Visual and Performing Arts Subjects and Their Status in Maltese Primary Schools

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

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October 2023

Abstract

Different subjects enjoy different status within the Maltese primary schools. The aim of this thesis is to explore the extent of subject status between the core academic tested subjects (CATS), such as mathematics, English, Maltese and science, and the visual and performing arts subjects (VPAS), such as art, drama and music in Maltese primary schools.

I started by analysing the National Curriculum Framework (NCF; MEE, 2012), and the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) (MEE, 1999) using Hyatt's (2005, 2013) Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analysis (CHEPDA). Research was conducted in 4 different primary schools: two co-educational government schools, one boys-only Church school and one girls-only Church school. There were three categories of participants: parents (n=100), students (n=204) and educators (n=67). Focus groups and questionnaires were used to understand the perceptions of participants using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Key findings showed that CATS indeed enjoy a higher status than the VPAS in Maltese primary schools. I used Foucault's *dispositif* (1980) to explain my theory as to why this was occurring and how a governance of power was the result of why different subjects are assigned different status.

This thesis is an academic contribution in a number of ways. It introduces a CHEPDA analysis of the Maltese NMC and NCF. It also shows that a broad and balanced curriculum in primary education should be the way forward for education. I introduced my original concept of how students are regarded by the state as 'capital-abilities-machines'. My recommendations range from having a specialised teacher resident in each school to teach the arts subjects, to revising the curriculum to increase the teaching time for the VPASs so that all students may experience a broad and balanced curriculum.

Acknowledgements

To my family and my circle; thank you for your constant support and the pushes that I needed to finish this.

Thank you.

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List of Abbreviations and Meanings

CAPE: Chicago Arts Partnership in Education

CATS: Core Academic Tested Subjects

CHEPDA: Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analyses

CF: Consent Form

CLF: Critical Literacy Framework

GERM: Global Educational Reform Movement

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

INCO: Inclusive Co-Ordinator

IR: Insider Research/er

LOF: Learning Outcomes Frameworks

LSE: Learning Support Educator

MEDE: Ministry of Education and Employment

MEE: Ministry of Education and Employment

NCF: National Curriculum Framework

NMC: National Minimum Curriculum

NAPLAN: National Assessment Program of Literacy and Numeracy

PE: Physical Education

PIRLS: Progress in International Literacy Study

PIS: Participant Information Sheet

PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment

SDP: Staff Development Program

SMT: Senior Management Team

TA: Thematic Analysis

TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

UOM: University of Malta

UOS: University of Sheffield

VET: Vocational Education and Training

VPAS: Visual and Performing Arts Subjects

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Drama, music and art subjects in Maltese Primary Schools fall under the grouping of 'Visual and Performing Arts Subjects' (VPAS) in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF; MEE, 2012). In this thesis, the term 'VPAS' will be referring to drama, music and art, following the NCF collective term.

This research was prompted by my experiences as a music teacher in a primary school for the past twelve years. Different educational stakeholders such as educators, students and parents value VPAS differently. Some stakeholders view the VPAS as important, whilst others view them unimportant. Through the NCF, primary curriculum subjects are allotted a specific amount of teaching time within the daily lesson schedule in schools. After realizing that the head of school of my work place considered VPAS as subjects which could be cut at any time, I was prompted to research the status of the subjects across the primary sector in Malta. Even though I will be researching the status of VPAS in Malta only in this dissertation, international literature will be referred to so that this research on Maltese primary schools can fit into the vast literature on the different subject status in primary schools.

School subject status has multiple meanings that are regularly challenged within education (Paechter, 1993). The meaning of status correlates to the position and power of a subject taught at school, one that depends on external forces and powers. Ball (1987) explains how subject status depends on a range of variables, such as the students being taught, the choices educators have while teaching the subject and how the curriculum is influenced by policymakers and external forces as to what should be taught in schools. Bleazby (2015) has also noted how the status of subjects depend on the context surrounding the subjects. Bleazby (2015) also notes how a subject's higher status reflects their higher economic and social value.

To understand why there is this division of high versus low status, with special reference to the VPAS, I propose to expound on the significance of the subjects in the development of children and see how VPAS contribute towards a broad and balanced curriculum, with references to peace education, language education and developmental education, to name a few. This chapter outlines an introduction of this study and the reasons behind it, while explaining the problems this study aims to investigate. The context of my research, its justification and the significance of my study is also presented. This chapter concludes with a brief outline of the following chapters. In order for me to explain what led to my research perspectives on the value of VPAS

at primary school level, it is best if I first explain the Maltese educational agenda which forms the context of this study.

1.1.1 A Brief History of Maltese Education

Education in Malta was first undertaken with the introduction of Arabic numerals between 870 to 1090. Throughout history, Malta was ruled by the Knights of St. John, the French, the Italians and the British, amongst many others. Over the years, diverse religious orders brought religion-based education to the island for wealthy families. These religious orders were the Franciscans in 1350, the Carmelites in 1418, the Dominican Order in 1450, the Augustinians in 1460 and the Friars Minor in 1492. In 1592, the *Collegium Melitense* was established by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), the result of a direct order by Pope Clements VIII, which institution later become the University of Malta (UOM).

In 1798, the dominion of the French Republic over the Maltese islands brought with it a reformation of the educational system, where private schooling was banned and state-funded elementary schooling was established (Xerri, 2016). A year later, Malta became a British Colony, and with the help of Sir Thomas Maitland in 1814 new groundwork for primary education was laid, and public schools started teaching writing and reading. On 1 February 1846 education became effectively compulsory up to the age of 14 (Cassar, 2003). Maltese primary schools were established in every village and education was made free of charge, a move which followed the British model in 1847. Nevertheless, during the years of WWI, the interwar years and WWII many families from the lower classes kept their children home to help the parents and earn an income. In order to counteract this phenomenon, education was declared compulsory in 1946. Presently, Maltese education is compulsory up to the age of sixteen, and Maltese schools are divided into three: Government schools, private Church schools and the private independent sector. The Maltese educational system is divided into four stages: pre-primary (ages 3–5), primary (ages 5–11), secondary (ages 11–16) and tertiary education.

Maltese education is currently undergoing a change in structure through the development and implementation of Learning Outcome Frameworks (LOF; MEE, 2017) and the NCF (MEE, 2012). The LOF and NCF provide guiding tools for teachers so as to enable them to present a lesson as recommended by the Ministry of Education. The NCF was preceded by the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC; MEE, 1999). Within the NCF, cross-curricular themes were introduced. This led to an increased focus on literacy, highlighting that all learning mainly

occurs through language in its numerous shapes. This cross-curricular theme was introduced via the policy 'A Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo 2021-2030' (MEE, 2021). This literacy strategy aims at "improv[ing] literacy outcomes, resulting in inclusive practices, higher educational qualifications, and better job prospects" (MEE, 2021, p.5). In Maltese education, the term 'literacy' is used to describe "the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media" (MEE, 2021, p.5). Schools all over the Maltese Islands have begun implementing this strategy, aiming to promote the importance of language literacies (Maltese and English), while also supporting digital literacy (MEE, 2021).

1.2 Significance & Contribution of the Study

Existing Maltese research focuses on one VPAS and the majority are Bachelors dissertations, for example, the degree dissertation by Rapa & Portelli (2016), where the authors discuss the integration of music within the primary core academic tested subjects (CATS), the dissertation by Vella (2013) on teaching drawing in secondary schools, Caruana's (2019) on teaching drama in primary schools, a thesis by Farrugia (2014) on teaching drama in Maltese public primary schools, and an article by Micallef (2015) on teaching the Maltese language through drama in the early years. In contrast to these studies, my study focuses on all VPAS. I wanted to review the participants' perceptions of VPAS at primary level, something that has not been carried out in Malta.

Through this research, I investigate the perceptions of participants to see how they perceive VPAS within the primary school curriculum. I will explore whether, and if so how, the global economic market, influences the curriculum through high-stakes tests, and how these tests in turn may influence the curriculum that is taught in Maltese schools, by focusing on the primary sector.

My research is significant in the consideration of the evidence regarding the importance and the status of the VPAS in the primary school curriculum. It will also investigate whether Maltese education is being affected by national and supranational tests and whether the tests affect the status and positions of the VPAS at primary school level. This research is also a contribution to the question as to whether the Maltese educational system is being affected by the global economic market and whether neoliberalism is impacting any decisions taken within the Maltese primary educational system.

1.3 The Issues this Study aims to Investigate

The NCF proposes a timetable, with different subjects allocated different lesson time. Maths, English, Maltese and science are tested via benchmarks exams and are referred to as the 'core subjects' within the NCF (MEE, 2012). Benchmark tests are high-stakes tests which provide feedback on the students' academic development, connecting the test records to the promotion of a student to a higher scholastic grade, or graduation. In this dissertation, I refer to the core subjects as CATS. The CATS are allocated more scheduled lesson time than the VPAS. The timetable shows the allotted time for each subject divided as follows: 30% for languages, 15% each for mathematics and sciences, 5% for physical education (PE) and another 5% for the Visual & Performing Arts besides other subjects (MEE, 2012, p.17). Figure 1 is a representation of the pie chart used in the NCF to distribute and allocate specific teaching time for varied subjects within primary school levels.

Figure 1

Personal rendition of: Learning Areas Distribution Junior Years
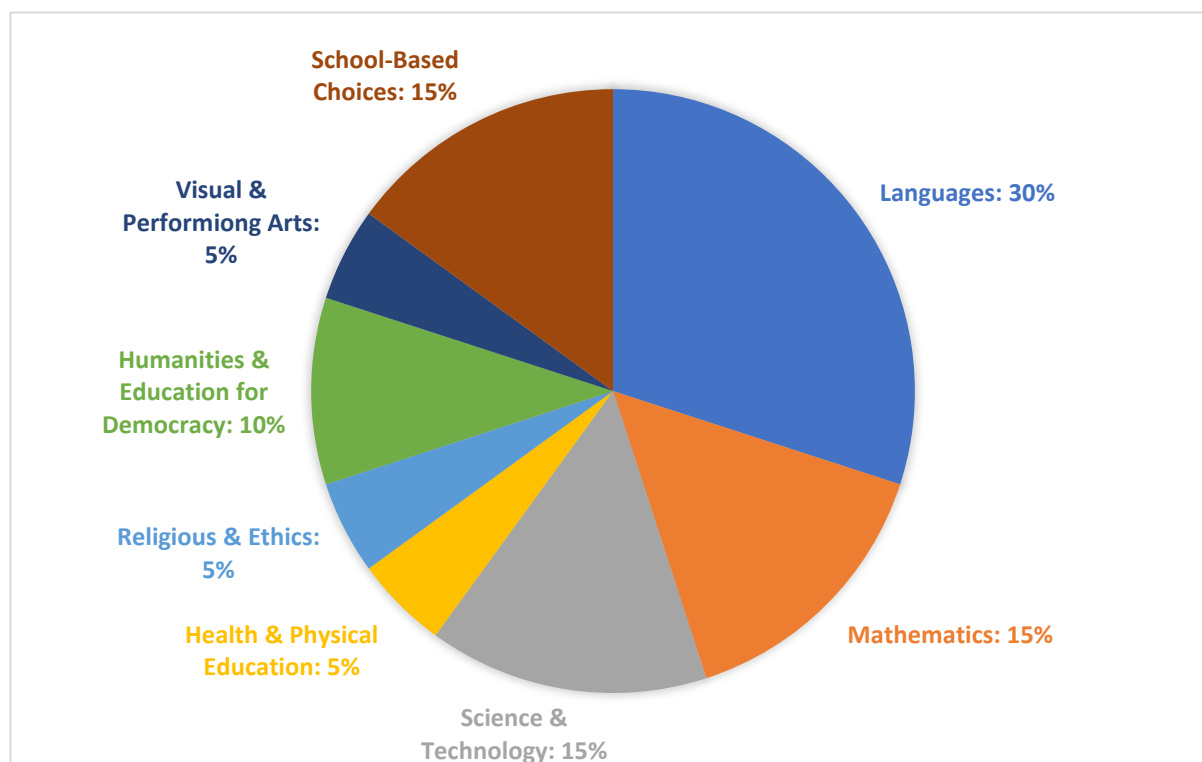
According to the timetable , students are allotted only one lesson a week per VPAS, as opposed to the CATS, where mathematics, English, Maltese and cience are allotted five lessons each weekly. The division of allotted time between the subjects shows that because of the push towards good grades in high-stakes testing for the majority of students, other subjects such as the VPAS are struggling for the allocation of teaching time. Students are highly encouraged to undertake high-stakes and benchmark exams.

1.4 Research Context

During my career as a music teacher I have experienced first-hand the importance of the VPAS and what these can bring to children during their primary school years. Even though the NCF (2012) promotes a holistic curriculum, it is not really promoting a broad and balanced curriculum suitable for all children. Instead, the curriculum has become a means to justify the higher value of tested subjects – the CATS, against those subjects which are not tested. In this thesis I propose a portrayal of the VPAS and the CATS as dichotomously opposed. This is because the focus of this thesis are the VPAS, and not other non-tested subjects such as physicsl

education or religion. My justification for this dichotomy is that the VPAS are not tested like the CATS.

Studies that focus on learning VPAS in general indicate a range of positive consequences for students. Greene (2001) notes that aesthetic education is intentionally designed to foster the understanding of the self through introspection, through the examination of the culture of the individual and their participation in the VPAS, thus assisting the learner to observe what there is to be observed (Greene, 2001). This may be because the VPAS affect the emotional and intellectual development of the learners, while experiences which nurture their development are linked to the cognitive understanding and senses of the learner (Greene, 2001). Greene notes that the VPAS develop the "wide-awakeness" of the learner; the ability to focus on details and yet still see the whole and not just the VPAS (Greene, 2001, p.11). Because of this "wide-awakeness", the learner will be made aware of their freedom and be capable of finding their voice, eyes and ears (Greene, 2001, p.11). The VPAS provide a multidimensional education for the individual by establishing a broad and balanced curriculum where all subjects are imparted, thus not limiting education to one where students are educated only on tested subjects.

Researchers such as Jones et al. (2003) and Lobascher (2011) note how VPAS, even though research shows the positive effects on students upbringing and development (see Chapter 2), are still being side-lined. The implementation of the MEE (2014) literacy strategy within VPAS via cross-curricular themes may be regarded as a means of facilitating the endorsement of high-stakes tested subjects and the tests themselves. The insertion of literacy within the VPAS to accommodate high-tested subjects may result in the implied notion where the education market influences subject hierarchy and value through the accountability of high-stakes testing. Various nations compete for positive ranking places in global high-stakes tests, such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Progress in International Literacy Study (PIRLS).

1.5 Justification for the Study

As an expressive arts teacher and a pianist, I see the impact the VPAS have on different children of all capabilities. I believe the VPAS help the students in many ways, such as improving their self-esteem, making friends and discovering new talents. I believe that the student is missing out when the VPAS end up not being taught at school. It is why I advocate for a broad and balanced curriculum, especially within the primary school years. During primary schools, students do not have the pressure of choosing specific subjects which will lead them towards

post-secondary schools and employment, but have the luxury of learning and exploring different subjects. If the VPAS are removed from the equation, then the student would not enjoy the benefits of a holistic education.

It is also my opinion that the manifestation of national and supranational trends in high-stakes testing reinforce the idea that only CATS are to be treated as important and allotted the maximum amount of time within the daily school timetable. This may result in a 'teaching-to-the-test ' phenomenon, something Alexander (2016) described as leading to a curriculum which shifts towards high status school subjects, maybe even at the expense of the VPAS since VPAS are seen: "as desirable but inessential" (p.2). Through this research, I aim to determine and analyse the status of Maltese primary school subjects.

My research will attempt to site Malta alongside research carried out in other countries regarding whether high-stakes tests impact on the time devoted to specific areas of the curriculum. This occurs when teachers focus their teaching on tested subjects, thus narrowing the curriculum and teaching-to-the-test (Lipman, 2011). Researchers have examined the impact of high-stakes testing globally. For example, Lingard & Sellar (2013) in Australia, remarked how schools whose students do not perform well in tests are given an ultimatum to either progress or else risk the closure of the school, while Jones et al. (1999) in USA and Lobascher (2011) in Canada examined how the social sciences, PE, science, and the VPAS have experienced cutbacks in the time allotted to them as an outcome of the demands of high stakes testing programmes (Jones et al., 1999; Lobascher, 2011).

By marginalising the VPAS in favour of the CATS, educators may be marginalising students who show potential in VPAS and maybe do not fare so well in CATS. This may be a social justice issue, an indirect form of discrimination towards children whose practical achievements shine through the VPAS. Through my research within Maltese primary schools, I will explore whether the VPAS are being sidelined to accommodate the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon, which is in turn leading to a narrowing of the curriculum. I will also examine whether this leads to the exclusion of non-tested subjects from day-to-day schooling.

1.6 Study Aims: Research Questions and Rationales

This section presents the three research questions, along with their rationales.

1.6.1 What is the relationship between global economic markets and the primary school curriculum, with particular focus on the VPAS?

This research question allows me to investigate my observation that school curricula worldwide are being influenced by the global reform agenda which focuses time and resources on CATS at the expense of the VPAS. I will be reviewing global literature on the definition of the term curriculum, how globalisation is affecting curricula, and how, by means of high-stakes tests, there is a narrowing of the curricula to accommodate the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon. I am interested to find out if the global spread of high-stakes testing in CATS is related to the spread of the global market and Neoliberalism and the extent and impact of change on the teaching of the VPAS. This is mainly because VPAS, in countries such as the UK, are being side-lined in favour of CATS while schools are socially constructing a subject hierarchical system, a notion that some school subjects are more valuable than others (Alexander, 2010). This phenomenon is happening globally and is not limited to the UK. I will investigate if this phenomenon is happening in Malta.

1.6.2 How and in what ways do the VPAS contribute to primary education?

I will research what the VPAS contribute to education, whether and how students benefit from learning the VPAS at school through their primary years. A lot of research is available on the importance of the VPAS as an aid to academic subjects (Bamford, 2006; Creech & Navaz, 2002; Schellenberg, 2011a; Schellenberg, 2011b; Robinson, 2014). I want to research the value the VPAS bring to primary education, such as whether VPAS increase the self-esteem of the student and aid in both social and academic abilities.

However, research literature such as Burton et al. (1999), Catterall et al. (1999), Catterall and Waldorf (2002) and Psilos (2002) show that the association between the VPAS and tested subjects is far from a synergetic one, but rather a parasitic association where the VPAS are subservient subjects to the tested academic subjects. Because of this, I aim to explore the perceptions of the participants (students, parents and educators) of the status and importance of VPAS in schools in the following research question.

1.6.3 What are the perceptions of students, educators and parents on the VPAS within the primary curriculum?

By means of this research question, I will examine participants' perceptions of the VPAS. I will also ask students and educators if the school curriculum lacks VPAS, and if so, how this influences the participants. I will then ask participants whether they experience a hierarchical

system within the subject curriculum. I aim to discover whether students feel the pressure of CATS on the VPAS and whether participants perceive exams to reduce the time for VPAS in relation to the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon (Abrams, 2004; Ewing 2011; Jones et al., 2003; Perrault, 2000; Ravitch, 2010; Reay & William, 1999).

1.7 Outline of Chapters to Follow

My thesis is divided into seven chapters, beginning with this Introduction as Chapter 1. In Chapter 2, I provide a general outline of the theories I will be using for my thesis, by understanding existing peer reviewed literature and linking it with my own findings. This chapter is divided into three sections, each section pertaining to one research question. The first section allows me to investigate my deduction that the Maltese primary school curriculum is influenced by the global market. In section two, I delve into existing research about what the VPAS contribute to education within the primary years of schooling, while in the third section I analyse literature on the perceptions of students, educators and parents on VPAS at school.

In Chapter 3, I lay out the theoretical foundations of Foucault *dispositif* (1980) while linking it to the different theories which I believe are the reason as to why the CATS are being favoured over the VPAS. The different theories include Biopower, Governmentality, Neoliberalism and the Curriculum. I also describe how the VPAS are seen as a utilitarian commodity to serve the CATS and how education is seen as a capital investment to produce future workforce, and how the student is seen as an abilities-machine. In this chapter, I also produce my original term, that because the child is being objectified by means of a utilitarian education, the child is not only seen as an abilities-machine, but, as I term it, a capital-abilities-machine. I will be explaining this in more detail in this chapter.

Chapter 4 introduces, justifies and evaluates the aims, purposes and structure of the methodology, methods and overall design of the study. I start by explaining Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analysis (CHEPDA) by Hyatt (2013) which will be used to analyse key curriculum texts used for this thesis. The CHEPDA is then followed by an overview of Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis (TA). TA will be used to analyse the data collected via questionnaires and focus group discussions. Questionnaires will be analysed using graphs and some nonparametric inferential statistics, where data will be ranked and grouped according to thematic key facts. Focus group interview transcripts will be analysed to find any emerging key themes. This section is followed by a discussion and the justification of the pilot group and the participants' samples used for this research, together with the approach adopted

to analyse the data collected. Another section will review the ethical considerations used for this research, including the ethical review process and my reasons for defending the trustworthiness of my research study. The next section evaluates my position as an insider researcher, detailing its strengths and limitations, together with a description of issues which arose during the data generation phase and how they were dealt with. Lastly, I will illustrate my reflections on the planning and execution of the methodology and methods and the data collection, concluding with the strengths and limitations of this whole chapter.

Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the NMC and NCF through the lens of CHEPDA. I will also discuss my findings where the key themes and arguments are presented and critically evaluated and analysed in relation to the research questions and literature reviewed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 6 I will present the analyses and discussion of the questionnaires and the focus groups TA. This is followed by the conclusion, Chapter 7, where I address the research questions in turn, discussing the strengths and limitations of my study and recommending appropriate pathways for Maltese education through future research, policy and practice. This concluding chapter will also recount my journey as a researcher.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical examination of the literature by reviewing what has already been done in the field, while also debating pertinent issues in the context of present research (Wellington et al., 2005). The following are the three main research questions guiding this study:

1. What is the relationship between global economic markets and the primary school curriculum, with particular focus on the VPAS?

2. How, and in what ways, do the VPAS contribute to primary education?

3. What are the perceptions of students, educators and parents of the VPAS within the primary curriculum?

2.2 What is the relationship between global economic markets and the primary school curriculum, with particular focus on the VPAS?

2.2.1 Globalisation and Neoliberalism of Education

The term 'globalisation' is a theoretically and politically contested term with both negative and positive connotations (Rizvi & Lingard, 2000). In this dissertation, I use Spring's (2008) argument that globalisation of education stems from the beliefs of governments and business groups which encourage schools to meet the needs of the changing global economy in order to remain competitive. It describes the processes, discussions and organisations influencing local educational policies and practices on a worldwide scale, constituting a superstructure of global education processes which affect national school systems (Spring, 2008).

Appadurai (1996) and Rizvi & Lingard (2000) note that through the globalization of educational policies, education systems are being submitted to both heterogenization and homogenization. Heterogenization and homogenization are simultaneous occurring processes and consequences of globalisation, whereby people have access to an extensive variety of different markets, cultural traditions and products. In homogenization, things become increasingly similar globally, such as nations following the same policy recipe. Rizvi and Lingard (2000) call this the "McDonaldisation of the World" (p.420). This line of thought follows what sociologist Ritzer had first noted in 1993, that is, 'The McDonaldization of Society' where society is controlled and standardised, bringing about a unification of a global ideology (Ritzer, 2019).

Heterogenization, on the other hand, enables each nation to interpret the homogenised global reforms in different ways according to the perspective of the country, in relation to the traditions, national histories, politics, markets, and cultures of the country (Rizvi & Lingard, 2000).

Through the influence of global super-structures such as the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank on national education systems, and through homogenization and heterogenization, a 'policy borrowing' between nations is created. Even though school systems are independently controlled by their nations, the nations are influenced by, and choose to adopt, the policies of this superstructure of global education processes in order to compete within the global economy (Rizvi & Lingard, 2000). In neoliberalism, market freedom is not defined and monitored by the state, for the state is organized and regulated by the market itself, ultimately revealing how the state is controlled by the market.

Neoliberalism is a collection of economic and social policies, discourses, forms of governance and ideologies that back the privatisation of social goods (such as public schools, public health centres) and the removal of government from the role of offering social welfare, on the basis that economic markets are more valuable and effectual (Lipman, 2011). Neoliberals visualize a society that endorses a smaller government in size and influence, where the individual is innovative and is self-reliant rather than of relying on society (Hursh, 2013). Neoliberalism argues that competition is what ensures proper market level-headedness. With neoliberalism, the market is the administrative regulatory standard by which society and state are influenced (Foucault, 1984).

