Secondary Schools. All these horizontal school networks will have a College Board, a Principal and a Council of Heads. The four Boys and Girls Centres, Mater Dei School and St Patrick’s Craft Centre will also be grouped in a network except that its aim will be to transform these schools into Learning Centres that will work in conjunction with Learning Zones based in the schools. Adequately resourced and provided with the necessary technical assistance, such centres will carry out programmes for the benefit of students finding it difficult to cope in the mainstream. It is imperative that the necessary services to children not coping should be given primarily in the class. If it is beneficial to the child, the next step should be the periodic withdrawal into learning zones within the school. In serious cases, the child is referred to a Learning Centre for a stipulated period. The ultimate specific objective here would be the student’s reintegration into the mainstream. Such learning centres may specialise in different areas so that they will be developed into resource facilities for the mainstream.

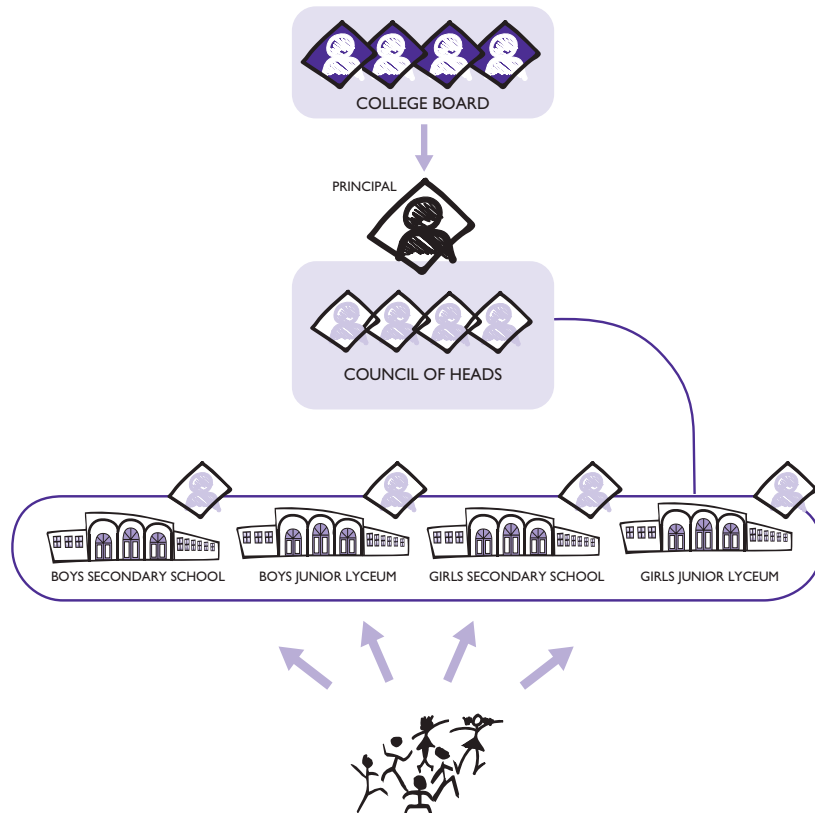
FIGURE 5: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 5

