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# History Teaching in Malta

Yosanne Vella

*University of Malta, Msida*

## **Abstract**

This paper provides a brief description on the development of Maltese education in general and then goes into detail on the development of history pedagogy in Malta. For a long time the teaching of history reflected the Maltese educational culture, with its characteristic features of pupil selection, considerable teacher direction, pupil passivity, transmission pedagogy and emphasis on outcomes measured by final tests and examinations. ‘The traditional’ teacher-centred approach and most history lessons were of the ‘lecture-type’ with heavy emphasis on the use of the textbook, note-taking, frequent testing and stress on the summative examination at the end of the year. However, from the 1980s onward there was a move towards ‘New History’ methods, the Source and Skills based history teaching approach initiated in England in the late 1960s. This paper explains how this method slowly became established in Malta’s schools.

There is a discussion on the struggles for history to retain its place in the Maltese Curriculum as developments occur. On the one hand, history as a school subject does not have a high status; it is not given much importance by either schools or the education department, although it was quite favoured in particular individual schools, it does not enjoy general popularity. On the other hand as far as the actual pedagogy of the subject is concerned significant advances have been made, with Malta figuring quite high on the scale in international surveys when comparing ‘source method use’ in different European countries<sup>1</sup>.

## **The Maltese Islands**

The Maltese islands are located in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea some

96 km south of Sicily. The archipelago consists of Malta, Gozo, Comino and Filfla, and occupies an area of around 316 square kilometres. There are no forests, rivers or mountains and there are few natural resources with a dense population in excess of 450,000. At different historical periods the island belonged to various colonisers including to mention a few the Romans, the Arabs, the Normans, the Knights of St. John, the French and more recently the British from whom the Maltese got independence in 1964. Perhaps the best living evidence of Malta's chequered history is the Maltese language, which is Semitic but with a strong Romance and Anglo Saxon influence. Today Malta is a nation possessing a European identity with a distinct culture. The religion is predominantly the Roman Catholic faith and this is clearly stipulated in Malta's constitution <sup>1</sup>, that notwithstanding, Malta is a European Union member and functions as a democracy which grants freedom of conscience to individuals.

### **Education in Malta**

The Order of the Knights of St. John arrived in Malta in 1530 after negotiating with Emperor Charles the V for a new home following their expulsion from Rhodes by the Ottoman Sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent, seven years previously. The University of Malta traces its origins to the time of the Knights having been first set up as a college by Jesuits in 1592. When the British came to Malta in 1800, they took over the administration of the islands and the University which had enjoyed a large degree of freedom under the Knights of St. John, came under the direct control of the government. Since then Malta has had a very centralised educational system with strong government control. It was in the nineteenth century that the first slow attempts at primary education and much later secondary compulsory schooling were made. Recommendations were put forward in the reports of Royal Commissioners who sporadically visited the islands, namely Austin and Lewis in 1838, and Keenan 1878. The structures of the curriculum were laid down in the middle of the nineteenth century when according to Fenech:

It was under Canon Pullicino's directorship, which spanned over three decades, that the classroom system was introduced, textbooks began to be ordered or compiled, time-tables set, syllabuses prescribed, the streaming system established and examinations used as evaluation mechanisms of teaching in the schools.

(Fenech, 1989, p.36)

During the last sixty years Malta's education system has expanded rapidly particularly after Independence when the needs of the country were transformed. The trend of building new schools started in the sixties but as far

as curriculum development was concerned little was done and what Fenech calls the 'Canon Pullicino legacy'<sup>2</sup> persisted for a very long time. One driving force was that of utilitarianism, and governments sought to gear Malta's educational system towards the economic needs of the island. (Curmi, 1991)

Education in Malta has often been a highly politicized issue, particularly the 'Language Question'<sup>3</sup> and the introduction of Secondary education. One radical experiment was undertaken in the 1970s of the twentieth century when A.Raimondo, the then director of education announced the introduction of comprehensive schooling in Malta. This meant that from 1972 all forms of entry tests and examinations to secondary school were abolished (previously Malta had had the British system of the 11+ examination at the end of primary school which then streamed pupils into grammar schools, area secondary schools and trade schools). This experiment in Maltese education lasted ten years and it was all revoked in 1982 when a tripartite system of Junior Lyceums (grammar schools), area secondary schools and trade schools was once again firmly re-established.