2.2.2 The Curriculum

Multiple definitions have been given for the term 'curriculum'. Stenhouse (1975) presented an early definition of the word 'curriculum' as a venture where the principles of an educational system are engaged through an analytical methodological analysis and translated into practice. According to Schwab (1983), the curriculum is whatever is fruitfully communicated through the different processes operated by teachers upon students. This occurs when knowledge and skills are transmitted from the educator to the student by means of suitable materials and activities chosen according to the period the curriculum is written (Schwab, 1983). Karseth & Sivesind (2010) elaborate on this noting that the curriculum embodies and reflects a time in history.

With the introduction of mandatory subjects in the context of a subject-based curriculum during the Education Reform Act of 1988 (HMI, 1998), primary schools in England and Wales had to plan to teach ten subjects, namely mathematics, English, religious education, science, art, music, PE, design and technology, geography and history. In Malta, the Maltese language is added to this list. An 'Inside Government' report on an Ofsted inspection by Hall (2016) noted that the range of subjects in a broad and balanced curriculum provided different prospects for all learners to become skilled, while contributing to the personal and mental well-being, behaviour, welfare, safety, social, moral, cultural and spiritual development of the learner. A broad and balanced curriculum applies to the school curriculum which not only focuses on academic subjects, but also on the spiritual, moral, physical and mental development of the student (DfE, 1989). A broad and balanced curriculum boosts creativity, problem-solving and offers physical activity and VPAS education while all subjects are being taught (Ravitch, 2010). A broad and balanced curriculum should teach and reach all students (Bamford & Wimmer, 2012). Young (2014) notes how the curricula restrains the actions of the learner, since the curricula contains a fixed number of subjects and topics being taught, thus limiting the knowledge the student will learn through school. In order for a student to truly benefit from the curriculum, I believe that the curriculum should be broad and balanced.

By transferring the VPAS to afterschool activities, and privatising them following a neoliberal agenda, the VPAS would be out of reach for students whose families do not afford to pay for extracurricular activities. Consequently, not every student will have access to the VPAS. Bourdieu (2000) noted how a student belonging to a family of good economic means has the priviledge of appreciating art and may have the opportunity to learn how to play a musical instrument (Webb et al., 2002). He called this 'cultural capital'. Bourdieu (2000) termed 'cultural capital' as the behaviour, skills and knowledge one gains unconciously through the influence of their surroundings, such as the family and school. Bourdieu and Wacquant believe that the role of the family is critical in the acquisition of cultural capital since the family is the first place where the student belongs to a community (1992).

I now argue how following a neoliberal approach by privatising the VPAS and relocating them afterschool hours would be a disservice to these students. Following the 'cultural capital' concept, if a student comes from an affluent family, then they have access to the VPAS which have been relocated as afterschool activities, while students from low socio-economic backgrounds do not have access to these classes as these may be too expensive for their families.

This creates an imbalance in social justice; on the contrary, by teaching a broad and balanced curriculum, schools would be able to offer all students far more opportunities.

A Singaporean study by Bautista et al. (2016) emphasises the importance of promoting the 'holistic' development of children at kindergarten level, particularly through the learning area called "Aesthetic and Creative Expression" (p.3). The Singaporean Ministry of Education designed a curriculum emphasising the importance of student holistic development through its focus on both the academic and non-academic fields of learning (Tan, 2007). Within the Singaporean context, "Aesthetics and Creative Expression" is a learning area which is deemed important as it allows children to participate in the creative areas of music, movement and art (Bautista et al., 2016, p.3). This learning area is considered a non-academic learning area as there is no formal assessment of the topic. However, Bautista et al. noted that teachers in Singapore balance the teaching time between the academic and the non-academic (2016, p.13). In Singapore, the government is promoting the VPAS and is also investing in teacher training so that classroom teachers are able to teach the VPAS (Bautista et. al, 2016). Singapore shows that a broad and balanced curriculum may be achieved.

2.2.3 The Relationship between Globalisation and the Curriculum

In relation to this first research question, I mention a wide-reaching faction portrayed as the "Global Education Reform Movement" (GERM); a term developed by Sahlberg (2011). GERM is not an official international education policy agenda (Sahlberg, 2011), but a symbolic idea showing the implementation of a policy rationale of parallel comparable global policy problems and priorities being implemented worldwide (Verger et al., 2018). In view of this, globalisation is affecting education through the endorsement of high-stakes tests. Global high-stakes tests are helping the phenomenon of heterogenization and homogenization as nations look at different educational policies, adopt what other nations are doing while making the policies their own. High-stakes tests are examinations set at different levels within the education sector, occurring either at national or supranational level. Homogenization creates a global area of commensurate educational evaluation, while also contributing to the globalisation of policy making, enabling nations to compare results globally (Rizvi and Lingard, 2000). This may be seen through global tests such as PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS, and as a result, education is being narrowed down to cater for the tests.

2.2.3.1 Narrowing of the Curriculum In 2016, British education emphasised the importance of five subjects: science, maths, English, another language, and geography or

history through the introduction of the Ebaccalaureate (EBacc; Department of Education, 2016). Ironically, the EBacc was introduced so that students would be able to follow a broad and balanced curriculum (Education Committee, 2011) until the end of their secondary school years. However, narrowing the focus of teaching on high-stakes CATS material in numeracy and literacy has resulted in a curriculum which is not broad and balanced. While focusing on these five subjects, the EBacc discounts the creative subjects, such as drama, music and design and technology (Hardy, 2015). I do not believe that the EBacc is a broad and balanced curriculum, since it only focuses on five subjects at the expense of other topics. The EBacc's five subjects narrow the opportunities for the student to discover what they are good at as the subjects are too narrow and do not reflect the diversity of the students' abilities, interests and needs. Thus, I believe that in reality, the EBacc does not really prepare the student for the future where they choose their own pathway. Instead, the EBacc narrows the options and future opportunities of the student by focusing on five subjects, which will lead to limited future opportunities. This goes beyond what a broad and balanced curriculum should be.

Hardy noted that the five EBacc subjects were chosen because they provide the indispensable knowledge all students should learn (2015). Young (2008) justified the five EBacc subjects as the essential subjects which transmit knowledge through what he termed as 'powerful knowledge'. Powerful knowledge is knowledge which has the power to change the individual, knowledge which is taught and provides the learner with the tools to make their own choices (Young, 2014). Young called it 'powerful knowledge' because it is knowledge which gives power to the students, and not knowledge which has power over the students. For Young (2013), schools should offer all student of different capabilities different opportunities, opportunities for all to be able to outgrow the schooling system of specified subjects teaching and tests, and instead acquire knowledge outside the school subjects. However, even though this 'powerful knowledge' is limited to, as is the case of the Ebacc, five subjects, these fives subjects are not going to give the opportunities all students of all capabilities deserve, mainly because not all students will do well in these subjects. Limiting the curriculum to the EBacc five subjects also limits education to the teaching-to-the-test.

2.2.3.2 Teaching-to-the-test Another outcome of globalisation in education, as pertaining to this research question, is the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon. This phenomenon has resulted in the steady erosion in the position of non-tested subjects, particularly VPAS at school, as they are not considered important in the raising of the academic standard of public education (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006). This point resonates with Wasmuth and Nitecki (2017)

and Urban (2017) who noted that the primary focus of the curriculum was on mathematics and literacy at the expense of other areas of curriculum content (Wasmuth & Nitecki, 2017). I now refer to the intended and the enacted curricula. The intended curriculum is the written curriculum as prescribed in the policies and syllabi created according to and for the subjects being taught (Kurz, et al., 2010). The content of the intended curriculum is delivered through the lessons by the educators, and what is being taught becomes the enacted curriculum (Kurz, et al., 2010). This reminds me of Freire's (1972) 'banking concept' and how the educator deposits the knowledge through teaching the intended curriculum, and what they teach is what is being enacted. However, due to high-stakes testing, the intended curriculum is narrowed down to accommodate the subjects and topics being assessed. This promotes the development of the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon, and the intended curriculum becomes the assessed curriculum, i.e. the curriculum which is used for the assessment of the subject or topic (Kurz, et al., 2010).

Sabol (2010) determined that educators in the US noted that the stress of high-stakes testing on literacy and mathematics led to a reduction in time spent on the VPAS curriculum. In the US, the 'No Child Left Behind' legislature deducted teaching time from music, art and social studies, so that students would be equipped to participate in state tests that assessed student performances in literacy and mathematics (Jennings & Stark Rentner, 2006). Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2012) investigated the Australian Primary Principals Association's position and values regarding high-stakes testing and they too concurred that high-stakes test had a negative impact on teaching, from the narrowing of the curriculum to teaching only tested subjects (Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith, 2012). These results were also common to Stobart (2008) who researched the effects of these tests in the UK. Jones et al. (2003) and Lobascher (2011) both observed that the social sciences, PE, science and the VPAS have all experienced cutbacks in the time allotted to them because of the demands of high-stakes testing programmes (Jones et al., 2003; Lobascher, 2011).

Studies show that high-stakes tests are reducing the scope of the curriculum by concentrating on specific subjects which are tested, thus paving the way for the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon (Abrams, 2004; Perrault, 2000; Ravitch, 2010; Reay and Wiliam, 1999). My argument here would be that even though the US tried not to leave any child behind, they still managed to 'leave' students behind, mainly because not everyone is good at the CATS. As a result, non-tested subjects such as the VPAS are being side-lined to increase teaching time for

tested subjects. In this manner, the student is not benefitting from a 'broad and balanced' curriculum.

As the consequence of globalisation, the narrowing of the curriculum and the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon, GERM has negatively affected the global institution of education, where teachers had to "steal teaching time from other subjects, especially from social studies, art, and music" in order for students to excel in tests that measure the students' proficiency and performativity in literacy and numeracy (Sahlberg, 2011, p.101), leading to a narrowing of the curriculum. In the U.S., research by Au provides an example where schools decided to decrease the teaching of the non-tested subject art to accommodate and promote an increase in teaching time for the tested subjects of mathematics or reading (Au, 2008). In relation to this, Lipman discovered that in the US, high-stakes accountability impacts education by narrowing the curriculum for test preparation (2011). The metasynthesis research by Au (2007), a system representing conclusions of similar or correlated studies, reached the same conclusion (Au, 2007). Other researchers have also examined the impact of such tests in other countries. In Australia, Polesel et al. (2012) and Comber (2012) researched the impact of the National Assessment Program of Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing, discovering that the focus of NAPLAN on literacy and numeracy led to a negative effect on curriculum engagement and a reduction in the timetable for other subjects in their schools, resulting in the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon.

2.2.3.3 Hierarchy of the Curriculum and Subject Status The lack of a broad and balanced curriculum shows that subjects enjoy different status in education because of the curriculum hierarchy. Such is the case with the EBacc subjects, where there is an inference that the five subjects being taught for the EBacc have a higher status than the VPAS. This reflects the dichotomy this thesis investigates: that of the high status of the CATS vs the low status of the VPAS. A curriculum hierarchy is the idea that some subjects taught at school are more important than others, a phenomenon occurring in schools globally (Bleazby, 2015), possibly as a product of the focus on "high-status" knowledge (Apple, 1979, p.38).

Global tests such as PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS test different countries on the same academic material, reflecting the neoliberalism approach to competitive markets where countries taking part in these high-stakes tests compete for first place, and schools within any given country compete for top-rankings. On a national Maltese level there are the benchmark exams where mathematics, Maltese, English and science are tested. Mathematics and the physical sciences

occupy the prestigious position of being the highest-ranking subjects within the traditional curriculum hierarchy due to their grand universal theories and the reliance on abstract symbols (Bleazby, 2015). On the other hand, the subjects associated with concrete experiences such as PE, technology, and vocational subjects have the lowest status within the curriculum hierarchy (Bleazby, 2015).

In conclusion to the first research question, the curriculum is being affected by globalisation. Robinson (1990) reported how the hierarchical education system values mathematics and the sciences as subjects with the highest status, while the VPAS and the humanities sit at the bottom of the list, leading to the narrowing of the curriculum. As Robinson (1989) notes, the VPAS have been awarded little attention, even though the VPAS have: "an essential place in the balanced education of our children" (p.3). Robinson here epitomises what I strongly believe education should be: a balance of all the subjects to be taught during the primary years in order to promote a love for learning, a curiosity to explore different subjects, and thus become an exploration by the student to understand and learn what they are good at.

2.3 How, and in what ways, do the VPAS contribute to primary education?

2.3.1 The VPAS as Developmental Education

In this section, I investigate research on how the different subjects of the VPAS, i.e., music, art and drama can contribute to education in the primary school sector. I start with how the VPAS contribute to the developmental education of the child. The subject of music has long been used clinically in the treatment of mental health (Binzer et al., 2016), as therapy in the aid of behavioural and emotional problems in children and adolescents (Porter et al., 2017), and with children on the autistic spectrum (Bieleninik et al., 2017; Broder-Fingert et al., 2017), yielding many positive results. Freeman et al. (2003) discovered that students in the US who partook in creative drama activities at school exhibited better social skills than the group that did not. Similarly, Merrell's (2005) study, also conducted in the US, discovered that when children joined in VPAS events, positive improvements were seen with regards to attitudes towards bullying in schools as well as positive direct interventions in bullying situations.

Catterall (2007) established that students who partook in the drama initiative called 'School Project', an extra-curricular school-based programme in the US, had on average, higher scores in other subjects across the curriculum than those who did not. The programme used theatre, voice, writing, movement and visual arts to enhance the students' pro-social behaviour (Catterall, 2007). This research reflects another investigation conducted in the US by Catterall

and Peppler in 2007, which concluded that children who participated in the VPAS project enjoyed higher self-esteem than the students who did not. Catterall's (2007) research on extra-curricular drama is balanced by the Catterall and Peppler's 2007 study where the research is based on school-based drama lessons.

In the 1970s, Efland (1990) started advocating the effectiveness of art in teaching individuals with special needs through his work which established that the VPAS help in socialising children with disabilities, rehabilitate and remediate, as it encourages independence, self-expression, social interactions, general well-being and flexible thinking in the individual. Malley and Silverstein (2014) found that using art with students with special needs brings with it many supporting benefits. Here, art as a subject in primary school is associated with how it can help students with educational difficulties cope with social integration. Kim et al. (2008) researched how ad-libbing music therapy affects shared attention behaviour in preschool children on the autism spectrum in Asia. The results showed that children who partook in music activities improved in communication skills far more when compared to the group which did not. This section showed how the VPAS contribute and aid the student's behavioural, social, mental and educational difficulties.

2.3.2 The VPAS and Language

The VPAS have also been accredited with support and contributing in language learning (Fleming, 2021). Barrett (2011) investigated how early discourses by children and musical communications form the beginning of the identity of the child. This is supported by Fleming (2021) who researched how VPAS education contributes to the development and learning of language and intercultural education. In rural South Africa, learners lack numeracy and literacy skills besides having limited English language skills. Jansen van Vuuren noted how educators undertook the teaching of the English language by integrating VPAS. By means of this research, van Vuuren concluded that the VPAS do indeed aid the learning of languages (van Vuuren, 2018). In the US, Bilhartz et al. (1999) researched the relationship between cognitive development and participation in a structured music curriculum. The researchers discovered that students participating in singing, playing instruments and movement showed progress in their cognitive functioning that was superior to the participants who did not join in artistic activities. Similarly, Ludke (2018) notes how song activities and singing produce positive benefits for language learning.

Another research by Fleming et al. (2004) researched students in the U.K. who enrolled in the National Theatre drama project for three years, comparing them to a group who did not participate in the theatre programme. The research concluded that students who joined the theatre programme enjoyed better reading and numeracy abilities than the participants who did not. In the US, Creech & Bhavnagri (2002) have shown how drama could be used for the benefit of the child in order to enhance creative writing and story-telling, indicating that the VPAS may be the root of the development of creativity and of cultural awareness in individuals. This may be because children learn best through play (Stevens, 2003; Yue et al., 2018).

Greene (2001) notes how art pushes the individual to see beyond the ordinary, since there is always more to be seen. Art has the power of widening perspectives, enhancing the stimuli and imagination of the individual and, "expand[ing] the range of literacy" while fostering critical thinking (Greene, 2001, p.139). Bigelow (1997) examined the students' communication levels as a result of their participation in the performing VPAS within school curricula in the US. Children who participated in dance, drama, instrumental and vocal music improved in their communication abilities far more than the group which did not partake in different VPAS activities.

The VPAS contribute to primary education and may be helpful for students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds when they are encouraged to use drama to aid reading, which has been found to improve competence in reading new material and the ability to understand a text (Deasy, 2002). I believe that research is also needed to establish what drama lessons can do for children who do not come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

2.3.3 The VPAS and Peace Education

Many researchers have widely accredited the importance of VPAS education at a young age, indicating a range of benefits for students. One way which the VPAS contribute to education is the creation of a peaceful society. I start by reviewing the promotion of a VPAS programme as part of the creation of a peaceful culture launched by UNESCO (Mayor, 2000). UNESCO is the 'United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization', which contributes to security and peace by sharing knowledge and ideas, while promoting international cooperation in communication and information, culture, sciences and education (UNESCO, 2023). The 'Second World Conference on Arts Education' was hosted by UNESCO in Seoul in 2010. One positive outcome of this conference was the focus on the implementation of VPAS in schools at all levels and the safeguarding of the knowledge of traditional VPAS (UNESCO, 2010). The

Seoul Agenda was a detailed programme of meetings which included keynote speeches, parallel workshops, a Ministerial round table, regional group discussions, panel discussions and encounters with NGOs and foundations. The Seoul Agenda programme also included a special session on VPAS Education (UNESCO, 2010). It provided a reference for gathering data on VPAS education from different countries around the world, emphasising the importance of including VPAS at all levels, and how the VPAS aid in the creation of a peaceful culture. This has led to my understanding on how VPAS can aid peace education, where the aim is to promote communication in a peaceful manner.

The VPAS contribute to primary education through the promotion of peace education. In the first research question, I discussed how globalisation affects education. Globalisation also impacts education as students learn about different cultures, traditions, and as a result, the seeds for the creation of a peaceful culture are sown. Students may develop an intercultural appreciation as one of the most important aspects of peacebuilding, since there is no 'us vs them' but a 'we' concept of globalization. With peace education, the VPAS provide different methods for transforming the mind (Barkhordari et al., 2016). Schools become institutions which encourage the learning of peaceful educations, while promoting the upbringing of students without the need for conflict and violence. Students learn to respect one another while learning how to settle differences in a peaceful manner. Students learn that all individuals are different, where each student has their own culture, background, limitations and benefits. VPAS in education are needed to cultivate peace where the teaching of peace encompasses various issues such as behaviour and racial segregation both on a national and international level (Barkhordari, 2016). As previously mentioned in section 2.2.1, globalization impacts national school systems by means of local educational policies, deliberations and organisations (Spring, 2008).

2.3.4 The VPAS in Aid of Migration and Intercultural Education

As previously discussed in the introduction of this thesis, the Maltese Islands have historically been conquered by many countries. Each country has left its mark in different aspects of Maltese culture, such as cuisine, judiciary and language. Malta is a bilingual country, where students since the very early years of primary school learn both Maltese and English languages. Constitutionally both Maltese and English are official languages. This is the result of many years of British colonialism whose influence is felt in our education system where the Maltese education system closely mirrors the British one. Since Malta is positioned in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, its strategic position made it ideal for conquerors to use as a gateway to

access South Mediterranean and North African countries easily. This inevitably brought about many economic, historical and geopolitical developments throughout the years. Today, the position of these islands is the reason why Malta has experienced different types of migration, leading to an intercultural education.

Europe has attracted migrants since the nineteenth century and the emergence of industrialisation (Stratilaki-Klein, 2020). Since Malta is part of Europe, the migration phenomenon is ever present. Migration brings with it different lifestyles, cultures and languages, and in Malta, it has birthed a classroom where Maltese and English are no longer the primary languages used, but one where different mother tongues are present. This was something I had to keep in mind when choosing the schools for this research. In fact, the two government schools I opted to involve in my research are schools which host students of different nationalities. This choice is further discussed in Chapter 4.

A study was conducted in Malta, by Kopin, an International Cooperative which works with different government organisations and non-governmental organisations on numerous projects to raise awareness on how each individual is a global citizen, with their own values and roles (Kopin, 2023). Working alongside the VPAS Council Malta, Kopin offered different workshops for migrant children. In 2016 Kopin representatives and professionals used VPAS with migrant children to conduct non-clinical assessments of potentially traumatised migrant children (Kalweit, 2023). The VPAS helped these children to express their feelings and emotions using non-verbal methods of language while enabling psycho-social experts to analyse the children's creations (Kalweit, 2023). Kalweit noted how the VPAS bring different people together, who because of different experiences, backgrounds and language barriers, might not have otherwise met, and concluded that the VPAS should be embedded in education (Kalweit, 2023).

In 2010, Karseth & Sivesind noted that in Norway, particularly in the 'Arts and Crafts' section of the curriculum, art, design and architecture are given prominence as these subjects help raise the awareness of the individual's native heritage in a global environment. This idea further flourished after the 100th anniversary of the death of the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, when it was perceived that Norwegians were losing their identity while Chinese students were reading Ibsen's plays (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010). This prompted a curriculum reform, acknowledging a change in society while recognising how the VPAS root the culture and

traditions of one's own country. VPAS may also promote a multicultural society through the diverse cultures explored (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010).

In an article previously mentioned in section 2.3.2, van Vuuren (2018) noted how the VPAS were aids to help educators teach the English language in rural South Africa to students where English was not the first language. The author concluded that VPAS are a good medium to teach languages. Stratilaki-Klein in France similarly notes that acquiring a language through VPAS is a "fundamental element of the multilingual and multicultural education" (2020, p.327), thus sealing the importance of how VPAS aid in multicultural education. Thus, the VPAS contribute towards not only language education, but also aid migration and intercultural education.

2.3.5 The 'Learning In' vs the 'Learning Through' Dilemma

The literature discussed in this chapter has shown that the VPAS are taught either as stand-alone subjects, or used in conjunction with another subject, usually a CATS, to teach or consolidate topics belonging to the academic subject. In this way, the VPAS become the secondary subject, while the academic subject becomes the primary one. This shows how the VPAS become subjects used in service of the CATS, while also showing the ability of the VPAS to shift and adapt according to the need of the educational system. Sefton-Green & Simker (2000) note that the work within VPAS has a general transferable function in assisting young people to develop, feel, and think. This is also reflected in the 'Committee on the VPAS and Humanities' report 'Reinvesting in VPAS Education: winning America's future through creative schools' (PCAH, 2011). The report describes how the VPAS in schools result in positive outcomes, ranging from the perceived increase in student motivation and engagement, skill transference from the VPAS onto other subjects like mathematics and reading resulting in higher achievements, critical creative thinking, improved problem-solving while promoting social skills such as team-work, collaboration, tolerance and self-confidence. Psilos (2002) reported how the VPAS in education offer different kinds of options to CATS since the VPAS can prepare the workforce by offering effective learning opportunities, producing increased academic functioning, cut down the amount of nonattendance and improve the skills of the individuals. Studies have shown that young people who study the VPAS show increased academic aptitudes, an ability to self-assess and greater self-confidence (Psilos, 2002).

The Chicago VPAS Partnership in Education (CAPE) is an art programme model which partners local artists with teachers in order to plan curricula through the integration of a visual

art form in social studies or reading lessons (Catterall & Waldorf, 2002). This investigation evaluated the performances of students based on standardized test scores of students who participated in CAPE alongside a controlled group of students who did not participate (Catterall & Waldorf, 2002). The outcomes determined that students participating in CAPE improved their reading and mathematics standardized test scores more than the control group of students who only had reading and social studies lessons without VPAS lessons. Children from low socioeconomic backgrounds also performed better in programmes high in VPAS content, leading the authors to believe that low-income schools achieve better marks when they team up with local artists and VPAS organisations (Catterall & Waldorf, 2002). In the US, Catterall et al. (1999) discovered that students involved in VPAS education obtained better test results when compared to those pupils who participated less in VPAS education, notwithstanding their socioeconomic situation (Catterall, et al., 1999).

Deasy (2002) created a compendium of 62 peer-reviewed findings researching VPAS education in various VPAS of the world, from South Korea, Georgia and the US, examining how the VPAS benefit students both socially and academically. The studies and essays connect VPAS education with a mixture of social and academic abilities including mathematics, literacy, linguistics, social behaviour, thinking skills, and motivation (Deasy, 2002). Catterall et al. (1999) investigated student participation in the VPAS in the US, discovering that all students of different backgrounds involved in the VPAS enjoyed progressive academic improvement across all grades. Similarly, the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2011) concluded that VPAS aided in developing the cognitive skills of the child. The VPAS not only help the student to develop academically, but also socially, cognitively and emotionally.