VERSION I: PRIMARY SCHOOL NETWORK

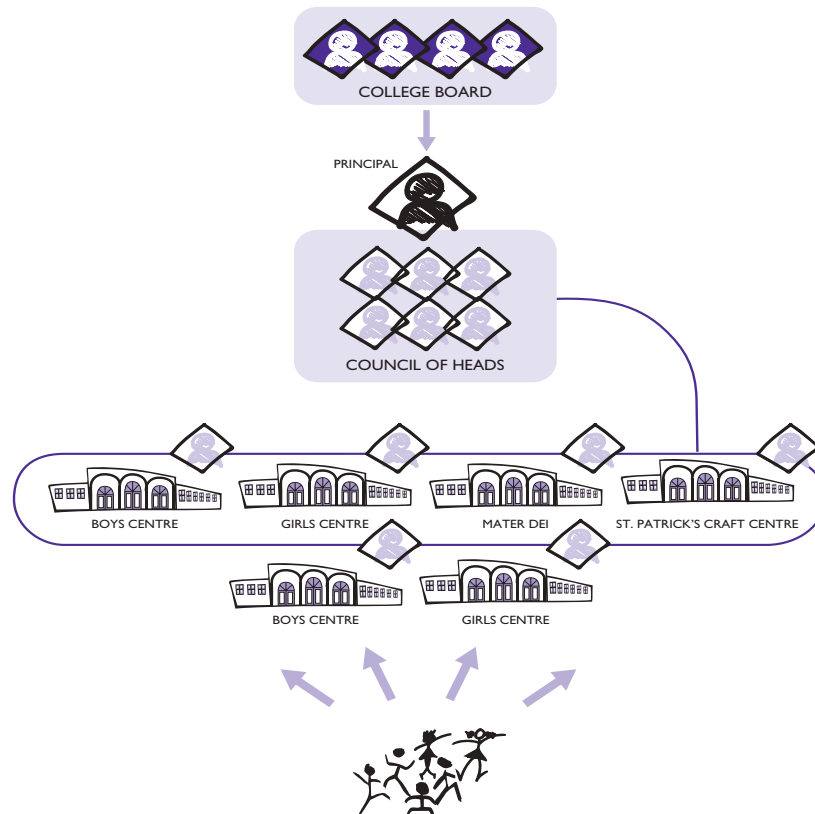




VERSION 2: SECONDARY SCHOOL NETWORK



VERSION 3: BOYS AND GIRLS SCHOOL NETWORK



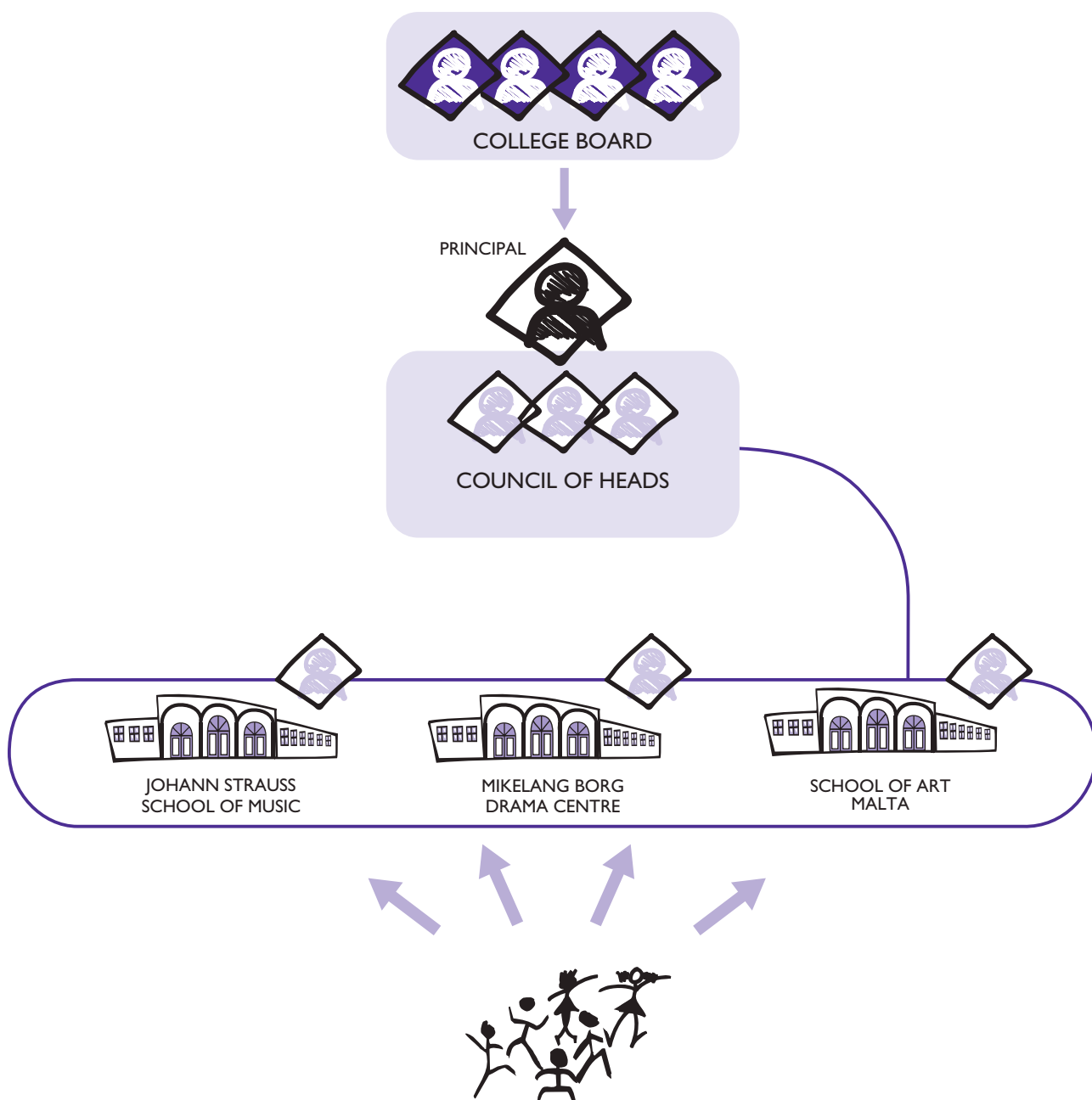


5.6 MODEL 6

Model 6 considers the networking of schools for students with special talents and interests, such as the Arts. Ultimately, there will be schools – and these will be within the College of the Arts – which will follow the ordinary curriculum with a special focus on music, drama, art or dance. As an initial step, it is being proposed that a network is formed of the Mikelang Borg Drama Centre, Johann Strauss School of Music, and the School of Art in Malta. This will allow the usual administrative economies of scale and cross disciplinary interaction. It should be possible to integrate the physical spaces and facilities, whilst allowing for a distinction between the fine arts and the traditional crafts. Libraries and similar facilities will be made accessible to all schools and the public. The premises will still be available for public educational use. This network will also serve as a resource centre for all other schools and school networks providing support for their initiatives in the artistic field. There will also be scope for the development of other disciplines, including, music, the visual arts, classical and contemporary dance and digitised art. Sport will be another area where schools following the ordinary curriculum could develop a particular focus.



