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Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

MALTA

School year 2007/08

Education is compulsory for pupils between the ages of 5 and 16 and covers primary education (ages 5-11) and lower secondary education (*junior lyceum* and *secondary school* ages 11-16). A number of these secondary schools and junior lyceums have now been integrated to form Colleges. These Colleges were established 'with an aim of improving the quality, standards, operation, initiatives and educational achievements in State schools … which shall network within them State boys and girls schools, and which would ensure educational experience and services in a full and continuous process starting from early childhood education, and through the primary and secondary levels' (Education Act XXIV (1988) as amended by Act XIII of 2006, para. 49).

Guidance and counselling services are an integral part of the educational setup within the recently established colleges. Various activities are organized by the guidance teachers and counsellors to assist students in their whole-person development and to instil in them the skills necessary for them to be able to adapt to the different changes in school and transitions they will encounter in life. Throughout their school years, students are constantly provided with guidance services which focus more on the personal and social development of the individual and in dealing with problem situations faced by the students. At the end of compulsory education school guidance focuses more on the career aspect which prepares students for the transition from secondary schooling to a general or vocational upper secondary education or for some, to the world of work. Students may in fact opt to attend various upper secondary schools available, namely the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology, Junior College, Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School, Institute of Tourism Studies and other private educational institutions. Other students opt to enter directly into the world of work without pursuing their education at a further level.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The legal mandate for the provision of vocational and career guidance services is to be found in the Education Act of 1988 as amended by Act XIII of 2006. This Act 'establishes a Directorate for Educational Services under the responsibility, guidance and administration of a Director General. The mission of this Directorate is to ensure the effective and efficient operation and delivery of services to the Colleges and State schools within an established framework of de-centralization and autonomy' (Education Act 1988 as amended by Act XIII, 2006, para. 10). One of the main functions of the Directorate for Educational Services (in collaboration with colleges and schools) is to ensure the supply and the coordination of vocational and career guidance services, including the implementation of programmes aimed at achieving and improving school workplace correlation and assist in the transition stages including those from school to work.

The directorate also binds itself to ensure the provision of effective services of counsellors, social workers, psychologists and other professional persons according to the needs of the students and their families. The directorate has the duty to promote educational and cultural activities within the context of lifelong learning (Education Act 1988 as amended by Act XIII, 2006).

The legal implementation of a new Directorate for Educational Services consolidated the work which had been taking place since the introduction of a National Minimum Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1998). The Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment has been steering a significant reform process in the Maltese educational sector in a bid to strengthen the 'educational 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' (p. xii). As part of this transformation, the Ministry of Education commissioned the review of career guidance in Maltese schools. This review resulted in the publication of the policy document entitled, '*Career guidance policy for schools*' (Ministry of Education, Malta, 2007). The aim of this policy document was to re-launch career guidance within the Maltese compulsory education system by clarifying the role of career guidance, offering recommendations on the setting up of an adequate career guidance infrastructure and describing how these services could be carried out in a more professional way.

Following the amendments made to the Education Act (1988) in 2006 and the launching of the new career guidance policy, a new collective agreement was signed between the Government of Malta and the Malta Union of Teachers introducing and establishing new posts that ensure the effective delivery of career guidance in schools. The agreement ensures that students in schools are supported by a range of students' support services. The career guidance policy (Ministry of Education, 2007) suggests the employment of a range of qualified personnel including counsellors, trainee counsellors college counsellors, career advisors, trainee career advisor and college career advisor. A subsequent document entitled 'Student services within the directorate for educational services: a framework of operation'(2007) outlines the new framework of student services the Education Authorities intend to put into place to improve career guidance provisions.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of providing educational and vocational information, guidance and counselling services are shared mainly between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Policy.

The Ministry of Education plays a major role in this area. It delegates the organisational tasks to the Directorate for the Educational Services. At the level of the Ministry of Social Policy, the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) is responsible for guidance services aimed at young people and adults seeking employment and people with special needs. The ETC develops a considerable data regarding employment (such as the Employment Barometer). In 2004, ETC published a very useful '*Manual for Gender Sensitive Vocational Guidance*'.