Burton et al. (1999) researched different schools where different teachers taught VPAS (specialised teacher, classroom teacher and external VPAS teachers). The researchers used different methods to gauge the answers of the participants, from measuring creative thinking abilities to questionnaires. Through this multimethod approach, the researchers were able to obtain different points of views. Burton et al., discovered that students participating in VPAS in the US did better at school than those who did not participate in VPAS (1999). The research of Burton in different schools and the use of different methods is reflected in my own research, since I engage in the understanding of the perceptions of educators, parents and students from different schools, and shows that a researcher should never assume what they are going to find within their research. For example, Burton et al. (1999) expected that they could find schools

with constant and different experiences regarding VPAS at schools, when in reality, over the two years of their research, they found sporadic teaching of the VPAS with different types of VPAS lessons across grades, classes and schools (Burton et al., 1999).

Fleming notes that the use of the VPAS "in the service of non-art outcomes can distort the art-form itself" (2021, p.7). I agree with Fleming. It is my opinion that because the VPAS are being used to improve the outcomes of the CATS, the VPAS are losing their distinctiveness, their significance in the singular pursuit of the aesthetic art form. Fleming considers this the difference between "learning in" and "learning through" (Fleming, 2021, p.7). When one is "learning in", one is learning VPAS as an art-form per se. Examples include learning a choreography, singing or performing technique, acting or painting. When "learning through", the VPAS are being incorporated to service the CATS such as learning a language through VPAS. It is this differentiation which has distorted the VPAS and limited them in education.

One can thus understand how the VPAS have been subjected to a "learning through" outcome, where the VPAS have become subservient to CATS. My evaluation and critique are that the "learning through" mindset has prejudiced the way individuals perceive the VPAS in education, and it is because of the "learning through" that the VPAS have a low subject status. That is why it is imperative for the student to have the opportunity to have a broad and balanced education, where students learn in all the subjects. I do not agree with the trajectory of the research by Catterall et al. (1999), Catterall and Waldorf (2002) and Psilos (2002) because they focused solely on the limited ability of what the VPAS can do as a means to achieve better grades in other CATS; these researchers followed what Fleming (2021) noted as the "learning through" of the VPAS.

Other researchers such as Penny et al. (2002) sought to understand what the VPAS can do for the individual and discovered that VPAS in the UK provide a form of freedom which allows one to express inherent thoughts and emotions. In the UK, Alexander (2017) points out that learning the VPAS "must be every child's absolute right" since the VPAS encourage acknowledgment of feelings as well as free and deeper thought, which makes them irreplaceable and effective ways to help the individual make sense of the world and of the self (p.1). Alexander quoted the evidence of the UK 1982 report on the case for VPAS education in the Gulbenkian account '*The VPAS in Schools*' edited by Robinson (Alexander, 2017; Robinson, 1982; Robinson, 1989). This raises the question of why the VPAS are found to be important only when associated with CATS, with research focusing on the link between the student

participating in VPAS and the improvement the student makes in the CATS. This topic is investigated in the next chapter where I will be discussing the position of Foucault's *dispositif* within globalisation and neoliberalism.

This section has shown how the VPAS contribute to primary education through supporting peace, language and migration education and through their transferability to adept and aid the learning of a CATS. Having reviewed the literature on the contribution of the VPAS in primary schools, we can see that the VPAS are more than just aids for the CATS, and contribute to improving students' cognitive skills (ACARA, 2011; Bilhartz et al., 1999), social skills (Freeman et al., 2003), communication skills (Bigelow, 1997), improving attitudes towards bullying in schools (Merrell, 2005) and expanding the students' critical thinking abilities (Greene, 2001). The VPAS have also been found to contain a therapeutic element (Binzer et al., 2016), especially with children on the autism spectrum (Bieleninik et al., 2017; Broder-Fingert et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2008; Porter et al., 2017), and with children with special needs (Efland, 1990); Malley and Silverstein, 2014), while also supporting the development of the identity of the individual (Barrett, 2011; DeNora, 2000; MacDonald et al., 2009). I now move onto the third and last research question, that of understanding the perceptions of the different stakeholders in education, mainly students, parents and educators on education with particular reference to the VPAS.

2.4 What are the perceptions of students, educators and parents on VPAS within the primary curriculum?

Literature on the perception of students, educators and parents is very limited and mostly relates to what the VPAS contribute to education. This section reviews a range of sources in trying to understand the viewpoint of students, educators and parents.

2.4.1 Students' Perceptions

Burton, et al., (1999) conducted research over a two-year period in twelve different schools in New York, Connecticut, Virginia and South Carolina. The researchers identified that students who participated regularly in VPAS programmes within the schools where VPAS lessons were available did not only improve in mathematics, science and language, but were also able to express their feelings and ideas better than students with little access to the VPAS in schools. On this note, Rabkin & Redmond (2006) reported that by connecting the VPAS to the CATS, students found the work more stimulating and significant. Hopkins (2008) focused on what pupils consider to be the best classroom environment in the UK, noting that students perceived

that time spent on CATS overshadowed what students described as the "good subjects", and that art, drama and music were important because they taught the children "a lot" but were given too little time and importance at school (p.399).

In 2014, Robinson compiled a report led by the Cambridge Primary Review Trust about the voices and experiences of children at school, noting the general lack of research in this area which records student perceptions during their primary school years (Robinson, 2014). My research study is an attempt to fill the gap in understanding as identified by Robinson, by exploring the perceptions of children in Maltese primary schools as, to date, no research material was found on this subject. It is also an endeavour to promote equal schooling for all so that all students have access to all subjects at school.

2.4.2 Teachers' Perceptions

In the US Mason et al. (2004) examined teachers' perceptions regarding the VPAS in schools, in particular, how these impacted students with special needs with regards to academic, artistic skills, cognitive and social development. Over a two-year span the researchers led 34 focus groups with artists and teachers who had already worked with students with different cognitive and learning disabilities, emotional/behavioural problems, and sensory and physical issues, and found that teachers feel that art activities hold significant value for students with special needs because VPAS empower students in independent decision making, thus giving students the chance to become active members of society. This independent decision making was possible because children were given a choice as to what they could do during the VPAS lessons (Mason et al., 2004). This shows that students of all abilities may benefit from VPAS lessons, and if the curriculum restricts these lessons, then some children will be lost amid mainstream and CATS.

It has also been shown that teachers understand how the integration of VPAS into the curriculum benefits students both academically and socially and that VPAS teachers are fully aware of the limitations of time constraints on their subjects, while also feel helpless since their subjects are only valued as an aid or prop for CATS and not of value in and of themselves (May & Robinson, 2016). They wish to teach VPAS as stand-alone subjects, and not teach VPAS linked to a CATS. In New Zealand, research has shown that teachers feel the VPAS are being marginalised since greater prominence is given to literacy and numeracy to the detriment of visual VPAS (Smith et al., 2018).

2.4.3 Parents' Perceptions

With regards to parents' perceptions of VPAS at schools, the literature revolves around perceptions on school attractiveness, that is, what makes a school better than another and why parents should send their child to that school. I have decided to include this literature here because VPAS are part of what makes a school attractive for a parent. For example, Windsor-Liscombe (2014) made a case study of a public elementary school in British Columbia, which transitioned into an VPAS-integrated school. The new curriculum focusing on the VPAS attracted an increasing number of families to the school. This research showed that VPAS are valued for what they provide for the student, such as academic advancement, positive behaviour and socialization. Having earlier discussed and argued that VPAS should be valued for what they can do for the student, it hardly surprised me that in Windsor-Liscombe's study parents deem the VPAS important because they value the VPAS on the premise of what these subjects contribute to academic achievement.

On the same lines, Bamford and Wimmer (2012) created a compendium of different research regarding school attractiveness, pointing out that parents base their choice of school mainly upon the happiness and well-being of their child, a safe school environment and where VPAS and culture are taught. Bamford and Wimmer (2012) noted that parents wanted the inclusion of the VPAS in their school choice for two main reasons: for their child to have more job opportunities in the future, and that the VPAS may help their child find "meaning in their life" (p.13). Timmerberg and Schorn (2009) and Mackenzie (2010) also found that according to parents' perspectives, VPAS provide higher chances of the child finding employment later on in life. Boulton and Coldron (1991) found that parents in Sheffield choose a school on the basis that it makes their children happy, an element which was not completely focused on academic standards but incorporates the VPAS.

The studies I quoted in this section were written between ten to thirty years ago, showing that parents will always know what is best for their children. However, parents are also focused on the academic outcome of their child's grades, and perceive a school to be excellent according to the performance of the child (Milovanska-Farrington, 2022). This research question sought to examine the different perspectives of students, teachers and parents on VPAS, concluding that the VPAS are important for these different stakeholders in various ways. The articles reviewed here have shown that there is a research gap, both locally and globally, in understanding the perceptions of participants on the VPAS. It is why I have decided to conduct my research in Maltese primary schools, and research three different categories of participants,

those of the educators, students from Grade 5 primary level and their parents, thus making my research a stepping stone for future research.

2.5 Concluding Thoughts

By means of the different theories presented in this chapter, I assert that the knowledge holders decide what and whose knowledge is of most worth, and what the student should learn at school, which subjects enjoy a high status, and which subjects are being side-lined to accommodate the high-ranking status subjects. By means of the first research question, I acknowledge that through globalisation, states compete globally through high-stakes tests, creating a global arena for evaluation and accountability. Since these tests focus on narrow areas, the taught curriculum is narrowed to accommodate the majority of the teaching time on the CATS, while not allocating time to provide the broad and balanced curriculum that represents the wider spectrum of school education. VPASs are being side-lined because of the teaching-to-the-test phenomena. The holistic development of the child is potentially put at risk, since a broad and balanced curriculum is not being provided (Wasmuth & Nitecki, 2017).

With regards to the second research question, the literature mentioned here shows how the VPAS are versatile subjects in aiding the development of the child, not just academically, but also on a behavioural and emotional level. Articles reviewed in this chapter vary from how VPAS are used as therapy, how the VPAS work for peace education, how VPAS are incorporated in schools and aid other curriculum subjects, particularly literacy and numeracy. As a primary educator, I understand why the VPAS are implemented in the aid to teach CATS; yet, as a musician, I know what learning a VPA as a subject per se can do for the child. I am in no ways condemning the teaching of VPAS through cross-curricular subjects; what I advocate for is for the VPAS to have their own importance within the curriculum for the student to benefit from a broad and balanced education.

By means of this research, I have investigated the existing literature on the status of primary school subjects, discovering gaps within the sources present, such as the lack of studies on the perception of the participants VPAS at primary school level, as discussed in the third research question (see section 2.4). This chapter has also helped to inform my own research, while leading me to hypothesise that globalisation of education paved the way for the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon. As a result, non-tested subjects, such as the VPAS are being side-lined in order to release more time to accommodate tested subjects. I now move onto the next chapter where I present the theoretical framework of Foucault's *dispositif* (1980).

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

My experience as a teacher within a Maltese primary school has led me to hypothesise that the CATS enjoy a higher subject status than the VPAS. As a researcher, I have hypothesised that globalisation of education has led to the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon, resulting in non-tested subjects, such as the VPAS, being side-lined in order to release more time to accommodate the CATS (Abrams (2004); Au (2007); Klenowski and Wyatt-Smith (2012); Lipman (2011); Perrault (2000); Ravitch (2010); Reay and William (1999)). These authors have been discussed in detail in section 2.2.

This chapter is an examination of Foucault's *dispositif* and how it informs my subsequent analysis in Chapters 5 and 6. I argue how concepts such as neoliberalism and globalisation impact education in the Maltese context, and how through different theories different school subjects hold different status, and how the CATS have become legitimized as being of higher status than the VPAS.

3.2 Foucault's *dispositif*

For Foucault (1980), the word *dispositif* means the hybrid assemblage of different discursive forms, said and unsaid, written or unwritten forms of forces which are all linked to a problem (Dumez & Jeunemaitre, 2010). Rabinow (2003) notes how Foucault's *dispositif* "is always linked to certain coordinates of knowledge which issue from it but, to an equal degree, condition it" (p.53). Thus, following this theory, the *dispositif* is a network of forces linked to different kinds of knowledge. When Foucault was interviewed and asked what the meaning behind the concept of the *dispositif* was, Foucault replied:

> first, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. […] what I'm trying to identify in this apparatus is precisely the nature of the connection that can exist between these heterogeneous elements. (Foucault, 1980, pp.194–5)

The word *dispositif* has been translated to English as 'apparatus' (Agamben, 2009) but I prefer to use the original word *dispositif* as the word 'apparatus' represents a technical image denoting devices and tools and instruments whose "purpose is control and management" (Rabinow, 2003, p.50). Since this dissertation is about the perceptions of the individuals on Maltese

education, the interpretations of the perceptions vary widely and cannot be controlled through technical instruments. As Foucault said:

> a particular discourse can figure at one time as the programme of an institution, and at another it can function as a means of justifying or masking a practice which itself remains silent, or as a secondary re-interpretation of this practice, opening out for it a new field of rationality. In short, between these elements, whether discursive or nondiscursive there is a sort of interplay of shifts of position and modifications of functions which can also vary very widely. (Foucault,1980, pp.194–5)

Foucault argues that a discourse can vary widely according to its context and temporality. He noted how the *dispositif* "has its major function at a given historical moment" (Foucault,1980, pp.194–5). This temporality of the *dispositif* allowed me to work on the NMC and NCF using the Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analysis (CHEPDA) by Hyatt (2013) in Chapter 4 "…with its focus on synchronic and diachronic analyses" (p.46). Hyatt offers the researcher an analytical tool to reflect on discourse according to its historical moment, specifically a temporal discourse analysis of the synchronic context (discourse analysis according to this moment in time) and the diachronic applicability of the discourse (the analysis of the discourse through time).

3.2.1 The Episteme

In Foucault's words, the *dispositif* is "a case of the episteme" (1980, p.197). An episteme is the controlled formation of a discourse using different forms of knowledge and the distribution of these forms of knowledges (Foucault, 1998). The episteme is a theoretical procedure which allows discourses to operate; that which allows different themes and different objects to be articulated on one specific occasion and not uttered in a different temporal space (McNay, 1994). The episteme falls in between words and things, in between the discursive and non-discursive, in between the visible and the articulable, in between the experiences and the recognized (May, 1993).

The episteme helps with the understanding of the *dispositif* and of how the *dispositif* is formed according to the forces found within the historic temporal reality in which it is created. Temporality is an important concept in the *dispositif* as one needs to examine it in the time it is being investigated. I have chosen to use the temporality of the episteme within the *dispositif* in my research because I will be analysing the last two Maltese curricula and the perceptions of different participants on VPASs in primary schools in Chapters 5 and 6. The episteme refers to knowledge that is dominant and often unconscious in a particular epoch or period of time; it is about the said and the unsaid discourses. The episteme also refers to the taken for granted

assumptions of a particular period of time - in this research, I refer to the assumptions made about the purposes of education and its relationship with economic drivers. It is why I will discuss the impact of globalisation and neoliberalism on education and how these concepts assume to know what is best for education, and, as a result, how these impact the VPAS by means of the power relations of the hidden curriculum and how education assumes the role of a capital investment.

3.2.2 Discourse

Foucault uses the term 'discourse' to express a historical social system that constructs knowledge and meaning (Foucault, 1969). Foucault argues that discourse is material in its outcomes, producing what he calls "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (1969, p.49). A discourse may be formed using knowledge which morphs to generate an intentional meaning (Foucault, 1998) and the meaning depends on the connotations of the discourse, on how the discursive is articulated and associated parallel to what is being unsaid, i.e. the non-discursive, and according to the temporality, the field and space where the discourse was created (Foucault, 2000). It is not the words, written or unwritten which form the discourse, but the structures and rules that constitute the discourse which one should examine when analysing it, since the discourse goes beyond the written text (Ball, 2013).

As Ball explains, "discourse is not present in the object, but enables it to appear" (2013, p.19) since discourse is not the equivalent of a language, but a more in-depth evaluation of the said and unsaid, reflecting the episteme. Foucault succinctly elucidates on discourse as something covertly based which is "already said" and not merely "spoken" or "written, but a 'never said', an incorporeal discourse" (1974, p.25). Any word, when analysed, has an unimaginable possibility of meaning that cannot be controlled, because the understanding of the word, its interpretation and translation is subjective to the temporal space it was conceived in (Pløger, 2008).

Foucault notes how discourse is consequently influenced by different *dispositifs* so that whoever controls the *dispositif* controls which type of knowledge is dispersed, thus influencing the population according to the knowledge represented in the discourse, readings of texts and their interpretation (Pløger, 2008). The result may be analysed as discourse being knowledge, since discourse is not just the word, but the thoughts and processes behind the written or spoken word, so that the *dispositif* at play in creating the discourse holds the knowledge of the creator. Discourse is transformed according to the *dispositif* in action, portraying how there is not one

centre of power to implement and translate the discourse, but a network of power forces, i.e. different elements acting together to analyse the discourse, its translation and its recoding (Pløger, 2008). These forces will lead to the implementation of power within the state while other "major dominations are the hegemonic effects" (Foucault, 1980, p.94).

3.3 The Power Relations of the *Dispositif*

Power relations play a very important role in the *dispositif*. For Foucault (1980), power is not merely the analysis of who possesses the power, such as a sovereign, a class or an individual, but power is relational and operates through multiple points, mirroring the network of the *dispositif*. In fact, Foucault (1980) notes how the social field entails a "mobile field of force relations" (p.92). This means that between the different fields found in society, one may find different forces in action, and these forces may struggle against each other or with each other. These different forces will lead to the implementation of power within the state and other "major dominations are the hegemonic effects" (Foucault, 1980, p.94). This means that power relations have increasingly linked up and been brought under state control and not that power derives from the state (Foucault, 2000). Foucault noted that there are different points of power sources such as biopower and discipline.

3.3.1 Biopower

According to Foucault, biopower can be viewed as technologies and tactics of power which can be divided and utilised in two basic approaches: to manage and discipline individual bodies, and the monitoring and control of large populations of people (Foucault, 1990). Biopower achieves this discipline and control over the individual and the people by targeting the intervention of a population by means of the "processes of life" (Foucault, 1980, p.139), while the power of discipline works on the population within enclosed spaces such as schools, workshops, barracks and prisons in order to produce individuals which assimilate and conform to the rules set by the power holders to increase their economic worth, while being politically passive (Foucault, 1995). For biopower, individuals within a society are classified into different groups, each containing different behaviours, customs, law, environmental elements, etc. (Foucault, 2008).

Biopower, as described by Lazzarato (2006) has been described by as "the strategic coordination" of the different "power relations in order to extract" essential and excess power from the individual (p.12). Muhle understands biopower as a power which operates by mimicking the fundamental forces at work in life, and how there can be no life which is separate

from outside sources of power (Muhle, 2014). The powers involved through and by the *dispositif* point to how the state ensures the functioning and protection of private property and safeguards its demands and manufacturing (Foucault, 2008) by means of the different choices it presents to the individual and how it encourages the individual to make the right choices. Since biopower concentrates on the process of life and the life of the individual while never imposing a prescriptive list of what to do or not for the individual, then biopower may be managed by the execution of power over the behaviours of others, or the management of conduct (Foucault, 1982) which may be by means of governmentality.

3.3.2 Governmentality

Governmentality is a new form of governance of the state, a conceptual design of the modern liberal state taking effect upon the individual's human body and social behaviours through the many diverse branches of power (Foucault, 2009). The term 'governmentality' shifts away from the term 'government' in the sense that governmentality is the development of how knowledge is sought about certain mind-sets, abilities and organisation of administrations and governments (Dean, 1999). In governmentality, the implementation of power is "rationalised" by different means employed through "technologies of governance", used by the different authorities and organisations which make up a government (Ball, 2013, p.121).

According to Lemke (2001), governmentality makes two very distinctive points where the first point of governmentality deals with how power is "rationalised" within a specific field (p.191). By rationalising power, objects and borders are specified, concepts are described, and arguments are justified, thus enabling the government to appear to address a problem and be in a position to handle or solve the problem. The second point deals with structuring interventions specifically to solve or handle the problem. Governance is not to say 'no' legitimately to an individual, but to get the individual to accept reality as deemed by the state and say 'yes' to this reality by conforming to what the state pronounces as real, and then acting correspondingly. Power thus does not derive from the state or one point per se, but rather, power works through the numerous links networked together within a social field. This is what ultimately encompasses the *dispositif*, the strategic envelope in which the power relations play out. A population is then made governable by the restructuring of the actions of others through biopower (Foucault, 2000).

For Foucault, governmentality is the art of governing individuals by means of distinctive types of rules (Foucault, 2009). Governmentality does not only refer to the managing of different

states, but also to how individuals might be directed (Foucault, 2009). I would like to use the metaphor of the conductor and the orchestra, were the conductor represents the state, and conducts the outcome of the music played by the musicians, who represent the citizens. The state has the power to 'conduct' over the 'conduct' of others' using premeditated means; this is referred to as the "conduct of conduct" (Foucault, 1982, pp.220-221). In this sense, to govern is to structure the conduct and behaviour of others within a particular field (Foucault, 1994): hence the conductor structuring the musical outcome of the musicians. This is the reason for opting to use Foucault's *dispositif* as the major theoretical framework in this thesis. I understand Foucault's governmentality shows how the "conduct of conduct" employs selected discourses and mentalities and introduces them to the individual as the new order. This may be a reason why Foucault analysed the link between governmentality and neoliberalism (Lemke, 2001) and why I have now chosen to elaborate more on neoliberalism and the *dispositif*.

3.4.2.1 Foucault and Neoliberalism Neoliberalism has transformed the state's administration previously accountable for the well-being of the individual into a state which passes on the state's power to global corporations. These global corporations have the power to install apparatuses and reconfigure the individual as entrepreneurs responsible for their own life (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Neoliberalism may be seen as a form of governmentality (Kalin, 2018), because neoliberalism as a political project endeavours to create a social reality that it suggests already exists, not just as ideological rhetoric or as a political-economic reality (Lemke, 2001). It is why Foucault's hypotheses on neo-liberal governmentality highlighted how inappropriate the strict separation between an economic base and a political-legal framework is (Lemke, 2001). It is a contradiction because you cannot have a state with an economic agenda without a political agenda, mainly because the politics involved in creating an agenda are produced by the people creating the economic framework (Lemke, 2001).

Schools have been reconfiguring the pupil into a product deemed entrepreneurial by the neoliberal state (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Research shows that it was through schools that the new forms of governmentality were first established, when people with financial interests recognised a "need to make subjects more governable" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p.250). This vested financial interest promoted a new regime: what people learnt and knew was chosen according to individuals with these financial interests. I now refer to Apple's (1990) theory on "whose knowledge is of most worth" (p.vii).

Asking: "Whose knowledge is of most worth?" (Apple, 1990, p.vii), Apple implies that the person/s controlling the knowledge and its dispersion decide/s and define/s what should be taught, arguing that the selection and organisation of knowledge in the school curriculum is an ideological process, one which serves the interests of specific classes and social groups (Apple, 1990). Apple's politics of knowledge perspective acknowledges Broudy's (1981) position in that the market tells us what is most important for the school curriculum, or, whose knowledge is of most worth. Both Apple's and Broudy's comments recognise how education is controlled by the neoliberal market as discussed in section 2.2.1.

Through the curriculum, negotiations take place on assembling meanings between stakeholders within the educational sector. Stakeholders include students, teachers, parents, politicians, academic institutions and educational bureaucrats (Karseth & Sivesind, 2010). These negotiations involve a strategic selection of knowledge and what is to be taught, thus creating the curriculum's underlying values providing "the framework within which national testing can function" (Apple, 1996, p.32). There are different power forces negotiating what and whose knowledge is of most worth, intertwined and networked together in an assemblage of power within a society. This assemblage of power links different theories and historical points in time, and it is difficult to form a simple linear model to explain the different forces of power since the relationship is too complex. It is why I have chosen to draw on Foucault's concept of the *dispositif*.

 I now understand why Apple chose the term 'whose' and not the term 'what'. Spencer had asked the question, 'what knowledge is of most worth?' back in the 1860s. Even though Spencer's question was put centuries ago, I believe that it is still relevant to this thesis, with my argument revolving around my understanding that during the times of Spencer, the curriculum was still a concept which scholars were attempting to build. However, ever since the emergence of neoliberalism around the 1970s, I agree with Apple in his choice of the term 'whose' knowledge, and not 'what' knowledge is of most worth. This is because I relate to how educational knowledge and policy making nowadays reflect the economic ambitions of the state. Consequently, chosen knowledge and policy making is dominated by the priorities of the state.