FIGURE 6: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 6





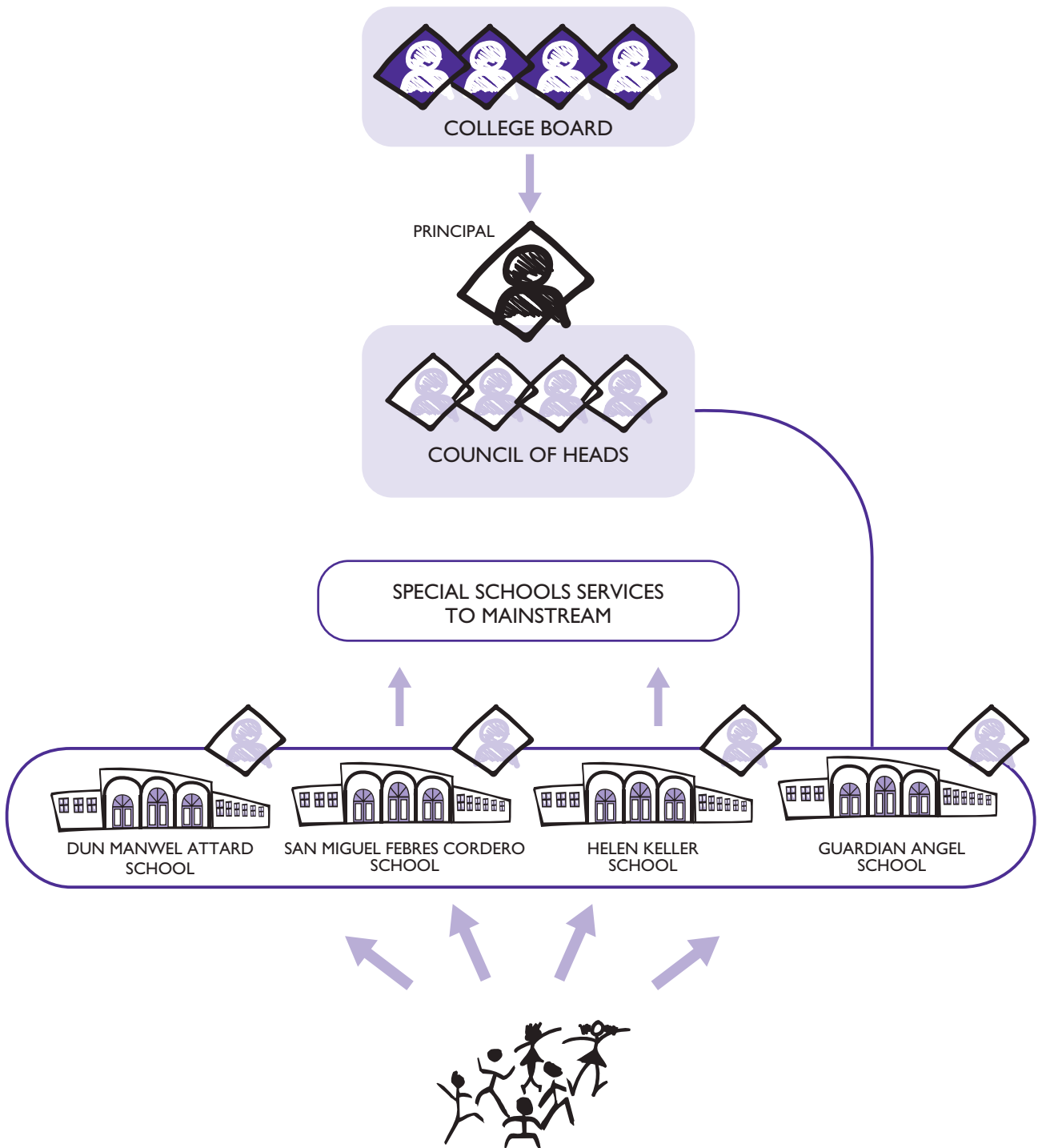
5.7 MODEL 7

Model 7 will incorporate, within a school network, the four special schools in Malta that is, the San Miguel Febres Cordero School, the Guardian Angel School, the Dun Manwel Attard School, and the Helen Keller School. These schools will be expected to offer a two-fold service. The first will be to offer quality educational provision to students with a disability. It is recommended that each school will focus on a particular area of disability (e.g. autism, profound physical disability, etc). The second function of the school will be to offer select services to students with a disability but who are in the mainstream. In this way, the special schools as we know them today will develop into resource centres as well as service providers. The schools will also be under the leadership of a Principal, will have a College Board and a Council of Heads.

The main thrust of these proposals is to ensure that all children and students in Malta and Gozo are given the best opportunity possible to develop their personalities and talents. Equity through inclusion is a fundamental objective. It is in the light of this vision that we have given uppermost consideration to the future development of special schools in Malta and Gozo. The ultimate objective is for these schools to be individually networked with mainstream Colleges. Given the complex phasing in of the networking proposals, we have opted, in a first phase, to provide a school network for these special schools. In this manner, the Colleges will be given time to grow into the new situation, whilst special schools will also start gaining experience in networking with the benefits this offers.



FIGURE 7: GRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF MODEL 7





CONCLUSION

The start up of school networks is an exciting opportunity for our schools to develop local solutions. It will provide us with the capacity to re-invent structures and practices in ways that are appropriate for our children today and in the foreseeable future.

This will not be a simple or straightforward journey. We know there are issues to solve. This is a process that involves collective commitment, discipline and the evolution of effective network leadership. Experience shows that all networks need to plan well to ensure that they are clear about the systems, roles and responsibilities which will help them develop and flourish. If we can do this when our network is in its infancy, and if we are able to build from the existing knowledge-base, we will find that the journey together, whilst being no less challenging, will be exciting, productive and properly satisfying.

Being part of a network is stimulating. It offers the prospect of learning new things in different ways for the benefit of all pupils. It can be a complex journey. Whilst a detailed map for that journey might be premature to expect, we believe this document provides clear signposts and directions that will help education stakeholders in Malta and Gozo on their way.

In the opening of this document the Minister of Education argued we are entering a new phase of educational reform in which educational audit, quality assurance, and school networks would play a central role. This is based on the belief that we require a qualitatively different approach to teaching and learning in the 21st century. The demands on young people and the demands of young people make this very true. Teaching in the 21st century should cover not only the transmission of knowledge, but also the process of learning how to learn. As students master information and skills, the result of each learning experience is not only what they learn, but, equally, the ability they acquire to approach future learning in and out of school.

The challenge is to focus this new relationship to achieve both equity and excellence. The solution is to build on what the most successful teachers do best, to create an education system with personalised learning at its heart, a system where every child matters, where careful attention is paid to individual learning styles, motivations and needs. There is rigorous use of students target setting linked to high quality formative assessment and marking, lessons are active, well-placed and enjoyable, and students are supported by partnership with others beyond the classroom.