A National Curriculum known as the Minimum National Curriculum came into existence for the first time after the 1988 Education Act. Prior to this curriculum, there had been no official policy statement on a national curriculum in Malta, instead there only existed detailed rigid syllabi of school subjects, periodically published by the Education Department. This produced some confusion as far as teaching methods are concerned, as well as creating a situation where examinations become all important. A situation described by Charles Farrugia in this way:

...in the absence of a national curriculum, the majority of teachers take the lead from, and base their teaching on the structure and the questions contained in the national examinations.

(Farrugia, 1989, p.21)

The Education Act of 1988 which brought about Malta's Minimum National Curriculum was called "a highly innovative and reformative Act" (Zammit Mangion, 1988, p.27) and in the words of the Minister of Education it was necessary because "there existed a need of providing for a common core – a homogeneous trunk" (Zammit Mangion, 1988, p.5).

These statements are somewhat misleading in the sense that one might get the impression that prior to the National Curriculum of 1988, schools and teachers were free to construct their own curricula. This was far from being the case for although an official National Curriculum was not formally written, all state schools both Primary and Secondary, followed the same syllabi prescribed from the Education Department.

At the end of the scholastic year all state school students sat for the same examination papers which were set up and issued by the Education Department<sup>4</sup>. Most of what the National Minimum Curriculum had to offer had already been happening in Maltese schools for many years, the new legislation merely provided an official document of what had been going on. The big change was in the role of the Minister of Education, whereas previously it was the sole duty of the Minister to decide educational issues: it was now the State's. Another important innovation was the fact that for the first time private schools had to follow the national curriculum.

A review of the 1988 Curriculum was requested in 1996 by the then Minister of Education Louis Galea with the intended plan of implementing a new National Minimum Curriculum by 1998. The final version was in fact presented to Cabinet in 1999 and was in operation in schools by the new millennium. The new document was based on 15 principles which included 'quality education for all', 'respect for diversity', and 'holistic educational'; all focused towards achieving more social justice, although once again in reality syllabi of school subjects changed very little if at all. There were some attempts at moving towards more formative means of assessment and an attempt at giving schools more identity through a decentralisation process.

After the 1988 and the 1999 Curricula, the next and latest Curriculum was launched in 2012. This time the term 'Minimum National Curriculum' was abandoned in favour of the term 'National Curriculum Framework'.

### **History in the National Curriculum**

It is difficult to trace the actual development of history as part of the Maltese curriculum, for as explained before, there was no official curriculum as such, prior to 1988 and even here only a few sentences were ever allotted to history. One way to understand what was going on in schools is to examine history textbooks<sup>5</sup> and Maltese history textbooks first make an appearance in primary and secondary schools in the early twentieth century. History as with all other subjects at first "reflected much of the atmosphere of the 1800s where the political and social forces had been in a continuous tug of war to achieve a sense of proportion between the pro-Italianate and Anglophile factions of Maltese society." (Cassar, G. & Vella, Y, p.86) However, by the turn of the century English slowly took over and history textbooks increasingly switched to the use of English, and later on the native language Maltese became the main language of use. For a long time irrespective of the language being used in history textbooks the general idea behind the teaching of history was that of passing across accepted knowledge together with a strong dose of moralistic

teaching (Cassar and Vella, 2011) .

The pedagogy of history teaching at first progressed at a fairly slow pace. In many ways the teaching of history reflected the Maltese educational culture, with its characteristic features of pupil selection, considerable teacher direction, pupil passivity, transmission pedagogy and emphasis on outcomes measured by final tests and examinations, in other words ‘the traditional’ teacher-centred approach. Most history lessons were of the ‘lecture-type’ with heavy emphasis on the use of the textbook, note-taking, frequent testing and stress on the summative examination at the end of the year.

There were isolated attempts at making history more interesting. For example, the report of the Commissioner appointed by the Minister of Education in 1955, recommended for history teaching a ‘story approach’ and suggested starting with myths, legends and adventures for both primary and secondary classes. (Education Department Report, 1955) Throughout the sixties, handbooks for history teachers published by the Department of Education all encourage visits to sites and historical places, as well as use of pictures, time-lines, outline maps and historical novels.