One can conclude that using Foucault's *dispositif*, neoliberalism was and is an important catalyst in understanding why different subjects enjoy different status in primary school. Neoliberal agendas drive whose and how knowledge should be taught in schools, paving the way forward for the new regime, as proposed through governance. Thus, through neoliberal

governance, a paradox develops where individuals think they are free, when in reality they are adopting the nudges of power, controlling and regulating themselves to follow the norms issued by the state (Foucault, 1991). For Foucault (2008), governing a population involves coercing individuals to say yes, by limiting what the individual desires and what the individual wants to achieve in order for their personal desire to reflect the desire of the state. This is because by means of governmentality, power is exerted over the administration, control and regulation of the individual within a population (Christie & Sidhu, 2006).

Neoliberalism promotes a false sense of freedom of the individual by endorsing the competitive and entrepreneurial behaviour of economic-minded individuals, instead of giving the individual the freedom to choose by regulating and limiting the action of the government's actions (Lemke, 2001). By means of neoliberalism, the individual covets their freedom and as a result welcomes the rise of competitiveness between individuals and companies. This freedom is, as Davies and Bansel aptly wrote, "an economics shaped by what the state desires, demands and enables" (2007, p.250). It is my opinion that this competitiveness triggers the division of school subjects into the CATS versus the VPAS dichotomy through competition between schools to participate in high-stakes tests while the prestige of high marks and a high-ranking position bring with them.

3.4.2.2 Power and the Curriculum My argument now develops into how the curriculum becomes a form of governance; a discourse designed by people controlling the *dispositif* of education. The curriculum is used as a tool to influence the students to become citizens in line with the criteria demanded by the state (Todd, 2001). In fact, Pløger (2008) noted that whoever controls the *dispositif* controls which type of knowledge is dispersed, thus influencing the population according to the knowledge represented in the curriculum. This follows Foucault's thoughts on the "conduct of conduct" (1982). According to Todd, the curriculum is also the template students use to create "meaning for themselves" (2001, p.446). Through biopower, the curriculum is used to teach, discipline and influence the individual to behave in a certain way, to make choices, and to eventually form their identity. Therefore, if through the curriculum the student is able to learn about oneself, their identity and understand who they are, it is no wonder that the curriculum is used to mould the student from a very young age.

I would now like to point out a relation between curriculum and Foucault's perspective on the constitution of the subject because I aim to link it to the construction of the curriculum through

biopower. The constitution of the subject refers to the configuration of different possible actions, methods and historical events by which the subject is taught and influenced to develop into the individual they are to become. Foucault calls this "*assujettissement*", usually translated as subjectification, the creation of process that "the self is neither knowledge nor power" but a process of individuation – where a thing is seen as different from other things – of order and discipline (Ball, 2013, p.126). In this sense, the individual forms part of the network within and through a *dispositif* and becomes an individual by means of the forces in play, through and within, the *dispositif*. There is no self or individual which is already formed before the *dispositif* through the influence of the curriculum, thus concluding that ontologically, there is no individual or self which precedes the different power relations (Ball, 2013). I am now able to relate how through my first research question, where I asked about what the relationship between global economic markets and the primary school curriculum is, and how the VPAS are being affected, I state that through biopower, the global economic market has influenced and affected the constitution of the subject by means of Foucault's *dispositif* (1980). Owing to the control of biopower and the constitution of the subjects, policy makers construct a curriculum which is configured and chosen within a historical period of time in order to meet the exigency of the state during a particular historical phase.

Apple (1996) maintained that a national curriculum is by no means a collection of neutral knowledge set as classroom texts of a state but is part of a discriminatory practise performed by powerful groups, which have their own values and foresight of what knowledge should be included in the school curriculum. What is included and excluded within a curriculum is a selection of knowledge based on certain arguments over what knowledge should be represented and legitimised by that curriculum (Apple, 1993).

What students and educators attempt to learn and teach are what is chosen by curricula makers, becoming, as Davies and Bansel aptly described as, "the new common sense" (2007, p.250). Through global economics, institutional changes occur, depriving students and workers their previous freedom. This "new common sense" does not allow freedom of choice for the individual to choose and learn a subject at school, but rather have specific subjects imposed. There is no freedom here if a curriculum has already been prescribed by policy makers. There is no freedom if a school must implement that curriculum and have students participate in high-stakes tests. There is no freedom if teachers end up teaching-to-the-test because of the high-stakes tests. There is no freedom for students to learn only the CATS at the expense of the VPAS.

I now refer to two curriculum perspectives: the Technical and the Postmodern, because I believe these two curricula perspectives are linked together to create the ripe circumstances for the enactment of the present curriculum perspective. According to the Technical paradigm, educational experts and curriculum specialists create a document which clearly outlines educational aims and objectives. Tyler (1949) developed a technical handbook for the production of the Technical curriculum, which focuses on technical accountability, making the curriculum a successful tool to achieve educational aims, thus politically useful, whilst sacrificing attention on the rationale of the curriculum and teaching and learning processes. In the Technical perspective, the curriculum is a form of applied psychology that uses instruction to change the individual, and thus resonates with how the curriculum may be used as a form of governmentality. The postmodern perspective shows how society is political, multifaceted and volatile and that social goals cannot be achieved without power struggles. Doll (1993) criticises the curriculum development based on setting goals which are implemented and evaluated within a closed system. With the Postmodern perspective, power struggles are found everywhere. As a conclusion to my analyses, I believe that the present curriculum can be understood as an amalgamation of both the Technical and the Postmodern perspectives, where the network of forces interlinked together formed by the *dispositif* merge into the creation of a new curriculum perspective, the Postmodern-Technical perspective.

By finding a correlation between the *dispostif* and the curriculum, one may note that whoever controls the power of production of policies and curricula holds the power of transforming young students into the adults the power holders desire them to be. The dispersion of knowledge by means of the curriculum can be seen as a means of subjectification, or "assujettissement" of a population. This knowledge dispersion is also the result of how education has been influenced globally. Global economy has widely impacted many countries geographically through the World Bank and the IMF (Davies & Bansel, 2007). This global move brought forward a wave in globalisation, and with it, neoliberalism (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Therefore, in response to the first research question, globalisation and neoliberalism are part of the *dispositif* of governance of power in education, influencing the curriculum to mould students into the future 'state' individual, i.e. individuals designed by the state and for the state.

3.4.2.3 Foucault's Meaning of 'Identity' For Foucault (1982), identity revolves around the manifestations of the different sources of power present in one's life at different points in time which surround, affect and mould the individual. Ball (2013) describes how for Foucault, there is no identity before the different power relations surrounding the individual.

Since Foucault (1982) has always been invested in understanding what makes the individual a subject, it is no wonder that his writings develop to understand the notion of identity and how the self is created and what impacts the self into creating the individual's subjectivity. Foucault notes how the individual is governed by the different forces of power which act upon and through the individual's subjectivity, thus changing the individual's subjectivity by objectifying the individual (Foucault, 1982). In this case, identity is seen not through the eyes of the individual per se, but according to how the self is subjectified and objectified by the different sources of power revolving around the individual.

For Foucault (1982), identity is what was done to the self by means of the forces of power at play. This echoes Freire's (1972) 'banking concept' in education. Through the 'banking concept' students are 'made'; their identity is subjected according to the power relations by means of the curriculum, by means of 'what' and 'whose' knowledge is of most worth. If the identity of the individual is shaped by the teachings one receives through their life, and the identity of the individual is not theirs to uphold but rather through policy makers who create the curriculum and who decide what is being taught, then the result is truly the renaming of the school into a factory of mass produced 'individuals' who conform to what the state deems fit. This would limit the understanding of one's own identity, since the curriculum being taught is being limited to the CATS or tested subjects.

As seen in section 2.3, the VPAS provide numerous positive outcomes for the student to truly be the individual that the narrowed down curriculum refuses. Eliminating the VPAS may be the elimination of the self. With the power relations found in education, i.e., the narrowing of the curriculum and the reduction of VPAS lessons in primary education, the student lacks a broad and balanced curriculum, and is no longer able to create and visualise their own self, but follows the teaching of specified subjects and is moulded into the self/identity through the power relations of the state based upon the selection of the curriculum. Therefore, in relation to the third research question, the VPAS do contribute to a sense of identity in the student, mainly because the VPAS allows the student to express themself and explore their creativity and their limitations.

      3.4.2.4 Hidden Curriculum. Deleuze (1992) describes how for Foucault, the *dispositif* is an energy which distributes the discursive and non-discursive elements to the different theories found within the network of the same *dispositif*. For example, within education, there is the hidden curriculum which is not seen (non-discursive) but is still there, and the network

of power relations within the *dispositif* in education provides the necessary momentum for the theory (of hidden curriculum) to be dispersed throughout the other joints within the *dispositif*. In this way, the *dispositif* is both a force of different joints and a force of subjectification (Pløger, 2008).

What biopower does is track the individual to bestow upon them a life with a predetermined identity (Foucault, 1980). Thus, the student may have already been predisposed to function in a particular manner by means of a predetermined identity. This identity will then allocate the individual into prearranged groups. If VPASs aid in addressing the understanding of identity of the individual and communicating through different artistic means (Eisner, 2002), then the VPAS may be seen as moving in the opposite direction of biopower. My argument here is that since the VPAS are expressions of the self, they may represent the individual through what and how they create. While on the other hand, if the individual is predetermined by biopower, then the VPAS move against the state's predisposition and subjectification of the individual. The governing power may feel that the VPAS are eroding the careful picture of the predisposed identity of the individual as influenced by the state as designed by biopower.

If the hidden curriculum is not a written discourse, but an implied one, with regards to the VPASs at primary schools, one may conclude that because of the lack of time and because of the narrowing of the curriculum and the teaching-to-the-test phenomena, the VPAS are being narrowed to accommodate the tested subjects, as previously discussed. The implied meaning would be that the priority should be given to the tested subjects. Section 2.2.7 discusses the time allocation for Maltese primary school subjects. The pie chart clearly shows that the Visual & Performing VPAS time allocation is 5%, the minimum time allocation for subjects. The hidden curriculum may also be linked to the lack of a broad and balanced curriculum, to 'cultural capital' and as to why the VPASs do not enjoy a high status.

3.4.2.5 The VPAS as a Utilitarian Commodity.

The majority of the articles reviewed in Chapter 2 emphasise what the VPAS can do for other subjects and not what the VPAS can do for the student. The articles also showed how the VPAS are used as 'learning-through' subjects in order to accommodate the CATS. By means of the *dispositif*, I am able to link different theories in order to answer the first research question.

The 'learning-through' outcome is proof that the curriculum is constructed and the subjects are configured and chosen in order to meet the requirements of the state. As such, the curriculum becomes a utilitarian commodity to influence the student according to the criteria and demands

of the state (Todd, 2001). The constructed curriculum and configured subjects have placed the VPAS in service of the CATS. Using the VPAS to service CATS gives a distorted dimension to the VPAS (Fleming, 2021). I believe that the VPAS (music, art and drama subjects) are being used, or exploited, in order to favour the CATS. Overgeneralising the VPAS as a means to problem-solving, aiding language learning, critical thinking, intercultural and peace education may be counter-productive to the status of the VPAS (Fleming, 2021). As a primary teacher I understand the importance of students learning all of the above, but as a VPAS teacher I encourage students to learn to love music and drama for the subjects' sake. If students learn that VPAS are there only to help them in CATS subjects, these students learn not to value the VPAS per se, but value what the VPAS can do for the CATS. This mentality perpetuates the perception that VPAS do not enjoy a high status in Maltese primary education.

Fleming pointed out that the question of whether the VPAS in service of CATS "run the risk of distorting the art form itself" (Fleming, 2021, p.5) is a question of interest only to researchers and teachers of the VPAS. My positionality as a VPAS teacher places me in a position to question this, where I find myself in total agreement with Fleming. A language teacher will not feel the need to ask whether a VPAS is being distorted in order to service a CATS. The inclusion of VPAS in CATS, within an inter-curricular activity, may weaken the status of the VPAS since it is the CATS which is benefitting.

When VPAS are used to service CATS, their innate form is diminished, because the VPAS are used in a limited form. By limiting the VPAS, one is also limiting the status of the subject. however, I believe that this limitation is the fruit of policy makers and their acceptance of the VPAS as CATS service providers. If the VPAS are helping CATS because they aid academic improvement, educators are then justifying the teaching of the VPAS for their utilitarian value, for their functionality and service towards the CATS. This, however, may be regarded as a double-edged sword. According to research, even though the VPAS aid the CATS, teaching the VPAS should be justifiable in and of itself, thus, the VPAS should be taught at school using the 'learning in' outcome.

Having reviewed literature and studied the latest two Maltese curriculum, the National Minimum Curriculum (MEE, 1999) and the National Minimum Curriculum (MEE, 2012), I have observed how the teaching of the VPAS in Maltese education is influenced by neoliberalism and the global economic market, thus linking my research to the first research question. This is because neoliberalism guides market values into all aspects of life, including

education while encouraging competition. It is this competitiveness which I believe is the root to how and why the VPAS are being used as subservient subjects and utilised by the CATS. The theories mentioned in this section are only part of the *dispositif* under analysis in this chapter. To recap, I explained how the construction of a curriculum by means of biopower and the configuration of subjects are chosen according to the demands of the state. These then pave the way to a curriculum which is weaponised to mould the student from a very young age according to what the state necessitates. It is thus the reason why I now move onto explaining other theories which also form part of the *dispositif*, on how education is seen as a capital investment, how it affects the child, ultimately leading to the objectification of the child.

3.4 Education: A Capital Investment

Through governmentality, one of the purposes of the curriculum is to give the student a set of tools in order to be able to find a job later in life. Education is seen as a business service (Ball, 2010), where the school is selected upon the grounds of what the school can offer. Consequently, education management teams become business executives whose objective is to meet the industry's requirements, where teachers are the manufacturers, while students and parents are the consumers (Marginson, 1997). Nagasawa et al. (2014) argue that high quality education programmes are considered an investment in human capital which lead to numerous societal benefits and sound economic returns portrayed as a more productive workforce.

Regarding education as capital investment, the student is seen as a means to a monetary end for the state's benefit. In theory, the government's education works at enhancing learners' skills, flexibility and progress while reducing unemployment, ultimately providing for the well-being of individuals and society. As Coffield (1999) and Field (2000) have noted, the intention of economy-driven education policies is to saddle the individual with financial responsibility and remove this burden from the state, and to expect individuals to act for themselves, by themselves. This relates to Foucault's self-governance and how, by means of a neoliberal political approach through the globalisation of education, as I have discussed in the first research question, the economic burden moves away from the state and onto the individual. In this case, the education sector has been consigned to the role of business and industry, where education is no longer considered to be a strategy to promote human development and self-enrichment but one that accommodates the state.

3.4.1 Schools as Factory Settings

Education has become an industrial endeavour motivated by profit (Nussbaum, 2010), where students are 'produced' in the school-factory-setting, examinations are a requirement, schools are held accountable, performativity is measured, all in the name of progress and economic growth. I now follow with Foucault's theory of the *dispositif*, and how all the theories in this chapter have impacted education and the different subject status of primary school subjects. I will note here that through the neoliberal form of government, the individual is expected to be autonomous and able to capitalise on its own existence by means of economic investments (Davies & Bansel, 2007).

Au regarded high-stakes test results as the products of the factory (Au, 2007). On this note, educators, learners and schools, together with curricula, pedagogies, performance, procedures, initiatives and data are subjects and objects on which the state focuses its interest in order to increase standards (Perryman et al., 2011). This may be seen through the lens of the factory-setting where quality control occurs in order to make sure the quality of the product is up to standard.

The choice and creation of the different curricula reflects the image of schools as factory settings, where students are taught a specific mode of knowledge in order to be influenced into the individual the state desires. This reflects Freire's (1972) banking concept, and how through the curricula, knowledge is being deposited into the student's mind. If a set of knowledge is designed to follow a prerequisite design, then the outcome would be the manufactured student moulded into the preformed design. The curriculum is seen as a governance technique again. The different theories presented so far keep on being repeated, showing how the *dispositif* is turned into a knowledge-based practice, becoming an apparatus which can be developed into a regulatory device via schools.

The field of education has arguably turned into a factory setting, where the curricula are the blueprints which direct and influence the teaching of a set of skills to children to accommodate the future workforce of the state. On this line, Hunkins (1991) explains how schools were designed "along production lines to produce ready, willing, and skilled workers for placement in jobs" (p.236). Schools have taken the role of sites of production, where student identities are formed (Apple, 1996; Wexler, 1992). Through a neoliberal governmentality approach, human intellectual capital is analysed economically, where the student and the teacher are converted into "enterprises" (Foucault, 2010, p.173). The child has become objectified as a means to an

end, where, at school, the student is produced in order to grow up into an adult to satisfy the needs of the government. Following Foucault's notion that the student is seen as part of an economical organization, Penn noted how investing in early childhood education in developing countries aids these countries by empowering them in their development and competitiveness within the global market (2010). Penn also notes how "The World Bank has even sponsored the development of an early child development calculator which enables policy makers to compute the likely long-term economic benefits of such investment in their country" (Penn, 2010, p.49). As such, the child is seen as a monetary number, calculated by policy makers, according to what the child's continuing investment to the state will be. Since the child is seen as a profit for the state, I now move onto explaining how human capital theory (HCT) works through education for the state.

3.4.2. Human Capital

HCT suggests that education increases the productivity and earnings of individuals, portraying education as a medium to determine the productivity of labour, while productivity drives income (Marginson, 2017). HCT is a comprehensive theoretical approach developed in the 1950s (Mincer, 1958; Schultz, 1959; Schultz, 1961). HCT indicates that humans within a given society advance economically by capitalizing on the people through education, which is considered as the leading human capital venture (Sweetland, 1996). The OECD (2001) has defined human capital as the constructive wealth expressed through work, knowledge and abilities.

Human capital accepts that individuals have skills and capabilities that can be decoded into value, i.e. the worth of the individual is understood as what the individual can do and produce. For Becker (1962) capital is a mechanism which yields income and other valuable productions over an extended time span. Becker and Schultz argue that individuals need to be invested in because they are productive (Becker, 1962; Garibaldi, 2006; Schultz, 1961). Individuals need to be invested in because through their abilities, knowledge, geographical position and health, they can produce a profit. Education, by means of a neoliberal approach becomes an investment which is not only crucial for individuals, but also the key to the economic growth of a country. As per research question four, one may understand this as the reason why there is a narrowing of the curriculum to cater for CATS such as mathematics and the languages. Through the chosen knowledge of the curriculum, the curriculum is designed for the state to invest in the student for future profit.

The state seeks to invest in education from a very young age to have the time to mould the student as they deem fit, through biopower. It will then reap the ultimate return of the investment, that is, monetary gain. This can be paraphrased using Foucault's biopower lens in that the individual is seen through the lens of HCT, where instead of recognising the person, HCT recognises the active potential of the individual, thus objectified into a being which yields profit.

3.4.3 The Objectification of the Child

Schools are understood to perform as bureaucratic machines, where the students emerge as productive workers (Bacon, 2015). Au notes how standardised testing turns students into commodities where education systems are interpreted to be systems of commerce functioning along the *raison d'être* of capitalist production (Au, 2011). Apple (1982) argues that schools do not see education as a means of growth for the individual's identity, but as a means of "primary modes of production of cultural commodities needed by a corporate society" where identities are influenced by the state (p.45). Children are reduced to statistics or targets, calculated as cost and benefits, or as bodies for "market transactions" (Moss, 2014, p.67). As previously discussed in this section, children are also seen as monetary numbers, calculated by policy makers (Penn, 2010). Thus, the student is seen as an individual whose identity is prone to be changed and shaped through the teaching set by policy makers when developing a curriculum.

Through reviewing different literature for the first research question, I have noted how globalisation is influencing the curriculum, and how through the curriculum, the identity of the child is changed into what the state deems as appropriate. The narrowing of the curriculum focuses the teachings of primary levels on CATS and on specific skills. This is because, as Bowles & Gintis (1976) have noted, schools are training young people for their future economic and professional positions, seeing students as productive subjects. Their identity is shaped through the various powers of the *dispositif* in order for the students to be subservient through their own objectification and capitalisation. The student is configured into a subject, into what Foucault calls the "assujettissement" (Ball, 2013, p.126) as discussed in 2.2.3.b.ii. The student is objectified, subjectified, and is required to assimilate the necessary skills, abilities and knowledge needed to reinforce their productivity (Moss, 2014). The student is also objectified as an end product through the neoliberal agenda, which uses education to condition and shape the student into what is needed for the state, a product designed by the global market in favour of economic accumulation (Kumar and Hill, 2008). Thus, in this scenario, it is my stance that

education caters for the economy, and that the student is seen for what they can produce and thus objectified.

3.4.4 The "Capital-Abilities-Machine"

Students are influenced in schools to perform for the state, into what Foucault (2010) calls "abilities-machines" (p.229). The role of the "abilities-machine" is to perform and generate what are considered to be economic gains for the state. Similar to Foucault's "abilities-machine", Bennett (2010) notes how the individual is seen through the lens of what they can produce, as "capital-abilities" by which an income stream is produced (p.114). I agree with both Bennett's (2010) and Foucault's (2010) theories, that the child loses their individuality and humanity in order to satisfy the state, but I believe that their terms are missing a crucial point.

I have merged both authors' terms into one, into the 'capital-abilities-machine' as I feel that this term defines how the state sees the child: an individual who is reconfigured and subjected in a school-as-factory-setting from being an individual to becoming a machine, able to produce capital by means of their own abilities. The student is seen as a 'capital-abilities-machine', and the way the state manages this machine is through the curriculum. Hence, using a neoliberal lens, the student is seen as a product responsible for their own actions and wellbeing, and the wellbeing of others, including the wellbeing of the state. This presents the transformation of the individual into an independent individual who is able to capitalise on oneself (Davies & Bansel, 2007).

3.5 The Episteme in Education

In section 3.3.1, I discussed what the episteme is, how the episteme is ephemeral and exists in between the words of a discourse and the implementation of the discourse, where the episteme is the in-between. What is written on paper does not necessarily mean it is. The episteme helps with the understanding of the *dispositif* and of how the *dispositif* is formed according to the forces found within the historic temporal reality in which it is created. The reason why I am writing this now is because I could not have explained the episteme in the *dispositif* in this research without prior explaining and discussing the different theories separately and by linking them together. This chapter analysed Foucault's (1980) *dispositif* and how the different theories of biopower, governmentality, neoliberalism, and other theories mentioned here have an effect on why certain subjects enjoy a higher status than others.

Foucault noted how the episteme is the controlled formation and equally controlled distribution of a discourse (Foucault, 1998). Thus one can understand the curriculum as being a chosen

discourse, whose knowledge has been carefully controlled and chosen by policy makers and the state. I also argue that one can also understand that through governmentality, the state implements its power into what and whose knowledge is of most worth, thus choosing which knowledge should be taught at schools. I can now explain and also assert that it is through the neoliberal influence and the effect of globalisation in education that high-stakes testing as a trend has been amplified and why schools increased their participation in these tests. I understand and I justify this episteme as the reason behind the reason why different subjects enjoy different status in primary schools.

Unfortunately, this also augments the competition between schools and nations for the highest status available where schools with children who obtained the highest marks rank high on the high-stakes tests lists. Neoliberalisation calls for the "suppression of oppositional critical thought and much autonomous thought of education" within national states (Kumar and Hill, 2008, p.4). Kumar and Hill explain that by suppressing, or, as I explained above, by choosing which knowledge is appropriate to teach in schools according to the neoliberal agenda, the neoliberal state is thus removing all critical thought from the student and providing the student with what the neoliberal state designs.

This suppression of autonomy and critical thought may be juxtaposed on what Freire calls 'the banking concept' (1972), as explained previously in section 3.3 when discussing governmentality and identity. If through the banking concept the teacher deposits a set of chosen information onto the student, then that deposited chosen information is what the state and the policy makers have sought to choose to include in the curriculum. What is left out of the curriculum is thus unimportant or irrelevant. There is a governance of power in what knowledge is chosen. The student grows into an adult according to what knowledge has been deposited onto them as a student. It is my observation that what is being deposited onto the student as a child is what knowledge the adult will carry with them throughout their lives; it is the knowledge that the adult will then deposit onto future generations; it is the objectification of the child, and the ultimate creation by the state of the capital-abilities-machine.

The above mentioned suppression of autonomy is the result of the increased "subordination of education… and its commodification" (Hill and Kumar, 2008, p.7). This is because education has become the subservient of the economic market and is influenced by the neoliberal agenda. As a result, education is seen as a commodification where students are produced in schools as

factory settings and the child mass produced as a product designed by the deposited chosen knowledge of the state rendering education utilitarian.

3.6 The 'Learning Through' and 'Learning In' Dichotomy In Relation to Foucault's *Dispositif*

In this chapter, I have presented and reviewed different theories which led to a formation of a *dispositif*, of the different power relations in education. The creation of and the result of the *dispositif* as a way to explain the governance of power in education show that there is not just one way of linking these different theories together, since all these theories are amalgamated, connected and juxtaposed with and onto one another in numerous ways. This is the network forming the *dispositif*, a network which portrays the multilevel of a *dispositif* at play found in the power relations within the education sector. The *dispositif* is used to disperse the power from policy and curricula makers into the classrooms through governmentality and biopower.