Personalised learning can only be developed school by school. This is truer of Malta and Gozo where small can be so smart and feasible. Personalised learning cannot be imposed from above. If we want to make personalised learning the defining feature of our education system, we need to develop a new, more focused and purposeful relationship between the Ministry responsible for education, the new national education Directorates, the Colleges, the new school networks, and the schools themselves. The new relationship with schools will bring a sharper focus of our work at national level, will strip out clutter and will release greater local initiative and energy. The desire to free schools so that they can focus on what really matters, on building from and in their strengths, on providing more help in identifying their weaknesses and offering more tailored and coherent support, should bind us all together in this exciting journey.

One thing is clear – individual schools cannot achieve this alone. They can no longer be regarded as the unit of integration. Networks of schools offer more hope. Networks of schools, together with other service providers, will respond creatively and collaboratively to serve each ‘whole’ learner. No single school can hope to provide diversity, flexibility or an economy of service this entails. Networks can.



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APPENDIX I: CHARACTERISTICS OF A COLLEGE

“College” is intended to mean a school or a network of schools as the Minister responsible for Education may from time to time determine. A College will be under the responsibility of a College Board and will be administered by a Principal.

a. Legal Personality

Each College will be statutorily endowed with a distinct juridical personality.

Therefore;

1. Each college will be a body corporate with its own distinct legal personality and will be capable, subject to its mandate, of entering into contracts, of employing personnel, and of doing all other necessary acts which are incidental or conducive to the exercise or performance of its functions under its statute.
2. The legal and juridical representation of each college will be vested in the Chairperson of the College Board, provided the Board will be able to appoint the Principal or any one or more of its members, officers, or anyone employed by the College to appear in the name and on behalf of the College in any judicial proceedings, deed, contract, instrument or other document whatsoever.
3. A College will consist of a number of schools with their students, staff, Heads, a Principal, and a College Board. The Principal and Heads of School are holders of management positions which imply the adoption of a top management mindset.

b. Functions of the College

The functions of each College will be to:

1. network the schools forming the College by fostering a team culture amongst the Heads of School and their personnel, and by facilitating the effective co-ordination of the said schools, including cross school handling of common concerns and initiatives;
2. ensure the appropriate application of the principles and the guidelines of the National Framework Curriculum in the school/s forming the College in such a way that allows all students to receive their educational entitlement to the maximum of their potential;
3. ensure the ownership of, and the accountability for, the education process and the smooth transitions of all the students entrusted to the College from an early age through to secondary education;
4. ensure continuity, balance, depth, and coherence in the curricular provision for each student;
5. improve the quality of the educational provision by promoting and maintaining high standards of performance and attainment by all members of the school community;
6. ensure the emergence and the sharing of good practices;
7. promote the concept of lifelong learning;
8. promote and disseminate a culture of evaluation amongst members of the College communities. Such a culture will include the implementation of approved internal educational audit mechanisms and the participation in external quality assurance processes;



9. prepare a three-year business plan and an annual estimated budget for the College and apportion the delegated budget amongst the schools of the College;
10. ensure the appropriate selection and use of teaching and learning resources, services and facilities;
11. lead the College schools in ensuring a safe and secure school environment and a culture of discipline;
12. ensure the timely recruitment, induction and continuing professional development of the Principal and the teaching, managerial, administrative and other support staff according to nationally established criteria and procedures;
13. collaborate with the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta, the relevant MCAST³³ Institutes and other training institutions in the training and continuing professional development of schools personnel;
14. oversee the overall management, administration and conduct of schools;
15. provide appropriate customer care and complaint handling mechanisms for teachers, parents/ carers and students;
16. ensure the implementation of the national policy of parental involvement in school development and in the educational experience of their children and to promote effective home-school partnerships;
17. promote the development of schools into community learning and cultural centres.

c. Accountability

The College Board will be accountable to the Minister through the MED or ESD directorate. While the Principal is accountable to the College Board, the schools within the College will report to the Principal and are accountable to the Principal and the Board. The Board and the College schools will provide the Minister of Education and both Directorates with the necessary information, as far as regards anything they do which is ancillary to their functions. They will furnish them with the relevant returns and accounts, and will provide facilities for the verification of any information furnished. In matters involving financial considerations and commitments, the Board will also be subject to the direction and auditing of the appropriate public regulatory bodies. The Board, the College and the schools will be bound by the current Public Service (Procurement) Laws and Regulations..

d. Proceedings

Matters with respect to procedures and proceedings of College Boards and of the schools, as well as financial, the keeping and management of accounts, records, auditing and verification, will be the subject to the appropriate principal law as well as to subsidiary regulations.