This remained more or less the policy for history teaching in Malta for the coming years. It was accompanied by a genuine effort to motivate pupils by trying to suggest ways in which history could be made more interesting. One can detect the influence of people like R.J.Unstead, the British historian and author of history books for children who was very popular in the 1960s and 70s.

Similarly to what was taking place in Britain, in the 1970s after the Plowden Report, there was an attempt at subject integration, especially in primary schools. Primary school syllabi became more topic based with history being incorporated with geography, nature study and civics. In secondary schools history remained a separate subject but with social studies gaining more importance.

The key note speaker at a conference in Malta entitled “Maltese History: What future?” , held at the University of Malta proclaimed in 1971 that:

History as a vital educational experience is in danger today. The sciences of sociology and politics tend to take its place in the preferences of the young generation ... the winds of change might blow away this heritage before it reaches the next generation.

(Reeves, 1974 p.13)

These words echo the general feeling that also existed abroad at the time, in particular in the United Kingdom, where there was a fear that history

was going to disappear from the timetable. In the case of Malta the danger proved to be very real. In a survey, on 'O' Level<sup>6</sup> history in Malta, carried out by the author in 1989 in all secondary schools, 26% of the schools responded that history was only provided up to Form 2 or Year 8 (12 year-olds) and was no longer offered as an option. This meant that in 1989 one fifth of Maltese state schools did not prepare for history 'O' level. The fact that history was losing its importance as a school subject was also reflected in the small number of candidates sitting for the 'O' Level paper. The situation is still the same today, for in the past ten years the yearly percentage of history candidates who register for the history SEC examination normally average only about 4% of the whole cohort (MATSEC, 2012).

One frustrated history teacher remarked in 2011 that "a good number of Maltese secondary schools end up without any history option lessons in their school timetable in the later secondary school years (form three to form five/ages fourteen to sixteen)" (Briffa, 2011 p.1-2). In fact during scholastic year 2009 - 2010, out of 25 secondary state schools there was no history as an option subject at form three (year 10/14 year olds) at sixteen secondary state schools (Briffa, 2011). Despite these statistics there are a number of individual Maltese schools particularly Church and Private schools who for the past five years have been preparing a sizeable number of students (on average about 35% of their form 5 student population) for history O Level (Briffa, 2011 p.2).

### **Pedagogy of history in Malta**

Back in the 1990s, while comparing English teachers teaching in England and Maltese Secondary history teachers in Malta it was clear that "if one were to imagine a spectrum which represents the evolution of history teaching, English and Maltese teachers would be found in different places." (Vella, 1996, p. 178). English teachers in the early 1990s had had time to absorb the ideas of 'New History'<sup>7</sup>, with almost two decades of actual experience in using this approach in history classrooms. It was not the case for their Maltese counterparts; Maltese teachers showed a clear bias against the methods associated with 'New History' in particular the source method (Vella, 1996). However, sources did suddenly appear in the Maltese history O Level paper. This was an attempt by a university history teaching lecturer Michael Sant<sup>8</sup> to impose the 'Source Method' on a reluctant teaching staff. He was the Chairperson of the O Level history examination paper for many years and he introduced in 1986 a section devoted solely to questions based on historical sources. His approach seemed to have had the desired effect in Maltese secondary schools, with the President

of the Malta's *History Teachers' Association* reporting in 1998 that: "Today, it is not a rare occasion for our students to handle photocopies of official documents, letters, diaries or caricatures particularly those dealing with the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century." (Grech, 1998, p.23).

The move towards 'New History' teaching methods continued in Malta and in a recent research study on history teaching in secondary schools, it was observed that "teachers who graduated prior to 1980 rarely, if ever, use 'New History' methods, whereas almost all of those who graduated after 2000 often or always use 'New History' methods in their classroom". (DeGiorgio, 2008) Twelve years before another study had showed, that a large number of Maltese teachers were not in agreement with giving prominence to historical thinking (Vella, 1996) however James De Giorgio's study showed that 78% of history teachers were now strongly in favour of teaching history skills and, in particular, to giving students an opportunity to practice skills of analysing historical primary sources. This is probably due to a number of factors coming together and working in the same direction. Michael Sant's ideas on 'New History' continued in the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta, and today :

Student teachers are trained in how they can teach history as a form of inquiry with a focus on history thinking skills, which school children can use to analyse and interpret historical material by themselves. The ability to demonstrate conventionally accepted historical knowledge is not the priority within the framework of this teaching paradigm.