Unfortunately, following all of these theories, I now argue that education's focal point is on the student as a subjectified and classified productive subject. It is unsurprising therefore, that if the achievement of high marks in high-stakes tests in CATS is the ultimate goal for primary education, then non-CATS are being sidelined to increase the teaching time devoted to tested subjects. My argument here is that education should be for all children with all abilities, and that all subjects should be taught at school equally. The narrowing of the curriculum promotes the CATS, side-lines the VPASs, and as a result, excludes those students who do well in the VPAS. The narrowing of the curriculum may present a case for inequality. When teaching a broad and balanced curriculum, the educator would ensure that all students are being given the necessary opportunities to learn. But if the educator focuses on the CATS, students who do not do well in these subjects are sidelined in favour of the students who achieve high results in the CATS tests. Again, the student is seen as an object which can produce high results and seen only for what they can do. This may show how the neoliberal agenda is trading away human rights in favour of the global market and the economy (Devidal, 2008).

In Chapter 2 I discussed how the teaching of the VPAS has changed into using the subjects to aid the CATS. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Fleming noted how the VPAS have been distorted as sole visual and artistic subjects into subjects which service the non-art subjects (2021). It is why it is important to distinguish between the 'learning through' and the 'learning in' previously mentioned in Chapter 2. Fairclough suggests that a global market becomes a new order, or as seen in the previous chapter, a new regime, through a government's discourse

(2003). The neoliberal discourse is thus used to form different relations between the government, the individual and society (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Therefore, neoliberal discourses impact the individuals being governed by the state by means of the discourses.

The shift of a government to that of a neoliberal one reconfigures the relations between the government, the individual and society. Thus, the private sector becomes the central figure of a government's economic vision, and schools are reconstituted as part of the market. Schools and education become part of the market, are reconfigured as a product, and competition and accountability measures are implemented (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Even high-stakes tests are accountability measures, with students participating in high-stakes tests and schools competing against each other for a high rank within the global education system. This accountability may be seen as the influence of biopower and governmentality, and how the state uses tests in order to affect its control over the citizens.

As a result, in this section I have concluded that through globalisation and the impact of a neoliberal agenda, education is a medium used by the global market to mould students into what the state needs. Even if my hypothesis in Chapter 2 discussed how globalisation paved the way to the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon, I now add that it was the execution of the neoliberal market which changed education, and led to the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon.

The research and theories which have led up to this point consider how the chosen knowledge is what is being taught at schools is that which is chosen by the global market and the state. I now refer to the NCF's proposed timetable for 'Learning Areas Distribution Junior Years' previously discussed in Chapter 1 (see Figure 1, section 1.3). This timetable shows the allotted time for each subject divided as follows: 30% for languages, 15% each for mathematics and sciences, 5% for PE and another 5% for the VPAS besides other subjects (MEE, 2012, p. 17). I would like to point out that religious and ethics education and health and PE are individual subjects which are both allocated 5% of time within the timetable. However, the VPAS include drama, art and music, so the 5% is then divided between these three subjects. Figure 1 showed that in primary schools, languages (Maltese and English), mathematics and science enjoy the largest percentage of allotted teaching time (15% each), clearly indicating how the CATS are allocated a higher number of hours when compared to VPAS. This suggests that some subjects do enjoy a higher status compared to others. In relation to Foucault's *dispositif* and the creation of the episteme, what is written with regards to the percentage of time allocated for primary

school subjects in Maltese primary schools is an indication of what chosen knowledge is of most worth.

What is being said and unsaid with regards to the NCF timetable in relation with Foucault's' episteme (1998) is that the CATS enjoy a higher percentage of allocated time at school, while the VPAS enjoy the least. This implies a curriculum hierarchy, where the CATS enjoy a high status, as opposed to the low status of the VPAS. CATS have more teaching time than non-CATS subjects because these (CATS) subjects are what students need because of the high-stakes tests. It is my conclusion that because there are no high-stakes tests in non-CATS subjects (and here I am not referring to the VPAS only), these non-tested subjects are judged as non-important. I note that there is an implied message in the fact that only mathematics, science, and the languages are being tested; the implication is that these subjects are considered to be more important that the rest of the subjects taught at primary school level, and that only the tested subjects are important for the global market and the neoliberal agenda, reinforcing Devidal's assertion that the role of education is to assist international trade and the market (Devidal, 2008). Businesses in the global market strive for an education which is subordinate to the needs of business and to the economic necessities of a state (Hill and Kumar, 2008). Through Foucault's *dispositif*, the episteme, that is, the said and the unsaid, show how the CATS are considered as high status subjects as opposed to the VPAS.

3.7 Concluding Thoughts on the Theoretical Framework Framing this Thesis

Foucault's *dispositif* (1980) has proven to be the ideal theoretical framework for my reseach. This is because it encompasses the different theories of globalisation, governmentality, neoliberalism, biopower and the objectification of the child. All of these theories and the literature I discussed in the previous chapter reveal a chain reaction of these theories, all amalgamated together in a web of different theories strewn together, to ultimately result in different subjects status, curriculum hierarchy, and how the VPAS are being perceived in schools.

The importance of CATS in schools is thus, in conclusion, the result of the influence of the global market and the neoliberal agenda on education. A question which arose from this thinking was why the VPAS were excluded from these tests (as are the other non-CATS subjects). However, this thesis seeks to understand the status of the VPAS in primary schools, and why I chose to focus on VPAS vis-à-vis CATS. In Chapter 2 I noted how Au deemed high-stakes tests as the outcomes of the products of the factory (Au, 2007). This statement helped

me understand through the different theories in this chapter, using Foucault's *dispositif*, how school educate students for the product they become, through the schools as factory settings. The CATS subjects and high-stakes tests are a means for the global market to measure the end product – that is, the student, objectified, transformed and produced into what I have termed the capital-abilities-machine.

The exclusion of the VPAS in high-stakes tests, and the implied message that these subjects are unimportant made me question the validity of my research. If the CATS are the most important subjects according to what is being implied with the high-stakes tests and curriculum, then why research and advocate the importance of the VPAS for children within the primary years of schooling? It is my belief that everyone deserves a broad and balanced education. Children are different and unique, something which the school as factory settings and the objectification of the child theories do not cater for. Including the VPAS in the student's curriculum not only ensures that the child benefits from the numerous benefits of the VPAS, but also provides different opportunities for the student's future. It is my inference that including the VPAS within the primary curriculum should be a case for what Fleming (2021) noted as teaching the subject by means of the 'learning in', for in the 'learning in', the VPAS remain individual subjects, and are not subservient to the CATS as they would be by means of the 'learning through'. It is also my conclusion that if the CATS are taught by 'learning through' the VPAS, then the VPAS are subservient to the CATS and risk becoming co-opted to serve the neoliberal agenda. Therefore, the 'learning in' of the VPAS may be counteractive to what the global market and the neoliberal agenda desire, and may be the reason why these subjects enjoy a low status, because they do not serve neoliberalism.

Through the 'learning in' stance, the VPAS would be challenging the neoliberal agenda as the education being taught would be a broad and balanced education fit for all, providing all students with the necessary tools to choose a future which does not necessarily follow what the global market wants. I believe that if neoliberalism seeks to supress the autonomy of the individual and critical thinking, as formerly mentioned by Kumar and Hill (2008), then the broadening and balancing of the curriculum is what is needed to counteract the neoliberal agenda. In this way, the VPAS, and also the non-CATS, would be adding more opportunities for students to choose a different future path from those of businesses belonging to the global market. I also believe that including the VPAS in the curriculum and thus providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all moves education away from the existing commodification stance which Hill and Kumar (2008) noted and which I previously mentioned in this chapter.

My contention in this conclusion is that by limiting the VPAS within a curriculum and following the 'learning through' of the CATS through the VPAS, one is limiting the education of the student. This limiting of education involves not only the scope of subjects being taught, but also the limiting opportunities students will have when facing their future. If education is for the service of the student, as it should be, it involves the creation of diverse opportunities for the individual to experience a bright future for themselves. Having outlined the theoretical framework underpinning my research, I now move onto the next chapter, presenting the Methodology and Methods chapter of this dissertation, detailing how I will be researching the different subject status in Maltese primary schools.

Chapter 4: Methodologies and Methods

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 focuses on the design of my study. I start by explaining my researcher positionality in section 4.2, followed by a section on the informed methodological approach for this thesis in section 4.3. Section 4.4 presents the research questions I aim to explore, while in section 4.5 I present the ethical approval process. Section 4.6 explains the main research participants selection. Section 4.7 sees the methodology and methods used for this thesis, comprising of critical analyses and justifications of questionnaires, focus groups, Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis (TA) (2006) and Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analysis (CHEPDA) by Hyatt (2013). Section 4.8 describes the critical analysis of the data collected, while section 4.9 discusses the ethical considerations which have guided my work throughout this research. I conclude with section 4.10 where I present the issues which arose during the data generation phase and how they were dealt with.

4.2 Researcher Positionality

By understanding their positionality, a researcher is required to identify, acknowledge and reflect on their values, views and beliefs in relation to the research process and outputs. My positionality during this research has been that of a music teacher in a school for the past twelve years. As a VPAS teacher, I have seen through the years how the VPAS help students discover their potential and hidden talents, help students engage with their peers, increase their self-confidence and help them express themselves. I have also experienced how students are withdrawn from my lessons in order to revise CATS with their Learning Support Educators (LSEs), or how my lessons are cancelled because the class teacher needs to spend more time on CATS. Due to the strong focus on the CATS, some of my colleagues at the school where I teach are finding it difficult to adhere to the workload proposed by the curriculum and the LOF.

My positionality as a VPAS teacher has led me to perceive that the VPAS are not given importance at my workplace. It is why I wanted to understand whether this perception was also experienced by other educators, parents and students, not only within my workplace, but also in other schools. Experiencing all of this potential, and then knowing that the curriculum is sidelining the VPAS and decreasing the teaching time of these subjects has prompted me to research the perceptions of students, parents and teachers, and analyse the past two Maltese curricula, to see whether these phenomena were occurring only in my school.

4.3 Informed Methodological Approaches

In this study, I understand the crux of the matter to rest on 'what is' as socially constructed, subjectively experienced and expressed by the individual. I chose to develop a description of what and how the participants experience VPAS at primary school level in Malta. In order for me to do this, I had to construct research questions which would help me understand the perceptions of primary educators, students in Grade 5 level and their parents on school subjects and their status. The research questions were drafted prior to reading literature where initially their scope encompassed topics such as why the students are being pulled out of the classroom by the LSE. This was a situation which occurred at my workplace, and prompted me to research the importance of the VPAS and why these subjects are important for the student. However, after reading literature about the importance of the VPAS, I noticed that the VPAS were being used to teach the CATS. It was then that Fleming's (2021) 'learning in' and 'learning through' was implemented.

Research then started to pile up on globalisation and how neoliberalism affects education. I then moved on to research what a curriculum is, and theories on narrowing the curriculum, curriculum hierarchy and the hidden curriculum prompted me to research different power relations. It was a book by Stephen Ball called "Foucault, power and education" (2013) which introduced me to the different theories of Foucault, ultimately leading me to the *dispositif*. The *dispositif* as a notion was at first vague to understand, simply because it embraces different strands of theories, but when incorporated, these developed into an explanation of what I had observed at my work place. In fact, my observations and inherent suppositions about the world and how I understood it stem from my ontological and epistemological views. It was these views that guided my choice of methodologies and methods to discover knowledge through my research (Sikes, 2004).

For Grix (2002), epistemological and ontological considerations structure the questions researchers may ask, how one models them and how one may tackle fulfilling the answers. Having discovered Foucault's (1980) *dispositif*, I then constructed three research questions (which I will discuss in the next section). The *dispositif* aided in the selection of methodologies and methods in use. Since perceptions are personal and subjective to the individual, the methodologies and methods needed to encapsulate the thoughts and understandings of the participants as well as what was happening globally. It is why I have chosen a multimethod approach for my research through questionnaires, focus groups, TA and CHEPDA (see section 4.7).

4.4 Research Questions

This section presents three research questions to help guide my dissertation. Research questions point to the theory or theories necessary to explore the research, direct the author to the literature available (or lack of) and to the data available as well as choosing the appropriate methods for one to be able to answer said questions (O'Leary, 2017).

1. What is the relationship between global economic markets and the primary school curriculum, with particular focus on the VPAS?

Rationale: My assumption based on my experience as a VPAS teacher has led me to this research question. It allows me to investigate my contention that the Maltese primary school curriculum is being influenced by a global reform agenda which focuses time and resources on CATS at the expense of the VPAS.

2. How, and in what ways, do the VPAS contribute to primary education?

Rationale: I believe there is a need to research how and in what ways the VPAS contribute to the primary years of education, and thus ask whether these contributions are considered to be important during the formative primary years.

3. What are the perceptions of students, educators and parents in primary schools about the status of VPAS within the primary curriculum?

Rationale: I would like to examine the participants' (children, educators and parents) perceptions of the status and importance of VPAS in primary schools. I want to know what the participants feel about the existence and the role of VPAS within schools, how they experience arts lessons and whether they perceive a hierarchical subject position of the VPAS in Maltese primary schools. The following is a tabular representation of how I aim to answer my research questions.

Table 1

Research Design and Approach to Analyses

Research Question	What is the relationship between global economic markets and the primary school curriculum, with particular focus on the VPAS?	How, and in what ways, do the VPAS contribute to primary education?	What are the perceptions of students, educators and parents in primary schools regarding the status of VPAS within the primary curriculum?
Participants / Documents	Literature; NMC and NCF policies	Students, parents and educators	Students, parents and educators
Type of Data	NMC and NCF policies	Empirical Approach & Multimethods: Questionnaires and Focus Groups	Empirical Approach & Multimethods: Questionnaires and Focus Groups
Method of Data Generation	Literature, and Policy Documents	Literature, Questionnaire and Focus Groups Interviews	Literature, Questionnaire & Focus Groups
Approach to Analysis	CHEPDA, Thematic Analysis	Thematic Analysis	Thematic Analysis

4.5 Ethics Approval Process

The University of Sheffield (UOS) ethical approval for this research was granted on 11th March 2019 (Appendix 1). Part of the ethical approval process involved developing participants' information sheets (PIS) (Appendix 2-7) and consent forms (CF) (Appendix 8-13) for all participant categories. These were written in English and in Maltese. I then applied for the Maltese ethical review process entitled *Permission to Conduct Research Study* which was approved by the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability on 12th September 2019 (Appendix 14). This was crucial for me to be able to conduct my research within Maltese government schools. The Maltese ethical process required the different Informed Consent Forms (ICF) (Appendix 15-20), and a different CF which had to be filled in by the parents of the students participating in this research, granting me permission for their child to participate (Appendix 21-22). This was done since the children are all under the age of 16 (Mallia, 2003). The PIS and the CF I used were the ones approved by the UoS.

Besides conducting my research in two Government schools, I also wanted to carry out my study in two Church schools, and this required me to apply for permission from the Secretariat for Catholic Education. Permission was granted on 18th September 2019 (Appendix 23). After being granted permission and liaising with the heads of school where I wanted to conduct my research, I sent out copies of the questionnaires and focus group questions in advance to the schools. I found no objections from the heads of schools to conduct both the questionnaires or the focus groups.

Each school was very helpful in distributing and collecting the PIS and CF prior to research commencement. The PIS and CF were distributed as follows: a PIS and a CF to all children in the primary school level of Grade 5, to their parents, and to all educators of the four schools was sent electronically via email by the heads of schools. This followed the GDPR and ethical protocols. I did not have access to any of the participants' email addresses. Like the pilot studies, children were also given a Parental CF, to be signed by the parents as well as a CF which the children had to fill in. PIS and CF were collected by me prior to starting the questionnaires and focus groups. I appreciated the extra effort of applying for ethical clearance by the Ministry of Education in Malta because it made me reflect that besides the PIS and CF for the student to fill, I also needed a CF signed by the parents, since the students are under the age of 18. Another ethical consideration I had to make was with regards to conducting research at my own workplace (see section 4.8.1).

4.6 Main Research Participants Selections

My research was conducted in four Maltese primary schools, specifically two Church schools (one all-girls and one all-boys) and two Government co-educational schools. All four schools teach students from all over the world, thus providing a diverse population for my study. This mixture of ethnicity and gender is aimed at removing any issues related to research bias with regards to gender, ethnicity and religion (O'Leary, 2017). There are three grades in the primary level where students sit for assessments and tests: grades 4, 5 and 6. I chose Grade 5, mainly because at that level assessment tests would have started at both national and supranational level (TIMSS in 2019). I did not choose Grade 4 because the students would have not as yet experienced a supranational exam, while in Grade 6, students are preparing for the end of year benchmark exams and access to these students could have been difficult because of the pressure to prepare for these tests.

For this research, participants were chosen according to specific criteria, a technique known as "purposive sampling" (Williams, 2003, p.246). The participants were divided into three categories: parents of the students from Grade 5 , the students in Grade 5 and the educators of the primary school participating in the research. This warranted that the data gathered and analysed was analytically approached and grouped according to these three categories. This multilevel sampling technique specifies that participants are extracted from different populations (Collins, 2017). The research participants are all connected to the same grade level (Grade 5), with a participation of 50 children from each school for the questionnaires, thus a total of 200 students. The chosen participants reside all over Malta and have different ethnic and social backgrounds. The following table shows each schools populations of students and educators.

Table 2

Information on the Populations of Educators, Parents and Students in the 4 Schools

Category	Educators	Students	Type of School
School A	55	78	Primary Church School
School B	32	61	Primary Government School
School C	46	54	Primary Church School
School D	27	25	Primary Government School

4.6.1 Questionnaire Participants

The target sample size for my research differed according to category: for parents and students, I was hoping to get approximately two hundred participants. This number represented the number of students in Grade 5 level of one school (n=50) multiplied by the 4 schools where research was to be conducted. The same applies for the category involving parents. Parents submitted 100 questionnaires, while students submitted 204 questionnaires. With regards to the category of educators in the four primary schools, I asked all educators to participate in the survey, with a target size of n=100. 67 educators submitted the questionnaire.

Hardcopies of blank questionnaires were available for one particular school whose students and parents had limited access to the internet. This was a decision taken by the head of school. I printed out the questionnaires and handed them to my contact. After two weeks, my contact emailed me to retrieve the questionnaires. I then inputted the answers electronically on the questionnaire platform. Two schools allocated an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) lesson for the students participating in the questionnaires voluntarily. In school A, it was the school protocol to have the ICT teacher conduct the questionnaires with the students. School D offered to have the ICT teacher help out in distributing the questionnaire since the school principal wanted the students to answer the questionnaire at school during school hours. Like school A, the principal felt they could help out the students if a member of staff was present during the questionnaires and the ICT teacher acted as a form of supervision for the school. This was not a decision taken by me, as initially I thought that it would be unethical to use school time for my research, but both heads of schools assured me that it was their protocol and their decision to make. Since both ICT teachers of school A and D were external to my role as a researcher and oblivious of my study, I decided to meet with them prior to their conducting the questionnaires to provide them with a list of students whose parents consented to them participating, and another list of CF signed by the students. The questionnaires were ready by the end of October 2019.

4.6.2 Focus Group Participants

Denscombe (2014) and Ellis (2013) observe that the choice of the participants for focus groups should be based on a non-probability group of participants. A non-probability sample is the selection of the participants which are not randomly chosen, but which are discreetly chosen by the researcher in order to facilitate the research (Denscombe, 2014). One main reason of non-probability sample is when the researcher does not have information on the participants that make up the population under study (Denscombe, 2014).

For my research, a non-probability sample was selected because I did not know which languages the students spoke. I wanted the students to feel comfortable in expressing their ideas and not feel left out because they could not understand the language. I do not speak all languages, and the students from the four schools participating in this research spoke different languages. However, my focus groups were only prepared in either English or Maltese. I then had to ask for help to choose the students for the focus groups. For this reason, I asked the class teachers to choose students whose parents spoke English or Maltese and had already given me parental permission for their child to participate in my research. By not choosing the participants myself, I was able to maintain my unbiased position as researcher. Participants were selected by means of the non-probability sampling criteria in my research's case was the fact that I did not know the students, and I did not know which language they spoke fluently.

The non-probability participant group approach was only used in the case of student category. For the categories pertaining to parents and educators, there were very few participants who signed up for the focus groups, with numbers ranging from 4 to 7 participants. Since I needed only a small number of participants for the focus groups, all participants who signed up were welcome to participate in the focus groups. Table 3 represents the number of participants per category and school.

Table 3

Participant Information of Questionnaires and Focus Groups Response

Category	Participants' Responses		
	Parents	Educators	Students
	n	n	n
Questionnaires	100	67	204
Focus Group School A	4	5	6
Focus Group School B	4	6	7
Focus Group School C	5	5	6
Focus Group School D	6	7	7

4.7 Critical Analyses of Methodology and Methods in Use

4.7.1 Mixed-Methods vs Multimethods.

The research design of this thesis encompasses two main methods of data generation: questionnaires, focus groups, and two analytical tools: CHEPDA and TA, to analyse the perceptions of the participants on subject status in Maltese primary schools. This is because utilising different methods for data generation alongside other sources of information adds insights, perspectives and information to the research (Denscombe, 2014). Mixed methods encompass the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in one single study (O'Leary, 2017). Multimethod studies collect data from different sources to comprehend social and human behaviour (Anguera et al., 2018), and differ from mixed methods studies because methods are used progressively, but are not integrated until interpretations are made (Bazeley, 2017). The use of diverse methods in one study may also facilitate the encapsulation of diverse perspectives (O'Leary, 2017). I will use multimethods to help me understand the different perceptions of the participants on the Maltese subjects status. The following is a review on the methods in use in my research.

4.7.1.1 Questionnaires. A questionnaire on the perceptions of the VPAS status and contribution in Maltese primary schools will provide an overview of participants' perspectives, in relation to the third research question. One of the reasons I chose to conduct my research via questionnaires is that these are anonymous, and participants are able to safeguard their work and their identity while answering the questions. Another reason for choosing to conduct questionnaires is that the participant is free to answer the questions at their leisure.

One disadvantage of using questionnaires is that they may not be returned at all. Reminders are sent, but you cannot force anyone to fill in a questionnaire. Moreover, a limitation of the questionnaire is that even though the questions posed in questionnaires offer answers to the requests for 'What? Where? When? How?', questionnaires do not easily answer the 'Why?' since the main role of questionnaires is that of fact-finding (Bell, 1999). In order to ask the 'Why?', I have decided to use some open-ended questions. These questions will be analysed through TA like the focus group interviews. I will elaborate on this later on in this chapter in section 4.5 'Data Analyses'. Opie (2004) also notes that participants, especially students, may be inclined to abstain from providing written answers to open-ended questions. This may be due to the time needed to answer such questions. Another issue regarding the students' questionnaire is that open ended questions may pose an added difficulty for the participants;

even though the questionnaires are written in both English and Maltese, some students may still feel inadequate when answering. A mitigation measure for this is having students answer the questionnaire at schools. The heads of schools offered to have the ICT teacher run the questionnaire on the school computers. They will read the questions one at a time and give students enough time to answer and move onto the next question.

Another drawback of questionnaires is that this method might be prone to Common Method Variance (Gorrell et al., 2011). This happens when the replies to the questions by the participants do not entirely echo their inherent thoughts concerning the researched phenomenon. Rather, the answers are influenced by the extrinsic qualities concerning the design or administration of the questionnaire and by the way in which the questions are formulated and asked (Gorrell et al., 2011). This bias was carefully considered when writing down the questions and will also be deliberated upon when interpreting the data. A pilot study of the questionnaire was a must to help mitigate this bias, discussed in section 4.8 of this chapter.

4.7.1.1.1 Construction of Questionnaires. Questionnaires involve a degree of mental effort and as the researcher I needed to ensure that these would be completed in a short amount of time (Denscombe, 2014). Opie (2004) notes how the questions used in a questionnaire should be consistent, written for specific purposes and assure anonymity for the participant. With regards to methods used for data generation, questionnaires are justified as being the most reliable and valid method for a researcher to use (Opie, 2004).

I started the questionnaire using open questions to prevent putting ideas into the mind of the participant, while leaving the more structured or pre-coded questions for a later stage (Opie, 2004). This is known as the 'funnel approach'. I also followed the general rule mentioned by Opie to place demographic questions (such as gender and age) towards the end of the questionnaire, mainly because these questions are of a relatively sensitive nature and may be resented by the participant, hence reducing their motivation to start/continue/finish the questionnaire. I have chosen to use a mixture of both open and closed questions, mainly because open questions will help me understand the perception of the individual on VPAS in primary schools, something that closed questions cannot do. After reviewing literature for Chapters 2 and 3, I started drafting a list of questions which I wanted the participants to answer. I asked them about their perceptions on the VPAS, on the CATS, if they thought there were subjects

which were more important than others, and whether they perceive the curriculum to be a holistic or broad and balanced. A copy of the questionnaires are found in Appendix 24-26.