National objectives

Career guidance services should equip all individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to make effective lifelong career decisions. The National Objectives for Career guidance as outlined in the policy document *Career Guidance Policy for Schools* (2007) are to widen access to career guidance services and to ensure coherence of provision across education and employment sectors; to establish a clear guidance structure outlining the roles and functions of guidance practitioners; to ensure a smooth transition from childhood to adolescence to adulthood through a guidance structure that promotes lifelong learning; to shift from a service supply to a service demand focus; to offer a wide range of delivery options; to gather, compile and publish research in the field of career guidance; to ensure more accountability so that career guidance services result in effective outcomes.

Within such an organisational structure career guidance can give students the opportunity to understand themselves and the influences that affect them; investigate opportunities in learning and work; learn about change and transition; explore issues about stereotyped images related to jobs; be exposed to experiential learning; understand the importance of continuing education throughout life.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

Career guidance in schools has largely focused on helping students make important educational decisions at particular points in time, especially during the last years of secondary schooling, when students make choices on subject clusters and start seeking information on post-secondary educational institutions or job opportunities (Sultana, 2004). There are two types of personnel employed in secondary schools as part of the Guidance and Counselling Services. There are guidance teachers and school counsellors. Their roles differ in a number of ways. A guidance teacher in a school is assigned for every 300 pupils. The role of these staff members is to provide pupils with educational and vocational guidance. Guidance teachers allocate half of their time to teaching their subject and the other half is allocated to guidance duties. They work with pupils individually or in groups. They are also responsible for the management of a room dedicated to the dissemination of information on educational pathway and career possibilities (which exist in approximately half of schools), manage the cumulative record card system and organise seminars for pupils, teachers and parents, chances to meet representatives of the professional world, pupils from upper secondary schools, etc. Special attention is given to pupils at critical moments in their studies, such as the end of compulsory education and the transition to upper secondary, the moment they choose options in compulsory education, and during transition from one level of education to another and education to work transitions.

At central level, within the Guidance and Counselling Service Unit, school counsellors are responsible for guidance provided to pupils in several schools. Their work is different from that of guidance teachers and is centred on the personal development of pupils (in particular those sent to them by teachers, head of schools, guidance teachers and even parents). They hold counselling sessions with students in need and sometimes work with the parents or with the whole family to be able to help the student better. When the need arises they refer students to other agencies or/and professionals. As part of their preventive programme they organize talks on various topics according to the needs of the particular school in

question. The counsellors also monitor, provide support and work in collaboration with the guidance teachers. The school counsellors provide training and organize seminars for the professional development of guidance teachers.

School counsellors are attached to the central unit however each counsellor is responsible for a number of schools and spends a minimum of three days per week in one or several schools. They have no teaching duties and work both in the primary and the secondary schools.

Guidance activities and programmes

In Maltese schools students are provided with specific guidance activities. As described in the document, *Career Guidance Policy for Schools* (2007), these main activities are:

Transition talks and option exercise in year 6

Each year the guidance teachers and the school counsellor hold meetings for parents and pupils of all year 6 classes. The aim of these meetings is that of:

- making parents and pupils aware of the educational implications of transition from a primary sector to a secondary sector;
- making parents and pupils aware of the functions of the guidance and counselling services and the different roles of the school counsellor and the guidance teachers;
- informing parents and pupils about the subject choices and give them all relevant information so that pupils make informed choices (some colleges invite subject teachers to also address parents and pupils about the subject options).

Option exercise in Form 2

In Form 2 students are again asked to consider subject options according to their interests, abilities and attainment. The guidance teachers within each school dedicate a lot of time in the organization of meeting, both in groups and individually to help students make the best choice possible. The guidance teachers also collaborate with subject teachers and include them in the talks to parents and students.

Career orientation activities

Seminars, career information days and visits to companies are organised for pupils in the last year of compulsory education. These activities are generally organised by the school guidance teachers/counsellors. The Guidance and Counselling Services central unit organises a programme of Career Orientation Visits and career seminars which complement the activities organised at school level. All activities are organised in cooperation with other stakeholders

Choice programme

The Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) has been organising the ‘Choice’ programme with the objective of promoting careers in the hospitality industry. The programme includes visits to hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and historical places. The MTA collaborates and works with the guidance teachers to organize such visits for secondary school students.