³³ Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology



APPENDIX II: FUNCTIONS OF KEY PERSONNEL WITHIN THE COLLEGE

A. THE PRINCIPAL

The Principal, as the Chief Executive Officer of the College, will ensure an effective and efficient dialogue with all Heads of School and stakeholders. With respect to the discharge of his/her functions, a/he will be accountable to the College Board. S/he will be expected generally to execute and implement efficiently the policies of the College, and in particular s/he will fulfil the following functions and responsibilities;

1. Chair the Council of heads' meetings;
2. Support the schools within the College to grow together as effective providers of quality education;
3. Empower schools towards school improvement, effectiveness and growth;
4. Ensure timely provision of support, expertise and resources;
5. Develop and sustain a College ethos, character and identity;
6. Promote a holistic approach to the education of students from early childhood to the completion of secondary education;
7. Monitor the effective implementation of the National Curriculum by means of innovative methodologies and approaches, including the extensive adoption of information and communication technologies as pedagogical tools;
8. Facilitate the delivery of the National Curriculum between the various stages of the educational process and between the schools participating in each College;
9. Stimulate staff and school development;
10. Facilitate discussion and analysis of common school administration and management issues and problems in order to manage change effectively;
11. Offer opportunities to Heads of School, administrators and teachers in the various schools help to pool and share ideas, experiences and good practice and to work together on common educational programmes, projects, activities and other initiatives;
12. Facilitate the organisation of common activities in such fields as physical education and sports, culture (drama, music, art and craft), environment, creativity and entrepreneurship;
13. Promote the development of specialization in schools in various fields of knowledge and/or activities;
14. Encourage and facilitate the pooling and sharing of resources, spaces and facilities;
15. Co-ordinate research, including action research across schools in the College and across Colleges;
16. Provide mentoring to Heads of School when so requested and required;
17. Coordinate the provision of effective psycho-social services across the network;



18. Create links with child care centres to ensure a smooth transition between child care and kindergarten or compulsory schooling;
19. Develop a common policy and approach to the development of the schools into lifelong learning centres;
20. Submit regular progress reports to the College Board.

B. HEAD OF SCHOOL³⁴

The functions, role and responsibilities of the Head of School are:

Overall Purpose

1. to provide professional leadership and to ensure the implementation and the development of the National Curriculum;
2. to secure whole-school commitment to the curricular philosophy, values and objectives through the effective school team building, communication and collaborative approach to decision-making;
3. to promote and further the holistic education of each student in the school;
4. to organise, manage and control efficiently and effectively the human, physical and financial resources of the school;
5. to collaborate with other Heads of College Schools, as well as with Heads of other schools, in a manner that maximises networking under the leadership of the Principal and according to the direction and guidelines established by the College Board and other competent authorities.³⁵

Main Responsibilities

1. Lead the school team to determine and implement school policies in line with the relevant legislation, policies and guidelines;
2. Facilitate a participatory team and collegial process leading to the formulation and constant review of the School Development Plan;
3. Build and maintain an effective and open channel of communications with the school community, with other schools in the College, with the College Board and its administration, with officials of the MED and ESD and other external agencies;
4. Direct the planning, organisation and co-ordination of curriculum related and other activities throughout the year and perform duties connected with the School Council in accordance with current legislation;

³⁴ The functions and duties of Heads of School, teachers and other education personnel are the subject of discussion, debate and negotiations as education policies, strategies and systems evolve to keep pace with the changes taking place in society. Over the years Government and the MUT negotiated and concluded a number of agreements, addenda and side-letters regarding the detailed functions and duties of different categories of the teaching professional class. The functions and duties of Heads of School and Teachers in this appendix are based on the agreed 1995 documents of the Education Division and the MUT. Subsequent agreements since then provided other details that are not being reproduced in this document.

³⁵ See also Head of School's A-Z job description



5. Undertake on-going professional development in educational, administrative leadership, and management and nurture the development and maintenance of the availability of mentors;
6. Ensure order and discipline, help resolve conflicts, and promote healthy relationships between students, staff and parents;
7. Ensure the timely implementation of the established disciplinary procedures when required.