4.7.1.1.2 Format of the Questionnaires

1. **Parents' and Educator's Questionnaires:** I have followed the same pattern for the educator and parent questionnaires. I divided the questionnaires into different sections, where each section discusses a research question. In section 1 I examine which VPAS are being taught at the different school, while in section 2, I investigate the perceptions of the participants regarding the different primary school subjects and their status. Section 3 asks the participants for their opinions on the school curriculum, and in section 4, I ask whether VPAS are important for the student and I ask an open-ended question in order to understand the perceptions of the participants in a broader and deeper way.

2. **Students' Questionnaires:** With regards to the student questionnaires, the format was slightly different. Since the students are the youngest participants in my research, I had to keep in mind that most probably some of them might not have participated in answering a questionnaire before. I start this questionnaire with very simple questions which require short answers. This was mainly done so that the students feel comfortable and at ease answering the questionnaire. Section 1 starts by asking students what their favourite subject at school is, if they are being taught VPAS at school and to specify what these subjects are. It also asks whether they think that there are some subjects which are more important than others and if they feel that some subjects have more time allocated to them than others. In section 4 I ask questions about whether the students feel that the VPAS are important for them.

4.7.1.1.3 Pilot Study of the Questionnaires After receiving the ethical approvals from the UoS and from the Ministry of Education I conducted the pilot studies. Pilot studies may reveal areas which need to be amended and improved, thus avoiding any detrimental complications for the main research (Denscombe, 2014). Any pilot study should attempt to be demonstrative of the main participants cluster which will then be researched (Opie, 2004). Before sending out the pilot questionnaires, I reviewed the questions of the three participants category questionnaires with a critical friend who helped me to make sure the questions were easy to understand and answerable. I conducted three pilot studies for the questionnaires, as follows in table 4.

Table 4

Pilot Questionnaire Participants

Category	Educators	Parents	Students
Participants	3	2	3

Opie cautions that participants taking part in a pilot study should not be included in the main research, since those participants who would have participated in the pilot study may have become "sensitised to the questions" and any answers they give in the main questionnaire or interview may be influenced in a different way to those students who would have not participated in the pilot project (2004, p.105). Thus, I distributed questionnaires to participants who only participated in the pilot study, pertaining to the three categories: two parents, three teachers and three students. I asked three colleagues from my work place, who then did not participate in the main research. I then asked two parents whose children are at Grade 6 level (thus not participating in my research) to fill in the parents' pilot questionnaire. With regards to students, I asked two colleagues whose children do not attend any of the schools where I conducted my research whether they wanted to participate in the pilot study. I first gave all of these participants a PIS and a CF. All necessary documentation is signed and stored. Since they are signed documents, they will be shredded at the end of completion of this EdD.

Piloting the questionnaires helped make the questions user-friendly (Oppenheim, 1992), allowed me to note how long the questionnaires took to be answered and indicated whether the questions were easily understood (Opie, 2004). I acknowledged that some children may have learning difficulties, and that the questionnaire which I designed needed to be inclusive. Thus, the questionnaires were constructed using very simple sentences and a level of the English and Maltese languages lower than the average level of the grade. The language levels were evaluated by means of the feedback provided by the pilot participants and my critical reader friend. It also made clear whether there were any questions which were extraneous (questions which did not focus around the research question) as well as highlighted any important questions which were omitted. For example, the parent questionnaire had an extra question in the fourth section which I later omitted. With regards to the educator questionnaires, after piloting, I added one question in section 1, and then revised the whole questionnaire.

The answering method for the educators' questionnaires was changed from a 'yes', 'no' or 'maybe' to the Likert scale as it suited my study better. This is because the Likert scaling asks the participants to select a rank between the parameters asking the responders about their agreement/disagreement, their perceptions on lowest/highest status, their choices between adequate/excessive on the continuum scale (O'Leary, 2017). Usually, the Likert scaling involves between five to seven parameters, but since I wanted an understanding of the perceptions of the individual, I increased the paraments to ten. The result was the average overall rating of the answers.

With regards to the student questionnaire, at first the participants in the pilot study said that the questionnaire was fine as it was, but then, one of them suggested rewording some questions as they were not clear enough. The others then concurred. This was because while the pilot student participant read the question, they did not understand it immediately, and had asked me to explain it to them. The lack of the 'Why?' as advocated by Bell (1999) in her critique of questionnaires prompted me to use another method to acquire this understanding and to further delve into the perception of the individual. That is why I chose to conduct focus groups.

4.7.1.2 Focus Groups There will be three categories of focus groups: students in Grade 5 levels from four different schools, their parents and the educators of the schools. Each focus group will consist of between five to seven participants. Since I am studying the perceptions of the individual, I do not need a large number of people, but a small number of participants, as suggested by Creswell to be between 5 to 25 (Creswell, 2007). I will conduct focus groups and not individual interviews because I want the contributors to feel comfortable, especially the children, as they may feel awkward or uneasy if interviewed separately.

Focus groups present three characteristics which make them different from other types of interviews; the first characteristic is that the focus on the subject should be a familiar topic which all participants have experienced, while also having different opinions and different ideas on said subject (Denscombe, 2014). Focus group discussions may lead to either a consensus within the group or expose different opinions and feelings, thus revealing the reasoning and perceptions of the participants (Petty et al., 2012). The second characteristic is that group interaction is facilitated by a moderator rather than the moderator leading the conversation (Denscombe, 2014). This characteristic deserves some consideration from my part since I am both the researcher and the moderator. I will act as the moderator, propose the topic and ask questions of the participants, while also helping them feel at ease. However, I prepared a set of

questions to ask the participants in order to start the discussion and avoid any awkward silences in between. Thus, if the focus group members deviate from the subject, I will be prepared and use the questions to bring the discussion back on track. The questions used in the questionnaires and focus groups are the same for each category. This was done in order to work with a homogenous list of questions and be able to compare the answers of the focus groups to the questionnaires. A list of questions used to prompt the focus group interviews for each category is presented in Appendix 27-29. In addition, by juxtaposing the answers of the focus groups with the questionnaires and analysing the answers from the same sources, I will be able to triangulate the information. I will explain triangulation in more detail in section 4.9.2 of this chapter. The third characteristic is the collection of data by analysing the dynamics and interaction within the group since participants can discuss the topic between themselves – and are encouraged to do so (Denscombe, 2014). I have thus chosen to conduct homogenous focus group discussions so that the discussion will be focused on the similar experiences of the participants with regards to one main phenomenon (Petty et al., 2012).

4.7.1.2.1 Pilot Study of the Focus Groups I conducted three pilot focus group discussions – a focus group discussion with educators from my school and another school (these participants did not participate in the official focus group of teachers), and another focus group pilot study with two children, who also did not participate in the final students focus group. The pilot studies of the focus groups were conducted by the same participants of the pilot questionnaires on the same day, eliminating the need to schedule another meeting with the pilot participants. I conducted the pilot studies of the focus groups for educators, parents and students as per category. This was undertaken in order for me to get a feel as to how I should interact with the participants, as the questions of the focus groups are the same as the questions in the questionnaires. The pilot study was very helpful in organising the questions for both the questionnaires and the focus groups. Since the pilot focus group was conducted after the pilot questionnaires, I managed to also amend the questions of the focus group discussions as suggested by the participants. The parents focus group diverged a bit out of topic, but with the help of the prepared questions, I managed to bring the pilot focus group back on track.

4.7.1.3 Thematic Analysis Thematic Analysis (TA) is a tool which can provide a thorough and rich description of the collected data when used to analyse qualitative methods. TA provides a manageable and orderly process for creating codes and themes from qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Codes are the smallest components of analysis that encapsulate possible noteworthy characteristics of collected data, which are significant to the research

question. Codes are the building segments for themes; thus, the codes belonging to the same pattern create a theme. Themes are larger models of connotations, generated by clusters of codes which share a core idea, and as a result, reinforced the collective idea of the codes into the creation of a theme (Clarke & Braun, 2017). A theme encapsulates significant data in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). TA can be used to recognise patterns within and through the data under analysis, vis-a-vis the experience, perspectives and views, practices and behaviours of the participants (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The identification of the themes themselves involves not only a descriptive analysis, but a theoretical description and the interpretive work of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

TA analyses the: "experiences, meanings and the reality of participants" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.81). TA (2006) is a method which can be applied and used across many different research paradigms and theoretical frameworks (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Because of this flexibility within this method, I find that TA resonates with my choice of research since I aim at understanding the experiences and the perceptions of the individuals using a multimethod approach following Foucault's *dispositif* (1980) framework and Hyatt's CHEPDA (2013).

4.7.1.3.1 The Six Phases of TA TA has different steps to follow, is credible and very helpful in how the authors have divided the steps of the research into doable and achievable aims. Braun and Clarke advocate six steps of TA (2006). Step 1 is the verbatim transcriptions of the focus group interviews through which the researcher familiarises herself with the discourse and reflects upon the potential discursive themes. Step 2 involves the coding of the data, where data is organised into groups called codes, preparing the data for Step 3: the creation of themes. Themes can be pre-set or emergent while reading and analysing transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the emergence of the themes, in Step 4 one reviews the themes, and in Step 5 one should juxtapose the themes to see if there are any themes which recur. The final step of TA, Step 6 involves the creation of a report, which will be the essence of Chapter 6 of this thesis.

4.7.1.3.2 Inductive vs Deductive Approach The collected themes through the TA of data can be identified as being inductive or deductive. When the themes have been identified and the researcher notes that these are strongly linked to the data themselves, the approach is considered to be inductive (Patton, 1990). By following this approach, if the data have been explicitly gathered for a particular research, the identified themes may exhibit minor overtones with the specific questions that were asked by the researcher to the participants. This is because

inductive analysis analyses the data without trying to mould it into the researcher's analytic preconceptions, or into an established coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this sense, though an inductive process, TA is data-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through inductive analysis, the data collected and analysed would also not be determined by the researcher's interest in the subject or area being researched.

The deductive analysis diverges from the inductive type of analysis since there is the disposition of the analysis to be driven by the researcher's analytic or theoretical interest in the subject. In this manner, deductive analysis is considered to be unambiguously determined by the analyst, offering a comprehensive analysis of some features of the data, and a richer description of the overall data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The choice of inductive versus deductive data analyses depends on why and how the researcher is coding the data. However, the choice remains for the researcher to either code for a specific answer, creating a research question depending on what the findings are (favouring deductive analysis), or the research question evolves because of the coding process (favouring the inductive approach). My positionality and values which I brought in this research helped me create three research questions, which I wanted to explore. I can now conclude that my research has followed the inductive approach of TA.

4.7.1.3.3 Possible Consequences of TA Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that even though TA is quite an upfront procedure of qualitative analysis, there are still five possible problems which the authors outline. The first problem is for the researcher to fail to analyse the data at all, and look at it as though it is a narrative. In doing so, the researcher will fail to understand the context of the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second problem is using the questions to gather the data as the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The collected themes should be brought forward by gathering the codes and identifying any patterns which emerge through the third stage of TA.

The third problem is a weak or unsuccessful analysis, where the emerging themes do not work together, or overlap in similar thematic meaning. This problem shows that the fifth stage of TA is crucial for a successful TA and that juxtaposing different themes and finding common denominators call for an effective TA. On this note, the fourth problem also discusses the importance of incompatibility between the gathered data and the analyses. Thus, the researcher needs to make sure that their analytical point and their interpretations are coherent with the data excerpts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The last problem to avoid is to circumvent an incongruity between the analytic claims and the theory, or between the TA and the theoretical framework

in use (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, the theoretical framework, in my case, the theories of the *dispositif* and the analysed interpretations through TA should be reliable and even. Another reason why I chose TA is because through the analyses of different themes, I was able to link the different theories of the *dispositif* which I will explain in more detail in Chapter 6. I now move onto explaining the methods used in this research.

4.7.1.4 Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analysis CHEPDA is an analytical tool which analyses and investigates policy texts (Hyatt, 2013). Even though CHEPDA is a higher education policy analysis, I found CHEPDA to be an appropriate framework to use in the analyses of the NMC and the NCF. In fact, CHEPDA has already been used to analyse primary curricula by Kay (2021). I could have used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA; Fairclough, 1993), but instead I chose to use CHEPDA, mainly due to how Hyatt deconstructs the policy discourse, which enabled me to deconstruct the NMC and the NCF respectively using his 2013 article. It is through this deconstruction that I will be able to combine CHEPDA and Foucault's *dispositif* (1980) to analyse the NMC and the NCF. CHEPDA proposes a method for the social analyses of texts, with relevance to transformation and change (Hyatt, 2013). As asserted by Fairclough (2003), texts represent relationships and social matters. Fairclough further notes that: "what is said in a text is 'said' against a background of what is 'unsaid'" (2003, p.39).

One of the reasons I have decided to incorporate CHEPDA in my research is because, through the literature review of the Foucault *dispositif*, I have found that Foucault regards every statement, discursive or non-discursive, to be: "an event that neither language nor meaning can completely exhaust" (Foucault, 1998, p.308). I have chosen to use CHEPDA because I want to uncover any nuances, any text (said or unsaid) in the NMC (MEE, 1999) and NCF (MEE, 2012) in relation to the different theories discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Hyatt classifies two CHEPDA processes: contextualisation and deconstruction (Hyatt, 2013).

4.7.1.4.1 Contextualisation The contextualisation element of CHEPDA involves realising the aims of a policy document (Hyatt, 2013). These are referred to as the drivers, the reason as to why there is the need for a change within the policy to occur. The problem/s which the drivers aim at solving through education show a temporal context, in the sense that the aim of the driver is to solve something which is situated in the present tense. As a result of the drivers which express the stated aims of the document, authors choose different operational

processes, or the mechanisms called levers, which one uses to achieve the change advocated by the drivers.

Drivers and levers help the policy analyst to understand the evolution of the policy, how it was developed and interpreted, which then led to the interpretation and recontextualization of the policy (Hyatt, 2013). Engaging in the analyses of the drivers and levers of the NMC and NCF will help me in the understanding of the evolution between the two policy documents and analyse the texts as temporal text. The Foucault *dispositif* also works on temporality, and I found CHEPDA to be one of the best discourse analytic approaches for both the NMC and NCF because it analyses the policy document within its temporal frame.

Another reason why I have chosen to use CHEPDA is because it linguistically revolves around the formation of modes of warrant. Cochran-Smith and Fries (2001) explain that the term 'warrant' in its German roots means: "to protect or defend but also to trust" (p.4). It is the word 'trust' that made me reflect on how education stakeholders 'trust' whatever policies are set by the government of the day and implement them within the schooling system. Cochran-Smith and Fries continue to explain that the word 'warrant' indicates: "a commission or written document that gave one person or group the authority to do something, […] to signify justification, authority, or 'reasonable grounds', particularly those that are established for some act, course of action, statement, or belief" (Cochran-Smith and Fries, 2001, p.4). In this thesis, the term 'warrant' relates to how the NMC and NCF policy texts are authoritative documents which have been established to reform the educational system by means of the implementation of the policy text.

There are three types of warrants in CHEPDA: the evidentiary, the accountability and the political warrant. In the evidentiary warrant, evidence is key to the findings and writings. The evidentiary warrant is most commonly expressed in quantitative form (Hyatt, 2013). The accountability warrant involves certain outcomes related to and based on results (Hyatt, 2013). In this case, the consequences would be related to the schools' implementation of the policies and the results. In the political warrant, policies are justified according to the public and national interest. The accountability and political warrants may be linked together if one is analysing terms such as inclusion, social justice, values and social unity (Hyatt, 2013).

4.7.1.4.2 Deconstruction Hyatt (2013) proposes that within the process of deconstruction of educational policy texts, one may analyse a text through the "modes of legitimation" (p.840). CHEPDA's definition of 'legitimation' is the process of how policies are

justified to the people by using values and norms which are familiar to them (Hyatt, 2013). Thus, legitimation is linked to the previously mentioned modes of warrant. Hyatt lists four modes of legitimation: i) authorisation: the way the texts empower the voices of particular entities, factions, institutes or customs, ii) rationalisation: the way language is manipulated to validate policy rulings as uncontestable, iii) moral evaluation: the way text is used to justify ideological or moral conjectures, and lastly, iv) mythopoesis: the appropriation of educational policy text to be used as a warning against past or future situations via narratives (Hyatt, 2013). The resources used to rationalise the policy objectives are identified by means of these modes of legitimation and will be found in my CHEPDA of the NMC and NCF.

Another way of deconstructing a text using CHEPDA is through "interdiscursivity and intertextuality" (Hyatt, 2013, p.840). Interdiscursivity discusses terms used in discourse which belong to different categories, such as the category of education and the category of consumerism. Hyatt gives examples when students are regarded as "clients" within education (2013, p.841). The term 'client' usually refers to a business consumer, thus, interdiscursivity links consumerism with education. Intertextuality refers to the use of quotes from other texts, to legitimise a text and add extra support to a claim. I will be using intertextuality myself when I will be discussing the NMC and the NCF through the CHEPDA lens.

One may also deconstruct a text using CHEPDA through evaluation, where the writer expresses their own viewpoints and stance with regards to the written text (Hyatt, 2013). The NMC and the NCF do not have only one author, as they are policies by the Ministry of Education, and use multiple authors. I will not be using the evaluation criteria to analyse the NMC and the NCF as it is not possible to know whose text is being analysed and hence, will not know whose viewpoint and stances I will be elaborating on. However, I will be using the lexico-grammatical features to analyse the NMC and the NCF.

Prior to CHEPDA, Hyatt had originally created a Critical Literacy Frame (CLF; 2005) which he then incorporated within the CHEPDA. This involved the deconstruction of the text to analyse elements of texts using lexico-grammatical features (Hyatt, 2005; Hyatt, 2013). Hyatt identifies eleven potential criteria for the investigation of lexico-grammatical attributes of a text. These criteria are i) pronouns, ii) passive & active forms, iii) time-tense and aspect, iv) adjectives, adverbs, nouns, verbs, v) metaphors, vi) presupposition & implication, vii) medium & audience, viii) visual images, and ix) age, class, disability, gender, race/ethnicity and sexuality issues (Hyatt, 2005, p.47). Hyatt explains how the use of voice, tense, metaphors,

presupposition and implications, and pronouns can operate as part of the lexico-grammatical interpretation of a "reality" (Hyatt, 2013, p.842). The lexico-grammatical features will help me understand how the "reality" is constructed by policy makers and, as a result, how policies are used to reflect governance in education.

4.7.1.4.3 Critique CHEPDA is Critical Discourse Analyses (CDA). I now expand on the criticisms of CDA which have aided my stance as a researcher and led me to using CHEPDA and not another form of CDA. Hammersley (1997) noted how CDA is politically rooted in the stance of the analysts, so that whatever political agenda the analyst sides with is reflected in the analysis. Breeze (2011) notes that the analyst needs to explicitly make their own political commitments known to the reader.

As an analyst using CHEPDA, my main aim was to discover if Maltese primary school subjects, with special reference to the VPAS, enjoy different subject status. If I only investigated the NMC and the NCF using my own perceptions, my research would have ultimately been biased. To mitigate my bias, my own positionality and thoughts on subject status, I analysed the NMC and NCF through CHEPDA after analysing the focus groups and questionnaires using TA. This is considered a form of triangulation, which I will elaborate on in section 4.9.2, and a form of trustworthiness, detailed in section 4.9.5 of this chapter. CDA researchers often justify their work through triangulation to obtain different perspectives of the phenomenon being studied (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; Rogers et al., 2005; van Dijk, 2006; Wodak, 2007). In this thesis, the CHEPDA analyses will be presented before the TA of questionnaires and focus group discussions because I need the reader to understand the Maltese stance on education before journeying onto the perceptions of the participants.

Another critique of CDA is using the decontextualization of the text, without analysing the text in its whole context, such as without the social relations which usually surround the text (Breeze, 2011). Breeze notes how this deficiency in CDA has been tackled, up to a certain degree, in education, since the researcher uses different methods and methodologies for data generation (Breeze, 2011). It is one of the reasons why I have opted for a multimethod approach in my research.

Rogers et al. (2005) note that CDA is used to reveal the connections "between language and society" (p.365), emphasising the relationship between the text and power relations. My study aims at understanding the power relations as to why different primary school subjects enjoy a different subject status and why there is no equal status being allocated to all the subjects. I also

endeavour to understand why this is happening and whether it is because of the different distributions of power in education. It is why I needed an analysis which not only historically analyses the discourse, such as the Wodak Discourse Historical Approach (1996), but also looks at the temporality of the text. In the case of the Hyatt (2013) CHEPDA, the analyses of drivers and levers paved the way for the understanding of why different subjects enjoy different status and whethere there is Foucault's *dispositif* (1980) at play through different power relations.

4.8 Data Analyses

I now recount my approach towards using TA for the analyses of the questionnaires and the focus groups. I then move onto describing my approach when using the analytical framework of CHEPDA which I used to analyse the NMC and NCF.

4.8.1 Analysing the questionnaire data

The data of the questionnaires was analysed in two parts: the first part consisted of analysing the closed questions of the questionnaire by means of graphs and percentages configured through the online platform I used. The second part involved my analyses of the open-ended question and the coding of themes through TA. Coding processed the questionnaires answers into categories for analysis (Williams, 2003). I decided to manually code the answers. Williams (2003) notes that when manually coding the answers, the research would be prone to double the margin of error and may introduce observer bias. While interpretative analysis requires certain types of investigative processes, Wellington et al. (2005) suggest that intuitions, creative visions and imaginative thinking play an equally important role. I decided to use my thinking skills and intuitions to code the data of the questionnaires as well as the focus groups data. Moreover, by juxtaposing the data of both the questionnaires and the focus groups, I was able to analyse the material from two different sources. This is why I chose to have a multimethods approach in my research, since I believe one method will aid the other. I have also found it useful to refer back to the research questions to keep the analysis focused.

4.8.2 Analysing the focus group interview data

Some focus group interviews were conducted in Maltese and then translated into English for transcription purposes. Hsin-Chun Tsai et al. (2004) noted how the lack of a data analyst who did not understand the culture and dialectal of the members threatened the trustworthiness of the research. This was not an issue for my research because both Maltese and English are my first languages.

Being bilingual has helped me overcome the obstacle of losing in translation the gist of what was being said throughout the interviews, in both Maltese and English versions, while also capturing any nuances within the discourses. During this first stage of TA, I read and re-read the transcripts to be able to familiarise myself with them. I was also able to remember the participants saying what I was reading and the setting and ambiance of the focus groups. Furthermore, there was no language barrier in my research due to my fluency in both languages. Esposito (2001) notes how triangulation, using different methods and having multiple focus groups l: "validate the translation of the general content" (p.577). Thus, from an ethical point of view, the translations were trustworthy because I had twelve focus groups. Triangulation helped me establish the trustworthiness needed in my research.

I previously planned to code using Nvivo software to analyse the text for the second step of coding. However, I decided to manually analyse the twelve focus group interviews, rather than use my time learning how to use a new software. Since step one of Braun and Clarke (2006) requires the researcher to familiarise with the written text, I used my time to listen to the interview recordings and reading the transcripts. While reading them, I could identify some codes emerging and started marking them by using different colours while also writing down the codes allocated to them. I created four lists of codes pertaining to each school (Appendix 30). Then I started matching the codes from different transcripts belonging to the same categories looking for similar codes (see tables 7-8, Chapter 6, section 6.2). Following the analyses process, I was then able to refine the codes as I reviewed each transcript. At first, I identified 17 codes, but after reviewing the twelve transcripts to identify if I missed any of these 17 codes, two more codes emerged, bringing the total number of codes to 19 (see table 9, Chapter 6, section 6.2). This process helped me to double check my work.

In the third section, themes had to be identified. I tackled this issue by referring back to the literature and to the research questions I aimed to investigate, and grouped the codes into similar areas. This was an inductive reasoned approach, where I followed the emerging patterns of the codes being analysed, and then generated into themes as a conclusion of the inductive process. I reviewed the themes I created following step 4 of the Braun and Clarke (2006) method, and the result was the identification of four juxtaposing themes presented in the Chapter 5.