(Cassar & Vella, 2011 p.97)

This philosophy on history teaching is strongly supported by the history division of the Curriculum centre at the Education Department. The Maltese History Teachers' Association, since its beginning in 1996, has also advocated 'New History' and the Association is quite a strong lobby on the island. It has continually produced publications and other support material for history teachers who wish to use sources in their teaching, as well as organising conferences and seminars to promote this method<sup>9</sup>.

Today it is no exaggeration to say that, of all the subjects in the curriculum, history teaching is the one which has undergone the most radical transformation. Effective history teaching now focuses on the learning of specific history skills and concepts, and analyses and interpretation of primary and secondary sources.

Maltese history teaching has made huge strides by moving away from note-taking and listening to "lectures" given by the teacher towards creating a learning environment where the unique thinking skills found in history may be

practised by the students. Students in Maltese secondary and primary schools today do evidential work based on primary history sources on a regular basis.

### **History in the New National Curriculum Framework**

So as far as history teaching is concerned, in the late noughties there existed in Malta an interesting situation. On the one hand, history as a school subject does not have a high status; it is not given much importance by either schools or the education department, although it was quite favoured in particular individual schools, it does not enjoy general popularity. On the other hand as far as the actual pedagogy of the subject is concerned quite significant advances have been made, with Malta figuring quite high on the scale in international surveys when comparing 'source method use' in different European countries<sup>10</sup>. This state of affairs was the setting in Malta as far as history teaching is concerned, when plans in 2009 for a New National Curriculum started to be initiated.

Officially the first draft for consultation was launched in May 2011, however, rumours of some very real changes this time in the actual structure and content of school subjects had been circulating since late 2008. There were rumours that there were plans underway to free up the school timetable by integrating various subjects together and history was one of the targets of this change. These rumours were further ignited when one eminent history Professor, Henry Frendo, wrote about them in one of the local papers *The Times of Malta* (Frendo, 2009). Henry Frendo, a historian and academic was not involved in the creation of the new National Curriculum but was just expressing his concerns over the hearsay that there were plans to remove history from schools. The same newspaper had also published several articles announcing that the Education Department was about to start working on a New National Framework and in one of these articles one journalist mentioned how the current restructuring was to make "history and other core subjects more relevant to the students' needs" (Schiavone, 2009).

The History Teachers' Association called an urgent meeting to discuss the matter and as its Vice-President and a Committee member I was present at this meeting. Feelings and tempers were running quite high for in the draft interim report history appeared only as a component of Citizenship.

History teachers present at the meeting interpreted this to mean that Citizenship would be the general framework and Geography, Social Studies and History lessons would stop being separate subjects in secondary school timetables. There would now only be one lesson of Citizenship per week instead. Since these three subjects in many State schools were normally allotted two lessons per week this would considerably free up the timetable.

This would help the curriculum makers find slots on the timetable for new subjects and activities they wished to put in. I remember one history teacher remarking during a History Teachers' Association meeting that instead of two lessons of 40 minutes each we will now end up sharing one lesson with three other subjects and which he sardonically calculated to be 8 minutes of history per week!

There have been times in my academic career where I personally had been supportive of the idea of integrating history within an interdisciplinary integrated approach (Vella, 2000) but the gap between the rhetoric and the practice had long since made me rethink the validity of this method and I advised great caution before this situation. It was decided that the History Teachers' Association would contact the teacher associations of the other two subjects and ask for a meeting with the then Minister of Education, Dolores Christina and the Director General, Grace Grima. Meanwhile I wrote an article in *The Times of Malta* where I identified my position to be completely against such a move. Borrowing and adjusting a little Mary Price's title of her famous 1969 article on history teaching I wrote an article entitled *History in Peril* where I wrote that rather than the much hoped for innovative change planned, this was going to be the death-knell of the three subjects. (Vella, 2009)

The meeting with the Minister did take place some months later and while being very cordial there were moments of quite heated debate. The official ministerial stance adopted was that the criticism of the changes were "misplaced" and "premature", history teachers were jumping the gun and consultation meetings on draft proposals were still. In my opinion I strongly feel that in the case of history there is the added problem that history and citizenship do not always sit comfortably together; indeed, in some instances they are incompatible. Whereas, citizenship is concerned with developing certain attitudes and values which currently prevail in a society, history is about questioning evidence. Citizenship is essentially an initiation process while history is not designed for this<sup>12</sup>.