Tracer study

Guidance teachers comply information and trace students who leave compulsory education. Such information is important to educational planners since it supplies them with data regarding the number of students who continue to study after compulsory schooling and the choices being made.

One to one interventions

Guidance teachers conduct one to one interventions when the need arises. Such interventions help students explore their feelings and concerns, reflect on information they might have collected and work on any emotional difficulties which they might experience when choosing a subject or make a career decision. They also deal with personal issues that arise during the day to day running of the school, such as bullying, truancy, absenteeism, lack of motivation and other challenges that students encounter during their stay within a school set-up.

Work related programmes

Co-ops in Schools Project (Scoops)

An initiative which tries to link school to work is an initiative outside the formal guidance sector, namely the Co-ops in Schools Project (Scoops) which was launched in October 1995. This activity is part of the extra-curricular educational programmes and emphasizes entrepreneurship and self-employment.

The aim of such a project is that of enhancing co-operative awareness among students and educators; building entrepreneurial skills among students; and enhancing students' personal and social skills.

Job shadowing experience

Although there are no formal requirements for job shadowing experience, some guidance teachers take the initiative to organize a week long job shadowing experience for students, in there last year of compulsory schooling.

The aims of such an initiative is to help students become accustomed to the world of world; become aware of the different intra and interpersonal skills necessary to work within any type of job; motivate them to continue with their studies and embark on a career of their choice.

Young Enterprise

In post-compulsory education especially at the upper-secondary level, students participate in Young Enterprise. Young Enterprise Malta has a vision to inspire and educate young people to understand and value the role of business through practical business projects which develop attitudes and skills for professional success lifelong learning and employability. This programme is sponsored by private industry. Young Enterprise has plans to introduce a primary programme for primary school children in order to help young students understand the importance of business, economics and education in the workplace.

Such programmes consist of six sequential programmes, one per academic year, offered in curriculum, based on themes which teach students understand how people assume the roles of individuals, consumers and workers. By using storybooks, role playing, field trips, fun activities, use of technology etc. young students are introduced to business volunteers who help them understand business terms and concepts which provide students with a sound background of enterprise suitable for their tender age.

Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

Official recommendations do not exist in the area of the organisation of traineeships within the framework of the curriculum for compulsory education; however such traineeship programmes are an integral part of post-compulsory vocational education.

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Contacts with the professional world

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) provides information and counselling services aimed at young people and adults seeking employment. Students in the last year of their compulsory education may be invited to the ETC's offices to become familiar with the services offered. The Youth Section, within the ETC, specifically caters for young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 years, and offers employment and career information, advice and guidance.

The ETC builds on an educational foundation and its main aim is to support young adults and help them achieve a successful transition into work. They also offer training and work experience to those who choose to use the services provided. The ETC has recently launched a Youth Employment Strategy, on a national level, and amongst the measures included in this strategy there are listed the current initiatives such as personal action planning and profiling, career guidance, courses on job seeking skills, job search facilities, schemes to gain work experience, training courses, apprenticeship schemes, traineeships and training grants. Additionally, there are also listed the planned measures, which include the Employment Aid Programme (co-funded by the ESF 2007-2013), a Youth Employment Programme designed to increase employability and labour market integration, a Job Rotation Scheme, Job Tasters Scheme, Basic Employment Training (which provides basic employment skills to young school leavers) who leave compulsory schooling without any form of qualification. Another project carried out in collaboration with schools is the Reach Project. The Reach project takes place within the schools and has the aim of targeting 15 and 16 year olds who are regularly absent from school, a special programme is organized for such students so as to bring them back to school.

Guidance services at school

The *Career Guidance Policy for Schools* (2007) states that a lot of work is already being done with regards to career guidance in Maltese schools, but most of the career guidance activities are tied up to the transitional periods in the student's lives. The policy document (2007) suggests that career guidance in Malta has to adopt a life-long perspective and must consciously make a gradual shift from largely focusing on helping students to make immediate decisions to a broader approach that encompasses the development of skills.