4.8.3 Analysing the NMC and NCF through CHEPDA

With regards to CHEPDA, I began analysing the NMC and NCF through contextualisation, where I analysed the drivers and levers of the policies. I began by analysing the NCM since it

was written before the NCF. What helped with this analysis is reviewing the Maltese political scenarios of the time these policy documents were written. I did this because I wanted to see who held governmental chairs and what their agenda was. It also helped me understand what the political agenda of the political party in charge was, and to see whether their agenda was being reflected in the NMC and NCF. The drivers and levers helped me understand the evolution of the policies, how they were developed, interpreted and recontextualized (Hyatt, 2013, p.838). Engaging in the analyses of the drivers and levers of the NMC and NCF helped me understand the temporality of texts and applying the Foucault *dispositif*. I was then able to juxtapose my findings of CHEPDA with the data from the focus group interviews and questionnaires.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Denscombe (2014) advocates four key principles of research which I needed to adhere to when conducting my research. The first principle is to safeguard the interests of the participants concerned in the research. Each participant in the focus group interviews in all categories, was given an official PIS, both in Maltese and in English, describing the study, its rationale, and the focus group interview process. Each participant was offered my personal assurance, orally and in written form safeguarding their personal and organisational confidentiality. I wanted the participants to feel safe and comfortable during the interviews, while also being able to talk freely.

As a researcher I ensured that participants did not come to any physical or psychological harm and made sure that they did not experience any prejudice through the exposition of confidential information gathered throughout the enquiry. With regards to children, I needed to take special care with regards to the young participants and not just be a researcher seeking answers, but a researcher safeguarding the participants and the answers they provide. Anonymity for all participants and schools was safeguarded through the use of pseudonyms at all times. I informed the participants that the data would be kept safe on an external hard drive locked in a secure location and password protected. I also told the participants that the data would be destroyed on completion of my research.

For the second principle as noted by Denscombe (2014), I briefly explained the PIS to the participants of the focus groups, just in case they had not read it beforehand, and that their contribution towards the research was voluntary and that they could pull out of the research whenever necessary without prejudice (Denscombe, 2014; O'Leary, 2017). I informed the

participants that I would be providing them with a summary of the final study at the end of the research.

The third principle regards the focus group interviews recordings and transcripts. I needed to avoid all kinds of deception or misinterpretation when dealing directly with participants, in order to be able to operate with scientific integrity and provide a fair and unbiased interpretation of their findings. I needed to make sure that when I translated the Maltese focus groups into English, no material was lost in translation, as previously discussed in section 4.5.2. I also had to make sure that my positionality, bias and aims for this research did not influence the translation. In order to do this, I referred to a professional translator for a translation check (Ko, 2011). Finally, the fourth principle focused on my compliance with human legislation as stated by the UoS and the Maltese educational system (Education Division, Malta, 1999).

4.9.1 Insider Research (IR)

Another ethical consideration I had to implement in my research was learning about the strengths and limitation of IR. In IR, the insider is a person who owns a priori confidential information of the community and its members. The insider researcher chooses to study a group to which they belong (Breen, 2007). The following section depicts the advantages and disadvantages of IR which I encountered when conducting my research.

4.9.1.1 Advantages

4.9.1.1.1 Access and Knowledge. One advantage of choosing IR was easy access to the school. I did not have any problem to access the school I work at, while on the other hand, I found it quite difficult to access state schools and very difficult to access an all-boys Catholic school. Chavez (2008) states that insiders are capable of understanding: "the cognitive, emotional, and/or psychological" values of participants, while also holding: "a more profound knowledge of the historical and practical happenings of the field" (p.481).

4.9.1.1.2 Communication. Taylor (2011) notes that communication between the researchers and their participants is more accessible because of the ongoing contact of the researcher within the field. On the same line, Aguilar (1981), Atkinson et al. (2003) and Henry (2001) advocated that academics working in their habitual field can better perceive the answers given since linguistic and cultural hurdles are not an issue and thus, the participants may be more reachable and less likely to hide characteristics of their lives. I felt that I was able to communicate very easily with all participants of the school where I work during the focus group interviews. However, communication was not an issue in the other three schools.

4.9.1.1.3 Interactions. Aguiler (1981) indicates that for the insider researcher, relationships between the insider researcher and the participants are natural and that researchers following this method are less probable to typecast and deliver judgment on the partakers under study. This may be due to the fact that insider researchers are acquainted with the group and social setting and know how to address the people concerned. Therefore, the colleagues and students of the insider researcher are typically happy to talk to and often appreciate the possibility to reflect upon issues with someone they already know.

4.9.1.2 Disadvantages

4.9.1.2.1 Researcher's Assimilation. I call this the 'researcher's assimilation' (as opposed to the term 'going native' which is used by Ohnuki-Tierney (1984) and O'Reilly (2009), where the researcher embraces the characteristics of the people under study and the surrounding environment, thus becoming part of the group of participants being researched and perhaps losing oneself in the process. Ohnuki-Tierney (1984) suggests that the researcher who has been assimilated needs to find a way to generate a physical detachment between themselves and the researched environment. I was able to physically distant myself at my workplace because at the time I conducted my research there, I was not working full-time, but part-time.

4.9.1.2.2 Research Bias. IR is often seen as subjective or biased, as the researcher is thought to be too familiar with the society under study for one to present thought-provoking questions (Merriam et al., 2001). This refers to research bias, the process where the values, principles and experiences of the researcher may influence the study or data. By spreading my research in four different schools, and using multimethods for data generation, I made sure to keep my research as unbiased as possible. The use of multimethods for data generation helped in making sure that as a researcher, I do not change the answers of the participants.

Having participants replying electronically via a web link to their questionnaire meant that as a researcher I could not tamper with the results. Analysing the questionnaires via the web link sent to the participants meant that the answers had already been quantified by the program used. With regards to my own values influencing my analysis and interpretation of data, I made sure to leave my own values outside of the analysis by first conducting the CHEPDA analyses on the NMC and NCF. I then transcribed the focus group interviews, analysed them and found some similarities between the interviews. The similarities are not mine, but those of the interviewees, their thoughts and their perceptions.

4.9.2 Triangulation

By choosing three different participants categories (students, educators and parents) to research the perception on the VPAS at primary school level, I collected data from three different categories and increased the amount of data generation regarding the different perceptions of the participants. By triangulating the different perspectives of the three categories and comparing the answers between the different schools using the same category of participants, I used the suggestion by Denscombe to analyse and compare the answers with a similar set of completed questionnaires (2014).

The practices of triangulation I used in my research consisted of the methodological triangulation of using between-methods. In methodological triangulation between-methods, the researcher uses alternative methods for data generation and the data is then compared between the different methods used. In data triangulation, the validity of the data is checked by means of different sources of information; in my case the sources are questionnaires and focus group discussions, and CHEPDA of the NMC and NCF. Despite using multimethods to compare data, triangulation does not offer the social scientist the best method and is much better suited for physical science research in order to compare and contrast physical data and facts (Denscombe, 2014). I decided to use another approach called crystallization.

4.9.3 Crystallization

When someone looks at a crystal, the shape, colours, clarity and flaws are seen according to where the onlooker is situated. It is the same with crystallization in qualitative research. In view of the different facets of the crystal, Richardson (1994) argues that crystallization is a much better approach to understand the phenomenon than the two-dimensional triangulation which uses a fixed three-point view, and I agree. I felt that using triangulation would limit my understanding of the perceptions of the many individuals participating in this research.

Crystallization encompasses a multidimensionality of different perspectives in qualitative research (Richardson, 2000a) (Richardson, 2000b). Crystallization widens the number of different methodologies used for data generation so as to obtain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from different methods (Tracy, 2010). Through crystallisation, the researcher can gimpse into the different perceptions of the participants all at once through the different methods and methodologies used (Stewart et al, 2017). This aids the researcher in creating an analysis which is deep and rich while also incorporating even the most complex nuances of the personal accounts of the participants (Stewart et al, 2017). Ellingson (2015) notes how through

crystallization, the research process may gain academic validity. Crystallization reminded me of my interpretation of Foucault's *dispositif* (1980), on how it takes a web of different theories strewn together in a network to make meaning out of a phenomenon. This is another reason why I chose to use crystallization for my research: in order for me to understand the perception of the individual, I used multimethods to generate data, thus providing me with the multidimensionality of different perspectives needed for this research.

4.9.4 Reflexivity

Other tools I used to ensure an unbiased research was writing down my thoughts and experiences in a diary, as suggested by both Van Heugten (2004) and Drake (2010). Drake advocated how diaries work as methods of motivating reflexivity (Drake, 2010). Through reflexive thinking, the researcher may become more aware of their thoughts and potential biases, hence protecting their research from any partialities. Besides reflexive thinking one may use triangulation, a method where data is collected by means of more than one method (Curtin & Fossey, 2007), such as questionnaires, archival data, observations and interviews (Creswell & Miller, 2000; McMillan, 2004). I also add here that one may use crystallization, like I did, to ensure an unbiased research, and why I opted to collect research data through focus group interviews and questionnaires. I now explain another approach I used in my research which assisted me in conducting an objective enquiry, that of trustworthiness.

4.9.5 Trustworthiness

Guba (1981) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) promote four points to help researchers evaluate their work. These are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

4.9.5.1 Credibility. Guba (1981) advises that different methodologies are to be used for a source to be considered credible, suggesting the use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Data selection through different methodologies will establish a confidence in the findings and rely on more than one data generation methodology. The choice of using a multimethods approach in my research and juxtaposing the answers of data analyses from one method onto another helped me to ensure credibility within my research.

4.9.5.2 Transferability. Guba (1981) encourages the researcher to write down detailed descriptions to assist them in understanding the research context and transferring the results of a qualitative method to a written text. Expanding on this principle, Lincoln and Guba (1985) advise the researcher to keep field notes in a journal format using full descriptions. When conducting focus group discussions, I recorded the interviews via audio only, thus limiting the

amount of information I could record, and human attributes such as facial expressions and body language were not recorded. However, I took notes of all the different field experiences I went through, so that when reviewing my notes at the time of writing this chapter, I was able to remember what had occurred. I did this by checking the time lapse of the recording, noting it down on my journal, and noting any mannerisms of the participant during the interview. In this way, I was able to transfer the result of the interview onto the transcriptions as accurately as humanly possible.

4.9.5.3 Dependability. Regarding dependability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out how the researcher needs to show that the findings are consistent and that these could be repeated. This would usually be undertaken through external audits, but since my research is in part fulfilment of an EdD degree, this cannot be done at this stage. However, instead of an external audit, I chose to conduct the research in four different schools with three categories of participants. This was done so that my findings can be consistent when repeated, thus resulting in dependable research. The concluding TA of the focus groups showed that even though the categories and participants varied, the answers were in general very similar and consistent. This made it possible for me to create the codes and eventually the themes through TA in Chapter 6.

4.9.5.4 Confirmability. By opting to understand the perceptions of the participants for my research, I had to be aware of my bias. I had to ensure that when constructing the research questions and the questions in the questionnaires and focus group discussions, these did not reflect my point of view. Having different methods to compare the same questions helped me produce a trustworthy dissertation. With regards to confirmability, I needed to be as neutral as possible, and my years as an EdD student have taught me that no research is value free. This is because ethnological and ontological practices of a researcher are embedded and form part of opinions and thoughts. An unbiased research was made possible through triangulation, crystallization and reflexivity. I now move onto the last section of this chapter, where I discuss resulting issues.

4.10 Resulting Issues

4.10.1 Extra Ethical Review Processes

Is section 4.6 I explained how I had to apply for the ethical approval from the UoS. I also had to apply for the Maltese ethical review process. This took a long time, approximately four months, because I had to redo the PIS and CF according to the template downloaded from the government website. Each document had to be written in both English and Maltese. The

Maltese ethical review process was mandatory in order for me to be granted access to government schools. With regards to the ethical approval from the Secretariat for Catholic Education, I had to forward a copy of the questionnaires, focus group questions, CF and PIS and the UoS approval.

4.10.2 Negotiating Access

I did find some problems with regards to negotiating access. Initially, I had requested permission to conduct my research in two government and two church schools, with one of the latter being my own work-place. From the two government schools I chose, one refused in order to give the educators a break from participating in different research, while the other had only 20 students at grade 5 level. This number of participants was not enough for my research. I reapplied to have my research carried out in 6 other government schools, so that I would not have to reapply again for research permission. With regards to Church schools, I needed a boys-only school. I contacted two boys schools to conduct my research: one did not consent and did not provide any reason why and the other school refused stating that they had a busy year ahead. Finally, my head of school had a meeting with the head of a boys' school, asking him for permission for me to conduct my research where he consented on condition that the research would not take longer than one day.

4.10.3 Questionnaire Responses

The questionnaires were sent within the same week to the 4 different schools. The student category responded very well, exceeding my expectation of two hundred collected questionnaires by a slight margin (n=204). The parent and educator categories yielded the least number of responses (educators n=67; parents n=100).

4.10.4 Focus Group Interview Arrangements

One of the problems I encountered was to schedule the different focus group interviews. The most difficult group was the parent groups, since these parents had to come to the school I was at. One school scheduled the focus groups of the parents and educators on the same day. Another school gave me a date when the head of school was meeting with the parents, and suggested I go to school and ask the parents if they were willing to stay for the discussion after the meeting. This scenario worked very well as the parents did not have to come to school to meet me on yet another day. One school did not email the parents for a focus group, so the person I was liaising with sent the CF and PIS to the parents and an email asking them to participate, and we then scheduled a date for the third focus group. The focus group from my

workplace had to be rescheduled because on the day I was supposed to conduct the focus group, there was a staff meeting.

With regards to educator category, I found 2 different scenarios. At my own workplace, setting a date, time and place was relatively easy, although I was still a bit taken aback by how many colleagues refused to participate in the focus group. With regards to the other three schools, the time allocated for the focus group was agreed upon by the head of schools, which took upon themselves the task of combining the educators' free lessons, thus providing me with a time slot during school hours.

The focus group of the children was the easiest group for me to allocate a time. I had a lot of children whose parents granted permission for me to conduct my focus group with. I left the choice of students up to the teacher's discretion. This was done because if I chose the students myself, I could have come across some problems such as language barriers (if students did not speak Maltese or English), some would have felt left out, pressured, or felt uneasy participating. Having recounted my methodological and methods journey for my research, I now move onto Chapter 5 where I analyse the NMC and NCF using Hyatt's (2013) CHEPDA.

Chapter 5: Maltese Education Policy Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discourse analysis of the NMC and NCF using Hyatt's Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Analyses (CHEPDA) (2013). As discussed in Chapter 4, I have found CHEPDA to be a fitting instrument to dissect and analyse the NCM and NCF because Hyatt's discourse analysis outlines the drivers which are the aims of the document found in the texts and, consequently the levers which are the mechanisms one uses in order to implement a driver. CHEPDA also offers the identification of different relevant lexico-grammatical features while highlighting the drivers (the rationale behind a policy document) and the levers (the mechanisms used to enact the policies) used by the drivers. The lexico-grammatical elements form part of the deconstruction process of a text. My analysis does not include all the eleven criteria discussed in the Critical Literacy Frame (CLF; Hyatt, 2005) since not all are present in the analysed texts. In this research, the lexico-grammatical features I use are i) pronouns, ii) passive and active forms, iii) time-tense and aspect, iv) adjectives, adverbs, nouns, verbs, v) metaphors, vi) presupposition and implication, vii) medium and audience, viii) visual images, and ix) age, class, disability, gender, race/ethnicity and sexual issues.

5.2 Policy Analysis

Since my research is based on understanding the role, subject status and importance of VPAS in Maltese primary schools, this chapter begins by analysing the last two Maltese educational curricula in order to investigate any changes and whether such changes impact the VPAS . In Malta, the role of making knowledge official by means of written texts in the form of curricula and policies falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Employment (MEE). The role of the Government in the fashioning of curricula may result in selective knowledge being prioritized. Thus, a specific group with their own values and knowledge tend to have the upper hand in the spreading of specific know-how, pointing to Bernstein's (1990) recontextualization. The chosen knowledge may then result in being considered as official knowledge by the state and presented as the curriculum (Apple, 1993). This indicates that the selection of knowledge by policy makers is directly linked to power relations, in this case power which has very real effects on students learning through the curriculum which lies in the hands of the curriculum makers. The following consists of two short reviews of the National Minimum Curriculum (MEE, 1999) and the National Curriculum Framework (MEE, 2012) in relation as to whether and how the global market affects Maltese primary school curricula.

5.2.1 Analyses of Maltese Policies

When analysing the NMC and NCF policies, two predominant principles were disclosed as being relevant to this research, namely: a) knowledge and the norm of subject hierarchy and b) the importance of the future workforce. These two principles were chosen because they are present throughout the NMC and NCF policies, not just pertaining to one section, but throughout the whole document. Understanding the principles of knowledge (what and whose knowledge is of most worth) and the norm of subject hierarchy and the importance of the future workforce (including my personal capital-abilities-machine theory) was crucial to understand the different subject's status and why this occurs. There are more principles mentioned within the NMC and NCF, such as belonging and inclusion. I have opted to not discuss these values in this chapter because they do not correspond to the theories aforementioned in Chapter 2 and 3 and also because the scope of this thesis is to identify the subject status of VPAS in Maltese primary schools. I now move onto analysing the NMC.

5.2.1.1 National Maltese Curriculum (NMC). The introduction of the NMC (MEE, 1999) begins with the responsibility of the state "to ensure the existence of a system of schools and institutions accessible to all Maltese citizens catering for the full development of the whole personality" (p.1). The NMC safeguards the basic educational rights of all students (MEE, 1999, p.13), focusing on a student-centred holistic learning experience (MEE, 1999, p.5, 9).

5.2.1.1.1 Knowledge and the Norm of Subject Hierarchy . The NMC reads in a manner where the CATS are given prominence throughout the text. This is seen from the beginning of this policy, from the forewords of Dr James Calleja, Chairperson of the Post-Consultation Working Committee, and Professor Grace Grima, Chairperson of the Curriculum Review Committee, where they state that "This document outlines the core components that should govern our national curriculum" (MEE, 1999, p.ix). The word 'core' can be understood as fundamental, thus underlying the importance of these subjects throughout the curriculum. Thus, the subjects which are considered more important within the primary school curriculum are called the 'core' subjects. The CATS, as I have outlined in section 1.3, are mathematics, languages (Maltese and English) and science. The NMC states that: "Development of enhanced skills, knowledge and attitudes is linked to the basic subjects. At primary level, the basic subjects are: Maltese, English, mathematics, religion, social studies, media education, physical education and sport, science, technology, and creative expression." (MEE, 1999, p.77)

This may also be seen through the lens of the hierarchy of the curriculum, which includes the manner the subjects are listed, where Maltese, English and mathematics come first. The other subjects can incorporate the CATS within the lessons while it is stressed that subjects such as the VPAS can aid CATS. The latter was discussed in Chapter 2, where I reviewed the manner by which the VPAS aid in the teaching and learning of CATS, mainly because CATS are given a lot of weight during the school day and are highly emphasised in exams, both on a national and supranational level as discussed in the literature review. This indicates that this is a world-wide phenomenon, and not limited to Maltese education.

Consequently, the CATS' values are raised as subjects that all students should be exposed to. It is understood that there is a set of knowledge that all students have to learn. Continuing from the previous quote, I cite the following: "This document regards the integration of knowledge, centring [sic] around themes, as the kind of pedagogical approach that comes closest to the idea of a holistic education. This methodology should be the dominant feature of our schools" (MEE, 1999, p.77). The school becomes the ground where knowledge is transmitted, the teachers become the medium to transmit this knowledge and the students thus become the receptors of this knowledge.

Another quote I present articulates the education objectives found in the NMC. There are 14 objectives in total, ranging from 'Self-awareness and the Development of a System of Ethical and Moral Values', 'The Development of Citizens and a Democratic Environment' to 'Developing a Sense of Identity through Creative Expression'. An interesting point taken from Objective 1 is that:

> The educational objectives […] reflect the educational aspirations […] of the educational authorities. These objectives confirm the educational principles and vision of this document that are mainly intended to contribute to the best possible formation of every person so that good Maltese and world citizens can be produced (MEE, p.47).

Such an affirmation, with the use of the word 'produced' at the end truly shows that the agenda for this curriculum is to 'produce' beings and not to encourage the development of the self. I would like to link Freire's banking concept to Foucault's 'abilities-machine', in how education deposits knowledge deemed fit by policy and curriculum makers while moulding the students into the abilities-machines deemed fit by the state, transforming the student into the adult ready for work. Thus, the student becomes a capital-abilities-machine, an adult who works and pays taxes according to what the state needs and wants.

5.2.1.1.2 The Importance of the Future Workforce. Students are regarded as the future members of the workforce of a nation. I am stating this because when reading the NMC, I found that the authors of this text highlight (consciously or not) the importance of training for future work, as if the main focus of Maltese education is to train students for their future work as designated by the state. However, the NMC promotes a hierarchical form of education that is aimed at capitalising this concept of a work oriented educational agenda.

Nevertheless, there is an idiosyncrasy here. The NMC notes how values are important and how the VPAS curricula are designed to fulfil specific tasks, such as acting as tools for democracy and a means of educating the student in creative and critical thinking (MEE, 1999, p.18-19). As things stand, the curriculum does not promote a democratic education for all, because one size does not fit all. Therefore, the authors try to promote a democratic curriculum, but in reality, this is not encouraged. The NMC understands the importance of a holistic education: "Holistic education acknowledges the interdependence of psychomotor, intellectual, affective, social and cultural learning. The educational community would be selling students short if it privileges one of these aspects of the learning process at the expense of others" (MEE, 1999, p.26). Nevertheless, the teaching-to-the-test phenomena leads to the narrowing of the curriculum. These two theories were reviewed in Chapter 2 section 2.2, and literature showed how some subjects such as the VPAS are suffering at the expense of the CATS because of the tests being carried out on these subjects, resulting in a hierarchy of curriculum subjects.

The NMC also understands the importance of the VPAS in the formation of the identity of the student, and that one should be conscious of the history of a country through "the history of art, the architecture, the music" (MEE, 1999, p.93). The NMC perceives the VPAS as nurturing for the child in their holistic education by engaging in: "art and crafts, drama, movement and music" (MEE, 1999, p.75). In effect a new curriculum, entitled the NCF, a curriculum which further promotes the CATS over the VPAS took its place. ,. I will expand on this in the next section.

5.2.1.2 National Curriculum Framework (NCF)

5.2.1.2.1 Knowledge and the Norm of Subject Hierarchy. As an introduction to the NCF, the authors point out that one of the aims of this curriculum is that CATS are "indispensable" for the education of the student, and that students: "… have as an indispensible [sic] prerequisite mastery in Maltese and English, mathematics, a science subject and digital literacy." (MEE, 2012, p.iii).

The word 'indispensable' shows that there is a need for primary education to position these subjects at the top of the curriculum hierarchy, that these subjects are meant to enjoy a high status, simply because the NCF policy states so. This shows how the NCF follows the NMC with regards to Maltese, English, mathematics, science (and now also digital literacy) as it considers them CATS. The NCF places a heavy emphasis on CATS to the detriment of VPASs, thus creating a hierarchy within the curriculum. As evidence of this, I refer back to the pie chart of section 1.3 p.5, which is represents the different time distribution allocated to primary school subjects (MEE, 2012, p.17). With different students and therefore different aptitudes and different capabilities, education should not be focused solely on Maltese, English, mathematics and science. Among the students, there will be future artists, musicians, actors, producers, directors, designers, and other artistic creators. There will also be accountants, mathematicians, doctors, architects and scientists. Humanity is made up of different individuals, and each individual has his or her own needs. Thus, education cannot expect all students to adhere to the same guidelines and examinations. While it is important to equip students leaving schools with knowledge and skills required for them to be able to find jobs and have good careers, it is equally important to understand that not all students will be able to achieve the skills taught at school solely through the CATS, as there are students whose abilities go beyond the academic.

5.2.1.2.2 The Importance of the Future Workforce. "The NCF 2012 looks upon education as a journey towards personal enrichment and empowerment, as a mechanism to uphold social justice and as an important tool for inclusion and employability" (MEE, 2012, p.vii). The NCF builds on the NMC in promoting employability. The term 'social justice' is used as a tool to reform education in encouraging students to "work towards the acquisition of a formal qualification in key competences as the foundation for lifelong learning" (MEE, 2012, p.iii). According to the authors of the NCF, the new curriculum policy seeks to address the problem of early school leavers and students dropping out before graduating from secondary school. The Eurostat indicator as presented in the Early Leaving from Education and Training Strategy (ELET) show that Malta had one of the highest rates of school leavers, that of 16.7%, as opposed to the low rates of Croatia (3.3%), Slovenia (4.2%), and Switzerland (4.4%; MEAE, 2021, p.4). In Malta, the rate of early school leavers has decreased over the years, going from 23.8% in 2010 down to 17.2% in 2019 (MEAE, 2021, p.5).