Curriculum Development

8. With the Senior Management Team and the teaching team, determine strategies for the effective implementation of the National Curriculum, such as teaching and learning strategies, the use of educational resources and services, the selection of textbooks, etc;
9. Implement quality assurance mechanisms that maintain high standards of teaching and learning in the school;
10. Ensure the school curriculum includes holistic learning activities that take into account the diverse talents and learning modes and abilities of the child;
11. Ensure that the school curriculum includes holistic learning activities that tap into the resources of the school and of the local community as well as those of national organisations;
12. Motivate and support all categories of staff with the objective of pursuing for themselves lifelong learning opportunities including career development and progression;

Student Matters

13. Ensure the maintenance of effective psycho-social services for students and the effective delivery of pastoral care services for students;
14. Implement an effective referral policy and procedures for students requiring specialised services;
15. Develop and sustain procedures to facilitate the transition of students coming to and leaving school;
16. Ensure an all inclusive school policy;
17. Ensure a safe school environment;

Teaching Personnel

18. Nurture the development and maintenance of the professional school team leading to active participation in decision-making, follow-up action and evaluation;
19. Direct the induction of new staff and motivate, support, develop, monitor, act as their mentor, and appraise professional and non-professional staff;
20. Guide processes, including Performance Management Programmes, to ensure academic and pedagogical quality assurance and standards of teaching and learning;
21. Manage and mentor other personnel attached to the school on a permanent or temporary basis in order to ensure a high level of motivation and of quality service;



Home-School-Community Links

22. Create and promote links with the local community and its organisations;
23. Encourage and foster parental involvement in children's educational development, while providing staff with a clear direction, encourage them to seek effective ways of enhancing parental involvement in students' educational development;
24. Promote opportunities for parents to engage in lifelong learning opportunities leading to their own personal development and their enhanced involvement in the school community life;

Administration

25. Carry out the annual school classification exercise and ensure the preparation of timetables, assign classes, subjects and responsibilities to teachers;
26. Ensure that the duty of providing cover for absent teachers is shared equitably among all teachers in the school;
27. Ensure the compilation and upkeep of school statistics, student and staff records;
28. Ensure the provision of a functional filing system and the supply of data and information requested by the regulatory bodies, the College Board and other authorised entities;
29. Ensure the proper maintenance and servicing of the school building, facilities and equipment, as well as the cleanliness and the embellishment of the school environment;
30. Ensure the keeping of a detailed inventory according to prescribed regulations, as well as, the efficient management of stores, apparatus, furniture and other material resources;
31. Ensure the timely requisition of utilities and textbooks;
32. Provide necessary information to ensure adequate school transport;

Finance

33. Prepare the capital and recurrent school budget estimates within the parameters and priorities set by the competent authority and the College Board, whilst contributing to the preparation of the three-year business plan of the Cluster;
34. Manage and control funds according to established Government financial regulations and the guidelines of the College Board, record all transactions according to established practice.

C. TEACHER

Overall Functions

1. To teach and educate according to the prescriptions of the National Curriculum and the directives of the competent authority, and
2. To teach and educate students according to the educational needs, abilities and attainment of individual students entrusted to his/her care by the Head of School or Head of Unit.



Main Responsibilities

3. Plans, prepares and delivers lessons;
4. Teaches according to the educational needs, abilities and achievement of the individual students and groups of students;
5. Assigns work, corrects and marks, regularly, work carried out by his/her students;
6. Assesses, records and reports on the development, progress and attainment and behaviour of his/her students;
7. Provides or contributes to oral and written assessments, to reports and references relating to individual students or groups of students;
8. Participates in arrangements within an agreed national framework for the appraisal of the student's performance;
9. Promotes the general progress and well-being of individual students, groups of students or class/es entrusted to him/her;
10. Provides guidance and advice to students on educational and social matters and on their further education and future careers; provide information on sources of more expert advice;
11. Communicates, consults and co-operates with other members of the school staff, including those having posts of special responsibility and with parents in the interest of students;
12. Reviews and evaluates his/her methods of teaching and learning and the teaching and learning programme/s within the National Curriculum;
13. Advises and co-operates with the Head of School, Assistant Head, other teachers and Education Officers in the preparation and development of courses of study, teaching materials, teaching programmes, methods of teaching and assessment and pastoral care arrangements;
14. Participates in further personal training and professional development as a teacher, including the participating in in-service education and training courses.
15. Maintains good order and discipline amongst students and safeguards their health and safety at any time and place when students are under his/her care;
16. Participates in staff, group or other meetings for the better organisation and administration of the school or meetings related to the school curriculum or pastoral care arrangements;
17. Contributes to the professional development of new teachers and student-teachers according to arrangements agreed with the Head of School;
18. Provides the necessary information and advice and makes the necessary requisitions and arrangements in connection with the teaching of the subject/s assigned to him/her;
19. Ensures the safe custody of equipment normally used by him/her during lessons and sees to its regular servicing and maintenance;
20. Attends school assemblies;
21. Registers the attendance of students under his/her care;
22. Shares in any possible and reasonable way in the proper management, organisation, order and discipline of the school;