The draft document stated that:

The NCF is proposing a core learning area that provides for a broadly integrated approach to Citizenship Education, bringing together the subject areas of Social Studies, History, Geography, Environmental Studies and aspects from Personal, Social and Health Education and Home Economics.

(The National Curriculum Framework Consultation Document 2011 no.3, p.53)

So Citizenship Education had replaced all the other subjects including

history although the National Curriculum Framework consultation document continued to say that “in the later years, students are also given the opportunity to take History, Geography, Social Studies, Environmental Studies and European Studies as optional subjects.” (The National Curriculum Framework CF Consultation Document 2011 no 3, p.53) . So in theory, one could still choose it as an O Level Sec option in Form III/Year 9 (13 year olds) but obviously in practice this would become increasingly unlikely since students would not have been having any history lessons in the previous years. This development was very upsetting for everyone involved in history education but yet again we were informed that this is just the draft consultation document and people had up to June 2012 to give any feedback.

I wrote several feedbacks repeating in each one my previous litany of concerns. As the History co-ordinator in the Department of Arts and Languages in the Faculty of Education I wrote amongst other points that :

History in the draft document falls under the heading of *Citizenship Education* (p.44), together with Geography, Social Studies, Environmental Studies, PSD and Home Economics. All these subjects do indeed possess concepts and notions in common and in particular situations it might make sense to allot them a common branch title. *Humanities* instead of *Citizenship Education* would be preferable as main generic term.

It is important to point out that while Geography, Social Studies, Environmental Studies, PSD and Home Economics can be used to help develop children’s sense of democracy and citizenship, it is however by far not their sole function.

One hopes that the Consultation Document is not implying that these subjects will cease to exist as separate academic subjects in their own right and used only by means of an integrated approach to teach Citizenship Education ...

(Vella, 2012a )

I also made reference to other countries for example the case of Britain where I said:

back in the 1980s in Britain, where this approach had been very popular in some schools for some time, history inspectors were alarmed at how standards in the subject in these schools had fallen and how history teaching had become just an outline of facts and information. There was a loss of rigour and the distinctive nature and methods of history were compromised. Furthermore, integrated approaches in general were criticised for creating undemanding tasks and watered-down versions of the subjects. Students were often bored and found thematic approaches

tedious. More recently Annual Reports of HM Senior Chief Inspectors of Schools reported even more alarming results of ‘hybrid’ integrated courses. In seven of the 10 schools visited between 2008 and 2010 in which curriculum changes had been made towards integrated approaches, history, with other foundation subjects, had greatly suffered. For example: “a series of themes was created and history teachers were required to make artificial links to them...so the history curriculum lacked coherence and undermined progression” ...“schemes of work and lessons were created in which subject specialists had limited or even no input; the result was superficial and simplistic teaching and learning; feedback to students was of limited value because it lacked subject-specific comments about how they might improve” ... “the work set was not as challenging as when students were specifically taught history in discrete lessons...with students saying the work was too easy” (Source: History for all: History in English schools 2007/10, Ofsted, March 2011)”. (Vella, 2012a)

As the co-ordinator of Primary Social Studies in the Primary Department of the Faculty of Education I said that “Even at Primary level the distinct elements of Social Studies should remain separate. It is the only way the integrity of the areas can be respected and the specific learning skills and concepts of these individual subjects retained.” (Vella, 2012b) I also wrote the History Teachers Association’s National Curriculum Framework feedback where for good measure I repeated the above points once again.