Such skills will help pupils and students make effective career decisions throughout their whole life. The document therefore outlines three main proposals in relation to 1) Organisational structures, 2) Career education 3) Quality standards.

Regarding **organisational structures**, the document *Career Guidance Policy for Schools* (2007) suggests that the career services should be composed of two main complementary structures, one operating with the educational system and one independent of it.

Within the educational system, a new structure for career professionals should be developed. This means that different people will offer and give different services, the counsellors will therefore focus on personal issues while the career advisors will focus solely on the delivery and organisations of career guidance activity. This suggestion has already been taken on board and the new collective agreement goes one step further, and introduces trainee counsellors and trainee career advisors. These will ensure the professional development of people who chose to take up such careers and also that there is always a pool of people who are giving such a service.

The independent centre suggested in the policy document (2007), the National Career Guidance Centre (NCGC) should have several functions including research, distribution of career information and a quality audit. The NCGC should be a centre of excellence for career guidance in Malta. It should facilitate the educational, training and employment transitions of all the population, with particular emphasis on students, thus giving career guidance a lifelong perspective. More specifically the roles of the NCGC are to promote and ensure high quality career guidance services; provide advice to government on policy developments; manage national career related initiatives; complement, assist and integrate career guidance services; liaise with the Employment and Training Corporation and the social partners; increase the interaction between the educational and occupational sectors; develop and distribute guidance support material for practitioners; research, compile and disseminate career related information.

Career education is a integral part of career guidance since it provides students with knowledge of the labour market; skills to make education/training, life and work choices.

Career education lessons ensure that students' entitlement to guidance is guaranteed. Although the topic of work features in various subjects (e.g. Social studies, Personal and Social Development, European Studies and Business Studies) within the Maltese educational setup, there is no comprehensive programme from primary till the end of secondary schooling that ensures that pupils and students begin to reflect on their attitudes and beliefs about the world of work and therefore develop the necessary skills and knowledge they would need to be able to embark on the career of their own choice.

Career Guidance Policy for Schools (2007) therefore suggests that:

- career education should be delivered as a subsumed programme included in the Personal and Social Development (PSD) subject. The PSD should be reviewed to include a greater component of career education and should thus be renamed Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD). PSD provides the curricular space for dialogue, democratic learning, experiential learning and critical thinking, essential components in career education;

- there should be a developmental career education programme beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout life. The document highlights the number of hours each year or form should be entitled too;
- there should be cooperation between different professionals working within the framework of career guidance and therefore proposes that PSCD teachers work in collaboration with the college career coordinator and the career advisors to ensure that career education lessons complement guidance provisions in the school.

High **quality standards** are needed to ensure that clients get the best possible service and therefore the quality measures should aim to upgrade competencies and establish the boundaries that delineate professional career guidance.

The policy document *Career Guidance Policy for Schools* (2007) highlights the fact that career guidance practitioner should be adequately qualified and that they should demonstrate a commitment in continuing professional development. The formulation of a code of ethics and the development of quality standards will set minimum standards for professional conduct and it will ensure that clients will get the best service possible.

High quality standards can be achieved and maintained through appropriate data indicators adopted to evaluate the impact of the service Such evidence base would include detailed information on issues such as the number of users of services, as well as their characteristics; the different needs of different types of clients; and client satisfaction rates and variation in these rates by client characteristics.

The approval of a post-graduate diploma in counselling and a post-graduate diploma in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development within the University of Malta contribute to the updating of skills and knowledge of guidance practitioners and ensures good quality service.

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

In the schools

All guidance teachers are professionally trained teachers with at least a Bachelor's Honours degree in education. However, guidance teachers are not obliged to have specific guidance qualifications. Nevertheless, a number of these staff members have taken a higher education programme in guidance at the University of Malta. This is a two year part-time course at the University of Malta leading to the Diploma in Guidance and Counselling. Between 2002 and 2004, the university organised a Diploma in Occupational Guidance and Career Counselling. In February 2006, the university started to offer a Post-graduate Diploma in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development, with the aim of enhancing professional career guidance services in Malta. The course is designed for applicants in possession of a graduate level of education who wish to work at a professional level in the career guidance field. In order to be admitted to the course, a candidate is required to be in possession of (a) a recognised first degree, preferably in a related area, such as education, psychology and other related fields; and (b) satisfy the Board through an interview that they have the necessary qualifications to follow the course, including: (i) professional aptitude and disposition; and preferably (ii) work experience in a related field.