APPENDIX III: THE COUNCIL OF HEADS

The Council of School Heads will be composed of all the Heads of Schools comprising the College. The Council will be chaired by the Principal. The Council will:

1. Nurture a spirit of collegiality in the running of the college, while developing a common ethos;
2. Identify training needs of the school communities and plan staff development opportunities that can be delivered across schools;
3. Share experiences of school self-assessment exercises and tap into expertise across schools for further development and improvement;
4. Share experiences of School Development Plans, Performance Management Programmes and school policies with the participation of the school community;
5. Discuss issues of common interest and concern;
6. Hold occasional meetings with providers of external resources and services to reflect about effective school leadership issues, outcomes of particular approaches and new insights that can be integrated into revised practises;
7. Work with appropriate authorities, experts and providers to determine how to promote home-school-community linkages;
8. Encourage and facilitate the development of project proposals in partnership with schools across Europe and other parts of the world;
9. Encourage and support real opportunities for parents to become active school partners and promote lifelong learning amongst the community;
10. Celebrate and reward good practices that evolve across the College;
11. Ensure the sharing of resources amongst the College schools, and develop partnerships to provide particular support or technical assistance.



APPENDIX IV: GUARANTEE OF VESTED RIGHTS OF SERVING PUBLIC OFFICERS

The Ministry of Education will be discussing this document with all stakeholders, including the Unions representing employees of the Division of Education. Any issue related to vested rights and conditions of work will be the subject of appropriate negotiations between the Government and the Union concerned. It has always been Government policy to legally guarantee the vested rights of serving public officers. The Ministry of Education has from the very outset made it clear that such rights as are at present enjoyed by the employees of the Education Division will be guaranteed by law. The principles guiding this matter have already been established in special legislation regulating different public entities and will be repeated here for ease of reference.

a. Status of Public Officers

Public officers presently serving with the Education Division will continue to be considered and treated as public officers even though they will be detailed for duty under the administrative authority of the proposed central education entities or Colleges, and will retain the rights and privileges of their substantive grade with government.

b. Pay

No public officer will be so detailed that the remuneration and conditions of service are less favourable than those which are attached to the appointment under the Government currently held by that public officer.

c. Pension

In the case of pensionable officers (pre-1979 engaged public officers), service with the proposed new education entities of a public officer detailed for duty with such entities, is reckonable service with Government for the purpose of any pension, gratuity or benefit under the Pensions Ordinance (Cap. 93) and the Widows' and Orphans' Pension Act (Cap. 58), and of any other right or privilege to which that public officer may be entitled. Such pension will be computed on the salary of the substantive grade.

d. Promotion and Transfers

A public officer so detailed will not be precluded from applying for a promotion or a transfer to a department of Government in accordance with the terms and conditions of service attached to his/her appointment with Government.

e. Permanent Employment

Each of the proposed entities may offer to any officer, detailed for duty with such entities, permanent employment at agreed remuneration, terms and conditions, provided that these are not less favourable than those enjoyed by such officer at the date of such offer, and provided that acceptance of such an offer by the said officer is voluntary.

f. Pension of Permanent Employees

In the case of pensionable officers (pre-1979 engaged public officers), service of a detailed officer who accepts permanent employment with an entity shall be deemed to be service with the Government for the purposes of the Pensions Ordinance and the Widows' and Orphans Pensions Act.



g. Appointment of New Staff

The appointment of new officers and other new employees of the proposed central entities and Colleges shall be made by the entities concerned subject to the provisions of the Constitution and of any other relevant law. The terms and conditions of employment shall be determined by Government according to established parameters and practice.

h. Detailing of Public Officers

Detailing is the legal procedure by which the Management and Personnel Office, in the Office of the Prime Minister, may from time to time direct any public officer to be detailed for duty with the central entities or Colleges in the appropriate capacity. Service with the central entities or Colleges will be deemed service on grounds of public policy.