There were moments when things with regard to history in this New Curriculum became very unclear and confusing. At this point it was quite perplexing for me to learn that, oblivious to what was being said in the draft consultation document, actual detailed syllabi of all the subjects were being presented as separate documents entitled ‘Handbooks’ by the Educational Directorate itself. This was happening precisely while the consultation period on the National Curriculum Framework was being conducted, that is, the period between October 2011 and May 2012. This History Handbook was looking at history as a completely separate academic subject in schools and was being planned on the old model of two history lessons per week. This work was being conducted by a team of history subject co-ordinators led by George Calleja, the History Education Officer at the Directorate. When I learnt of its existence I offered my services and they were accepted. A lot of work had already been done when I joined and while on the whole I liked the general approach I was critical of certain aspects in particular on progression in history,

which were and are unfortunately still very unclear in the History Handbook. But otherwise I worked well with George Calleja and I was responsible for the topic ‘Life in Late Medieval Malta’<sup>13</sup>.

Then suddenly in February 2013 the New National Framework was out with a backdated date of publication of December 2012 possibly to precede any possible developments which might result from the General Election which was announced in Malta for March 9th 2013 and which in fact did bring about a change of government. All the lobbying in favour of retaining history as a separate subject seems to have worked. In this final document there is no mention of Citizenship in any of the Learning Areas for the Junior and Secondary School Cycles, instead the New Curriculum states that :

The Working Group establishes the Learning Areas for the Junior and Secondary Cycles of education to be Languages; Mathematics; Science and Technology; Health and Physical Education; Religion and Ethics Education; Humanities, Education for Democracy; and Visual and Performing Arts”

(A National Curriculum Framework for All, 2012 p. xiv)

It was very satisfying to read in chapter 1 that there “was a high level of convergence of views expressed” in the consultation process and amongst the points identified in the Report there was that:

The Learning Area on Citizen Education is, in the main, criticized as it is feared that it will result in the marginalization of Geography, History and Social Studies as separate disciplines.(National Curriculum Framework 2012, p. 3)

The New Curriculum Framework places the study of History together with Geography in a specifically focused Learning Area called Humanities. There are clear minimum entitlements for each of the eight Learning Areas in the Junior, Lower Secondary and Senior Secondary Years but the percentage distribution graphs for Humanities do not present Humanities alone but share the 10% entitlement of Humanities with Education for Democracy in the Junior and Lower Secondary Cycles while in the Upper Secondary School, Humanities share their 10 % with Religious & Ethics Education, Education for Democracy and with the Visual and Performing Arts. Presently it is difficult to predict at this stage how all this will translate into actual school lessons and the real situation history will find itself in, will only really surface once the implementation stage of the Curriculum begins.

The launch of the new National Curriculum coincided with a significant political change on the island. In April 2013 a new administration

is in government, after almost 25 years of a Conservative administration, Malta now had a Labour government, with a new Minister for Education.

Presently the broad aims of the history syllabus<sup>14</sup> are drafted as the following:

1. stimulate interest in and enthusiasm for the study of the past;
2. promote the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of human activity in the past;
3. promote an understanding of the key technical historical concepts;
4. develop historical skills and competencies.

While the syllabus objectives say:

1. What history is and the main scope of learning this subject;
2. That history is based on various types of evidence;
3. Learn about Maltese history in a Mediterranean and European context;
4. how the past can at times effect the present;
5. develop particular skills and competencies related to the subject;
6. encourage visits to historical sites so that learning is more stimulating and motivating;
7. be conscious that history is not just an academic subject but a means to widen their culture;
8. understand that society change over the years and that one should be prepared to adapt to future changes;

While assessment objectives will test how far students have mastered:

1. historical knowledge and understanding through the recall of facts and explanation of terminology.
2. evaluation and interpretation of evidence through the analysis of evidence various forms of evidence.
3. constructing and communicating a simple historical exposition, orally, digitally or in written form.
4. look at events and issues from the perspective of people in the past.