Guidance teachers attend in-service courses during the summer and professional development sessions once a month. Teachers without qualifications in guidance, applying for the post sit for an interview during which qualifications, professional experience, recommendations and personality are taken into account. First time applicants with a qualification in guidance also sit for the interview. Those with a qualification in guidance and who have already been guidance teachers are appointed automatically as guidance teachers without an interview. Nominations are renewable every two years.

Some guidance teachers and school counsellors have continued their professional development abroad, sitting for a Masters degree in careers. In order to become a school counsellor, applicants must have ten years' teaching experience, five years as a guidance teacher as well as the required professional qualifications. These qualifications consist generally in a diploma or postgraduate diploma in counselling obtained at the University of Malta or from other universities abroad (some people have a master's degree).

As part of the reform of the education system into a network of Colleges and reflecting the agreement of 2007 between government and the Malta Union of Teachers, the guidance and counselling services will be re-organised. The post of School Counsellor will be phased out and it will be replaced by the posts of Counsellors and College Counsellors. Applicants for the post of Counsellor must have a first degree in education, social work, youth work, psychology or other related field and a post-graduate diploma or a Masters degree or higher qualification in counselling. They also must have at least two years supervised practice in counselling in a setup working with children and adolescents. A Counsellor will be accountable to the College Counsellor with the duty to operate on a College basis at both primary and secondary school level, supporting students, staff and parents. The College Counsellor will be recruited from persons who are qualified as counsellors and who have four years experience working as Counsellor in a licensed school. Two other positions which will be created will be those of Career Advisor and College Career Advisor. The Career Advisor will operate at both primary and secondary school level to support students, school staff and parents to ensure better continuity in the educational development of students and better professional practice. The position will be filled through a call for applications open to persons in possession of a first degree in education, social work, youth work, psychology or other related field and a Diploma in career guidance, or comparable qualifications. The College Career Advisor will be recruited from among Career Advisors with at least four years experience in the post, or a teacher in possession of a Diploma in career guidance with at least four years experience in career guidance and counselling in a licensed school. It is envisaged that Trainee career advisors and Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and trainee counsellors will also be recruited.

In other guidance services

Employment advisors in the Maltese Public Employment Service (PES), namely the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), are required to have a diploma or degree in a related field, mainly in social sciences such as social work, psychology, human resources, sociology and youth work. The majority of employment advisors enrolled in the Diploma in Occupational Guidance and Career Counselling when it was offered in 2002. Other

employment advisors have recently completed the Post-graduate diploma in Lifelong Career Guidance and Development offered in 2006.

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Co-operation exists between the different stakeholders involved in guidance education provided to pupils. For example, schools organise meetings between parents and former students to discuss career choices. Seminars, visits to companies, etc., involving representatives of the professional world are also part of this cooperation (see sections above).

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

The use of the Internet in the area of guidance and counselling is limited mainly to the dissemination of information on websites on educational pathway possibilities and training opportunities. The Guidance and Counselling Services have their own web portal (http://schoolnet.gov.mt/guidance/default.html) which provides information and links regarding further education and employment. A large number of post-compulsory education institutions have their own websites. A national portal for access to national education has not yet been developed.

The public employment service also has its own website providing information on employment and training possibilities, found at www.etc.gov.mt. The ETC also administers the EURES Malta website, which can be found at www.euresmalta.com.mt. Both websites offer services to employers and job seekers alike. The most relevant with regards access to vocational information is the Career Paths database found on the EURES Malta website, where clients can access around a 100 career paths. The ETC website also contains extensive information geared for job seekers, including a Personal Action Plan Booklet which contains guidance and advice on job seeking.

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