These are very encouraging for they clearly indicate that the plans for the future of history pedagogy on the Maltese islands focus on both substantive history knowledge and procedural history knowledge which focuses on source analysis and history thinking skills. This will further build on what has been occurring for the past 20 years, and it is hoped that there will be a positive impact and history teaching and learning in Malta will become even more effective.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Malta's constitution clearly says that:
- (1) The religion of Malta is the Roman Catholic Apostolic Religion.
  - (2) The authorities of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church have the duty and the right to teach which principles are right and which are wrong.
  - (3) Religious teaching of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Faith shall be provided in all State schools as part of compulsory education.(Constitution of Malta Act, 1964 line 2)
- <sup>2</sup> Canon Paolo Pullicino (1815 – 1890) was a priest who was put head of a Committee on Education by the British Governor in 1847. He founded the Education Department which to this day runs all public state schools in Malta.
- <sup>3</sup> 'The Language Question' is a term in Maltese history which denotes a historic period starting in the late 19th century up to the 1930s. This was a time when a harsh political struggle started between sections of the population in favour of the use of English, against those in favour of the use of Italian. Maltese and English eventually became the two official languages in Malta in 1964 and today Malta's national language is Maltese.
- <sup>4</sup> Malta has one department which runs all state schools and is run by the national government under the Minister of Education. For many years it was known simply as the Education Department and later on as the Education Division. Today it is frequently referred to as the Directorate.
- <sup>5</sup> A thorough study on Maltese history textbook was conducted by George Cassar and can be found in a joint paper by G. Cassar and Y.Vella (2011) entitled "A hundred years of history teaching and learning in Malta" found in G.Cassar and Y.Vella(eds) *History teaching and Research: bridging the theory/practice divide* Vol 2
- <sup>6</sup> Malta followed the same system as in Britain with regard O Levels, with the change to GCSEs Malta starting calling her O Levels , 'Sec O Levels' that is Secondary Education Certificate Ordinary Levels.
- <sup>7</sup> In Malta the term 'New History' is still frequently used to refer to history teaching which places more emphasis on the use of sources and history thinking skills and concepts. A term first used in Britain in the 1970s but lately not so frequently used outside Malta, where it is now more popularly known as the 'Source Method' or 'Investigative History Teaching'.
- <sup>8</sup> Michael Sant was a pioneer in the teaching of History in the 1980s and early 1990s. In his capacity as Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Education, he was a complete convert to the 'New History' methods of teaching and popularised the idea of using sources in history

teaching in Maltese schools.

- <sup>9</sup> The Maltese History Teachers Association organised the 2006 Euroclio General Conference entitled “Teaching History Thinking Skills and Concepts” while they also organise an annual seminar on history teaching entitled the Michael Sant Memorial Lecture, where experts from abroad have regularly from 2000 been invited to give papers on history teaching.
- <sup>10</sup> With regards the use of sources as part of history teaching Malta came out quite high when compared to other European countries in an EU project entitled “Assessment, tutorial structures & initial teacher education of trainee students in the subjects Political/Civic Education, Social/Cultural Studies & History in Europe—a comparative study—ITTP”, co-ordinated by Prof. Alois Ecker, University of Vienna Summary of study may be viewed at <http://che.itt-history.eu/>
- <sup>11</sup> Today Primary and Secondary schools in Malta are clustered and grouped according to different areas and regions which form a College and these are headed by a Principal in charge of all the schools in that group.
- <sup>12</sup> I further developed and articulated my concerns about interdisciplinary teaching in a paper I presented at an IRASHE (International Research Association for History and Social Sciences Education) conference in Rome in September 2012 entitled *The problem with teaching history as part of an integrated or interdisciplinary cross-curricular pedagogical approach*.
- <sup>13</sup> The new History Curriculum Handbook may be viewed at [http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/curric\\_f1/curric\\_f1\\_history\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/curric_f1/curric_f1_history_handbook.pdf)  
There are only two specific detailed syllabi ready at present and these may be viewed as follows:  
Links for curriculum units  
Form 1 (11 year-olds): [http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/curric\\_f1/curric\\_f1\\_history\\_units\\_e.pdf](http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/curric_f1/curric_f1_history_units_e.pdf)  
Form 2 (12 year-olds): [http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/curric\\_f2/curric\\_f2\\_history\\_units\\_e.pdf](http://www.curriculum.gov.mt/docs/curric_f2/curric_f2_history_units_e.pdf)
- <sup>14</sup> Draft proposed syllabus obtained from History Education officer Ray Spiteri in December 2016

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- Vella, Yosanne (2015) ‘History in Malta’s New National Curriculum Framework’ in H.Cooper & J. Nichol (eds) *Identity, Trauma, Sensitive and Controversial Issues in the Teaching of History* Cambridge Scholars Publishing.