The NCF understands that early school leavers do not have the necessary skills and capabilities needed in order to find meaningful employment. A solution had to be found. During school

hours, the students were taught the necessary skills and competences which are indispensable for seeking and procuring jobs. This led to a reduction in the number of early school leavers:

> This NCF addresses the gaps in our learning processes that over the years have led to absenteeism, to significant rates of early school leavers and to low skills and competences for a proportion of students. It will strengthen the already existing structures that are transforming schools into modern education centres where active and meaningful learning can take place. It will lead to an increased participation rate in post-secondary and tertiary education. It will attract more students to lifelong learning, encouraging them to embark on further and higher education streams leading to new and better formal qualifications. (MEE, 2012, p.vii)

From the point of view of the state, unemployed students are not able to pay taxes and therefore unable to provide or return revenue to the government. Once again education is seen as a means to an end, as a way to teach the necessary skills for future employability. The NCF states that:

> The educational system should prepare students for the world of work by helping them to develop knowledge and acquire information about the different sectors of the Maltese economy […] the changing work environment […] different workplaces and the required skills […] the system of taxation […] the search for employment [and] adult training agencies […] ability to solve problems related to the world of work […] ability to choose a career in an informed and responsible manner […] proficiency in all aspects of literacy and numeracy [and that] a lack of interest in one's education can result in unemployment; – the work content in each trade and profession is constantly changing. (MEE, 2012, p.59)

Early school leavers meant that these students did not fit into the required category of future employees. Once again, I refer to Apple's statement where the student is seen as a commodity for society (1982). The student is objectified into a service for the state, and no matter how many documents promote lifelong learning, providing the necessary skills, etc, it nevertheless revolves around the fact that ultimately, the student will grow into an adult who will need to find a job, earn money, and be able to sustain themselves without the need of the help of the state, but who also contributes to the state by being able to pay taxes.

This is the reason why the NCF sought to stress the importance of lifelong learning and, like the NMC, tries to address diversity and inclusion by providing for all learners through differentiated learning. The following is a quote taken from the NCF with regards to the importance of including all students and adapting teaching to serve the students:

> The principles of diversity and inclusion which underpin the NCF imply that at all stages learners of all aptitudes and competences […] need flexible learning programmes providing diverse learning experiences that cater for a wide spectrum of learners and allow for different rates of progression […] Different approaches are needed to address different learning needs. (MEE, 2021, p.40)

Unfortunately, this does not translate into the reality of classroom teaching. While in the written documents this is promoted and encouraged by the NCF, in practice these objectives are not being reached. This will be further articulated and evidenced through the analysis of the questionnaires and focus group interviews in the following chapter. A discussion on how this is affecting the status of the primary subjects in Maltese schools follows.

Both NMC and NCF portray a concern as to how one should educate the person holistically (MEE, 1999; MEE, 2012). The NCF highlights the importance of the VPASs by providing schools with a timetable plan for a weekly lesson throughout the scholastic year (MEE, 2012). The NCF assigns limited hours to art, dance, drama, music, and literature. Moreover, art, music, and literature are given less importance since these may not always be taught at schools in an equal manner, and therefore, an inconsistency or a discrimination may result in that not all students have the same opportunities to choose these subjects. This is resulting in a diverged curriculum depending on what each school offers (DQSE, 2012). This research has discovered that not all schools teach the same VPASs: school A teaches drama and music (with art when time permits being taught by the class teacher), school B teaches art and music, school C teaches art and music and school D teaches art only. Drama lessons in school B and D are offered once per term or not at all.

Through the outcomes of the NCF and its implementation, the MEE anticipated higher percentage marks in the various high-stakes testing, such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS (MEE, 2012, p.24). Relating my reference to GERM (Sahlberg, 2011) in Chapter 2 and the increased stress on literacy and numeracy, the Maltese curriculum is also being affected. CATS have been allocated more lessons than VPASs, which may also be the result of the teaching-to-test phenomenon. The discrepancy on the importance placed on CATS and that which is placed on the VPASs shows that a curriculum hierarchy is also in effect, leading to more time being spent on CATS, which in turn leads to the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon. In Malta, this is narrowing the curriculum and side-lining the VPASs to the periphery of education, by limiting the number of hours being allocated for the VPAS and maximizing the hours of teaching time for CATS. I now follow this section by analysing the NMC and NCF using CHEPDA by Hyatt (2013).

5.2.2 CHEPDA Informed Policy Analysis

This section is divided into three segments: in the first part (a) I familiarise the reader on the NMC and NCF using Hyatt's (2005) orientation frames to highlight information of the policies

which have not been yet discussed; in part (b) I start by contextualising the policy texts and evaluating the drivers and the levers, while in part (c) I progress onto deconstructing the policies and analysing the lexico-grammatical characteristics of the NMC and NCF. Throughout the CHEPDA, I address the first research questions: *What is the relationship between global economic markets and the primary school curriculum, with particular focus on the VPAS?*

   5.2.2.1. Orientation Frames. Hyatt suggests an Orientation Frame to the text (Hyatt, 2005, p.54) before any criteria analyses.   In Hyatt's CLF (2005), this table is found before the 'Deconstructing' section prior to commencing the analysis of the micro lexico-grammatical elements of a text. I have however decided to place this here as it will give the reader a historic understanding of the NMC and NCF as well as a brief evolution and trajectory of the policies. Tables 5 and 6 represent the orientation frames used for the NMC and NCF respectively.

   5.2.2.1.1 NMC

Table 5

CHEPDA Orientation Frame NMC

Question	National Minimum Curriculum
1. Is this a typical text of its type?	This is a typical curriculum text written to address Maltese education from kindergarten level up to post-secondary school level. It impacts the Maltese educational system nationally as schools are meant to follow the document. Auditing of the implementation process of the curriculum occurs regularly at schools by the Ministry of Education.
2. Who produced this?	The Ministry of Education and Employment
3. Who will read it?	Educators, senior management teams such as Headmasters and Principals, and maybe teachers and parents. Educational researchers and critics and university students.
4. Will everyone understand this text in the same way?	No. The writings are very vague. It leaves a lot to the imagination of the individual reading. Interpretations will vary according to the role of the individual in education and their positionality.
5. Why was it produced?	In May 1987 the general election in Malta was won by the Nationalist Party, a Christian Democratic party. A year later, the government passed a wide-ranging Education Act title 'Chapter 327' (MEE, 1988) through parliament paving the way for the creation of the NMC for both government and private schools (MEE, 1999). This NMC can be read as a document which

testifies to the objective of the government to safeguard core standards in the Maltese educational system.

6. What is missing from the text?	Even though the authors promote a holistic curriculum, the emphasis is on education being used to prepare students for the future workforce. It does not cater for a broad and balanced education each child deserves.
7. How does this text reflect wider society?	The NMC promotes a hierarchical form of education that is pitched to a capitalist notion of work. The NMC promotes education in a manner to mould students in preparation to become Malta's future workforce.
8. What could we do about this text if we disagree with it?	Review processes prior to publication were enacted between 1996-1999 and the NMC (MEE, 1999) document is the result of these reviews (MEE, 1999).

5.2.2.1.2 NCF

Table 6

CHEPDA Orientation Frame NCF

Question	National Curriculum Framework
1. Is this a typical text of its type?	Yes, a curriculum addressing Maltese education from kindergarten level up to post-secondary level. Curriculum auditors regularly visit the schools to maintain standards and make sure the curriculum is implemented.
2. Who produced this?	The Ministry of Education and Employment
3. Who will read it?	Educators, senior management teams such as Headmasters and Principals, and maybe teachers and parents. Educational researchers, critics and university students.
4. Will everyone understand this text in the same way?	Although the NCF is clearer than the NMC, different readers will perceive the text differently.

5. Why was it produced?	The NCF moved away from subject learning and introduced cross-curricular teaching. It also promoted a learner-centred way of teaching. It was written with the intention of promoting the school attendance of students and to reduce the percentage of early school leavers (MEE, 2012).
6. What is missing from the text?	Even though the authors promote a holistic curriculum, like the NMC, the emphasis on education still remained that of having less school leavers and to prepare students for the future workforce. It does not cater for a broad and balanced education each child deserves.
7. How does this text reflect wider society?	The NCF presented guidelines regarding the skills, knowledge, abilities, as well as approaches and values that are to be taught at schools in a statutory manner in order to guide to the Learning Outcome Frameworks (LOF). The aim of the LOF is to support the NCF, and to distance students and schools from knowledge-centric curriculums. It remains a curriculum that focuses on CATS and digital literacy much like the NMC, while citing other subjects such as the VPAS and PE. This promotes a hierarchical subject education similar to the NMC. The NCF focus on life-long learning is also inclined to encourage a capitalist notion of work.
8. What could we do about this text if we disagree with it?	The draft of the NCF was issued to the public in 2011. An evaluation was carried out by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE) within the Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE) and the result was the publication of the NCF (MEE, 2012).

5.2.2.2 Contextualisation. Both NMC and NCF are official curriculum policies published by the Government through the Ministry of Education, written in expressions which more or less convey the intentions of the policy makers. The identification of drivers and levers is essential in CHEPDA where drivers and levers characterise the expressions used to reveal the aims or goals of any policy (Hyatt, 2013).

Part of contextualising a document through the use of CHEPDA also involves the analyses of the temporal context a document was written in. Foucault's *dispositif* examines a discourse through its temporality as does Hyatt's CHEPDA. This was one of the reasons why I chose both frameworks, because I wanted to understand why, at this particular moment in time, different primary school subjects enjoy different status. The evolution from the NMC to the NCF can be seen through the CHEPDA temporal context within the contextualisation of the policies. This temporality has also been discussed with regards to the curricula perspectives in Chapter 3 in section 3.4.2. Here I analysed the trajectory of the NMC and the NCF through the curriculum perspectives, and how there was a change from the NMC with a Technical perspective to the NCF which included the influence of the Postmodern curriculum perspective. Another temporal context will be discussed in the following section, where I will discuss how the Maltese education has been affected by globalisation. I have chosen to discuss this temporality within the CHEPDA analyses of the NMC and NCF because this correlates directly with the first research question of my thesis, that is, how globalisation has influenced Maltese education.

Another aspect of CHEPDA involves the analyses of warrants. As discussed in Chapter 4 section 4.4.2.2, there are three warrants: the evidentiary, the accountability and the political warrant. I will be discussing the political warrant in the section pertaining to inclusivity as a driver, and I will discuss the evidentiary and accountability warrants in the section regarding life-long learning as a lever.

5.2.2.2.1 Drivers

1. **The Promotion of Globalisation in Education:** Throughout my discussions of globalisation in education in Chapter 2, I noted how the term global education encompasses Maltese education, and how global changes affect primary curricula everywhere. I now refer to Block's (2018) explanation on how by means of the privatisation of state markets, there is a decline of the authority of the nation on its economy, which in turn leads to a hyperglobalist view of the market. Hyperglobalism destabilises the boundaries of many

nations, leaving the countries borderless and amalgamated into one big global state of cultural, political and economic affairs (Corry, 2012). Hyperglobalism steers the national economy to an international homogenous global market. Following Street's (2008) vision, globalisation is rooted in the ideologies of the state, as well in that of the business sector of the particular country, schools are moulded according to the needs envisioned by them in order to accommodate the ever-changing global economy (Spring, 2008). The way schools are moulded as programmes for the state to accommodate the market shows that the way the term 'globalisation' is being used here in a hyperglobalist sense.

Hyperglobalism shows how schools are commodified to serve the market (Heller, 2003). The commodification of education shows a shift from education as teaching future generations to the function of schools and what the schools entail in a globalised way, where for example, a school in the U.K. will mirror what a school in Malta does. My interpretation is that schools are seen as commodities through a utilitarian lens for the benefit of the economic market, and not to serve the child, where as a result, the child is also seen as a capital-abilities-machine to serve the state in the same utilitarian way. This hyper-globalisation of school settings epitomises the functionality and designs of the factories' settings, thus mirroring Foucault's theory on how schools are used as factory-settings to programme the future workforce. It is no wonder then that the NMC talks about globalisation as the need for change in schools: "Such a document cannot fail to look as well at the needs of society within which every child […]. Dominant features of present-day society are globalisation and change" (MEE, 1999, p.9); "The socio-economic evolution that took place in recent years is characterised in particular by […] globalisation of ideas" (MEE, 1999, p.21).

The NMC also discussed the fact that through globalisation, Malta was becoming a country that needs to cater for different nationalities:

> Particularly strong are the needs: […] for our country to move forward with an identity in a global scenario where the concepts of nation and national identity are constantly called into question through the process of globalisation and the emergence of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and pluralist societies. (MEE, 1999, p.21)

It is to be noted that the NCF is the first curriculum framework written since Malta became a member of the European Union in 2004 (MEE, 2012), showing how a policy text reflected the temporality and historical aspect of time when the document was written. This lies behind the palpable sense of urgency and importance within the curriculum policy for

a discussion on globalisation and the need to provide educators with the necessary means to embrace it within education. With this neoliberal approach to education, the NCF acknowledged this change by stating that the NCF is the: "[…] response to the changing demands of individuals and society, rapid changes in our education system driven by globalization" (MEE, 2012, p.iii).

In this case, one can consider the promotion of globalisation as a driver through the mechanism of life-long learning (which I will be discussing this in section 4.1.2) and the NCF as the reaction brought forward because of the changes in education and to the term globalisation. The term no longer discusses the issue of encompassing different nationalities within our Maltese schools, but has now evolved to show how the global market affects the educational sector. This is why I chose to use CHEPDA, because it does not only focus on the analysis of the word, but also considers the temporality the word was written in, reflecting Foucault's *dispositif*. This indicates that by applying Hyatt's (2013) CHEPDA together with Foucault's *dispositif*, the temporal context of CHEPDA can be analysed showing different historical actualities and the demands being pushed onto the educational sector as it changed throughout the years. One lever implemented as a mechanism for globalisation are policies which promote life-long learning. I will be discussing this in the section entitled 'Levers' following the different drivers being analysed in my study. I now move onto the next driver entitled 'Employability'.

2. **Employability:** Both the NMC and NCF agree that education is a tool for a more efficient workforce as previously noted when discussing the importance of the future workforce sections of this chapter. As evidence, I quote the following taken from the NMC and NCF respectively: "keeping oneself abreast of developments in one's field of work; not falling into a rut if unemployed for a period of time" and "Is ready to: - follow training courses of long duration required for various occupations […]; appreciate the value of private enterprise and self employment [*sic*]." (NMC, MEE, 1999, p.74); "The indication of the range of experiences in compulsory education provides students with key competences necessary for lifelong learning, employability and responsible citizenship" (NCF, MEE, 2012, p.x).

This 'better' workforce is desirable in order for the state to have a productive workforce, who, not only make sure the state survives economically, but also produces an economic surplus. I label this as the main driver for both policies, showing how education has the

purpose of producing employable citizenry, with the skills and competencies required by the state. The NMC states different learning objectives, one of which I will be remarking on in particular. This is 'Objective 9: Effective and Productive Participation in the World of Work'. This objective sees the education sector as a "system [which] should prepare students for the world of work" (MEE, 1999, p.59). With regards to the NCF, the then Education Minister Dolores Cristina wrote how education is an important tool for employability (MEE, 2012). Cristina also wrote how "Citizens with formal qualifications stand a better chance of employment; they add value to our economy" (MEE, 2012, p.viii). In fact, she ends her introduction by writing that "employability [is] our desired goal" (MEE, 2012, p.x). This is a very explicit remark by Cristina, showing how the objective of education during the period when the NMC was written was to create an education system which services the state by making students 'employable'. This shows once again how education contributes to the neoliberal agenda.

The NMC speaks of creative thinking, and how the VPAS are used to enhance the identity of the nation. Both curricula concern themselves with the question of how best one should educate the person holistically (MEE, 1999; MEE, 2012). Students are prospective members of the workforce of a nation in both primary and secondary sectors (MEE, 1999). The NCF also portrays education as preparation of the student for the labour force as portrayed using the following excerpts: "[…] the NCF is utilitarian in its approach given that it places undue emphasis on preparing students for the labour market" (MEE, 2012, p.4);

> […] the end of the compulsory education cycle, young people will have the necessary certification to access further and higher education and be in possession of a tool that adds value to their life and their employability. […] In a competitive economy new skills are required for new jobs so that people move towards better job quality and working conditions. (MEE, 2012, p.13)

As such, the curriculum places unnecessary stress on the student to prepare them for the labour market, showing how this policy and the policy makers regard the students as what I term capital-abilities-machine, that the child is seen for what they give the state. In this curriculum, the state is ensuring that the main focus of education is to prepare the child for employment. I will now discuss the levers behind the drivers of this section.

5.2.2.2.2   Levers

1. **Literacy Implementation:** I start this section by discussing the term 'literacy by Street (2006). Street (2006) states that:

> The 'autonomous' model of literacy works from the assumption that literacy in itself – autonomously – will have effects on other social and cognitive practices. The model, however, disguises the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin it and that can then be presented as though they are neutral and universal ... The alternative, ideological model of literacy ... offers a more culturally sensitive view of literacy practices as they vary from one context to another. This model starts from different premises than the autonomous model – it posits instead that literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical and neutral skill ... It is about knowledge: the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, being. Literacy, in this sense, is always contested. (pp.7-8)

Using Street's (2006) interpretation of the term, I understand that the Maltese concept of literacy reflects the autonomous model of literacy. Street (2000) notes how policy makers need to be conscious of how the different models of literacy influence education. This argument can be made since the autonomous literacy model focuses on the different aspects of the individual, or understands that the autonomous literacy model hides the cultural and ideological values inherent within the policy makers of the NCF in their promotion of a set of knowledge to be deposited onto the child through 'literacy'. As discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.1, the term 'literacy' is "the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media" (MEE, 2021, p.5); this definition is found in the policy 'A National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo 2021-2030' (MEE, 2021).

The literacy policy stresses the importance of literacy, the writing and reading part embedded in all subjects. This policy highlights the impact of globalisation on Maltese curricula by targeting the promotion of both English and Maltese literacy. Thus, literacy is the lever the NCF promoted as a mechanism for globalization and employability. Thus, globalisation as a driver pushed the importance of literacy beyond the CATS but on to the VPAS as well. Specialised lessons such as music, art, and PE need to have a literacy criterion implemented within the schemes of work for each scholastic term, even though the VPAS lessons take place only once a week.

Once again I justify the use of CHEPDA for my analysis because through the analyses of the term 'literacy' in my study, I have seen the progression of the term in both the NMC and NCF, reflecting the temporal occurrences and needs of the times the policies were written in. I now move onto the final lever of this analysis.

2. **Life-Long Learning:** The Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 (MEE, 2015) starts by defining lifelong learning as: "[…] the opportunity to learn throughout […] early childhood education and compulsory schooling to vocational education and training (VET), higher education, adult education and learning in our senior years" (MEE, 2020, p.7). I have chosen to discuss lifelong learning as a lever as I believe that it is a mechanism used to aid globalisation and employability. Lifelong learning is being seen as the answer to early school leavers, students who opt not to graduate or who graduate from their O Levels but do not go on to higher-secondary or tertiary education. According to the MNLLS:

    > Malta has a high number of early school leavers (22.6% compared to the EU average of 12.8%). […] The percentage of 30 to 34 year-olds attaining tertiary education is relatively low (22.4% compared to the EU average of 35.8%). […] There is a much higher share of adults with low-level education in Malta compared with the EU (61.9% versus 25.8%). (MEE, 2020, p.9)

    Malta emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning as a means to further promote the collaboration between training entities, the business community and education. This is to help the establishment of: "education and training through the academic and vocational recognition of qualifications within the European Union, and to stress the contribution made by education and training to the equality of opportunities" (MEE, 2020, p.102). The NMC notes that a "curriculum should provide an educational experience which: […] motivates and prepares [students] to be lifelong learners" (MEE, 1999, p.23). For the NMC, lifelong education is that "students [should] emerge from the obligatory curricular experience with skills and attitudes that enable them to continue to learn and live effectively and productively" (MEE, 1999, p.26).

    The NCF notes that a variety of practices in compulsory education prepares students with essential capabilities required for them to be responsible citizens and achieve employability and lifelong learning (MEE, 2012, p.x). Thus, education should provide different paths of learning for students to: "have opportunities to fulfil their potential within a lifelong learning context" (MEE, 2012, p.xiii). The way the NCF focuses on

lifelong learning as a means for the student to be eligible for future employability is utilitarian in nature. If a student achieves lifelong learning, then according to the NCF they can secure a good job. The NMC notes that for an individual to be a lifelong learner, one has to "be aware of one's educational needs and the limitations of one's skills" (MEE, 2012, p.xiii). It is difficult to argue with such a statement but unfortunately for the student to be aware of their capabilities and limitations is not always helpful. If a student does not achieve high marks in mathematics, and mathematics is a CATS, they are still expected to pass an exam in the subject both at a national and/or supranational setting. Thus, even if the student knows their limitations and capabilities, where one of the capabilities is a talent for VPAS or PE, this student can go no further in the subject they love without first achieving a pass in CATS exams. This is also the case with regards to the NCF.

Throughout the outcomes of the NCF and its implementation, the NCF anticipates higher percentage marks in the various high-stakes testing, such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS (MEE, 2012, p.24). There is the element of the accountability warrant within the NCF, as part of the contextualisation process. The Accountability warrant is inherent to the value of life-long learning and its importance for the future workforce was previously discussed. This warrant may be perceived by means of the high-stakes test results, the competitive globalisation in education and the effects of the market on education which seem to be the force behind the levers found in both the NMC and NCF. Even though both the NMC and the NCF promote life-long learning, they do not use evidence-based examples of previous test marks within the policies. This shows that both the NMC and the NCF do not use the evidentiary warrant. The NCF aims at: "Increase[ing] participation rate in post-secondary and tertiary education. It will attract more students to lifelong learning, encouraging them to embark on further and higher education streams leading to new and better formal qualifications" (MEE, 2012, p.vii).

In my first research question, I wanted to analyse how the global market influences Maltese education. On August 28th, 2021, the Malta Chamber of Commerce issued a call for the age of compulsory education to be raised from 16 years to 18 years (MCOC, 2021). This reflects Broudy's (1981) stance of how the market manages the curriculum, previously discussed in Chapter 2. This suggestion generated a wave of different arguments from different sectors. Using Foucault's *dispositif* one can see how by means of the premise to increase the school leaving age for compulsory education from 16 to 18

years, and even increasing the temporal context of a policy, life-long learning would be used as a lever to decrease the percentage of school leavers because: "Early school leaving is an obstacle to economic growth and employment. It hampers productivity and competitiveness, and fuels poverty and social exclusion" (MCOC, 2021, p.25).

For me, this is a clear example of how education has indeed become a production process for students. Schools are seen and utilised using the factory-settings I previously discussed in Chapter 2. Life-long learning and the move to increase the school-leaving age shows how education is not merely driven by the concept of teaching the child, but shows that there is governmentality in action in the Maltese state. The Malta Chamber of Commerce can be considered as an external organisation which implements its power within the government by means of technologies of governance, as I have discussed in Chapter 2. This technological governance would be the lever of hypothetically increasing the age of compulsory education.

Having reviewed the drivers and the levers, I now understand that the primary aim of Maltese education is not in educating the child for the sake of imparting knowledge and for the child to grow and develop into an adult who can think for himself or herself, but how education takes on a utilitarian role and is used as a 'tool' by which the child is moulded by the state to fit into what the state deems fit into abilities-machines. The utilitarian way education is being used is the reason why I chose to discuss both Spencer's (1861) 'what knowledge is of most worth?' and Apple's (1990) 'whose knowledge is of most worth?' in Chapter 2. I now move onto deconstructing these two policies and try to unearth the different lexicogrammatical elements used in their construction.

   5.2.2.3 Deconstructing. As I wrote in Chapter 4, Hyatt explains how "pronouns, voice and tense can also act as part of the lexico-grammatical construction of a 'reality'" (Hyatt, 2013, p.842). This interpretation of "reality" coincides with Foucault's governance of power within policy texts, how policy makers construct reality, and, as a result, how policies are used to reflect governance in education. I now embark on deconstructing the NMC and NCF by focusing on the lexico-grammatical elements by Hyatt found in his Critical Literacy Frame (Hyatt, 2005) previously considered in Chapter 3.

5.2.2.3.1 Pronouns. Pronouns used in policy discourse are either inclusive (we, us, our, etc.) or exclusive (they, them, it, she, he, their, your, you, etc.). The use of pronouns is a mode through which the reader feels a sense of participation with the policy and whether they are allied with the beliefs and values of the author. Pronouns are fundamental in how an author decides to address and name a group of people or individuals. Thus, they also register power relations and are deemed political.

The word 'we' is widely used in both the NMC and the NCF. In fact, when searching for the pronoun, I found 18 examples of 'we' in the NMC and 32 in the NCF. The pronoun 'our' appears 63 times in the NMC and 58 in the NCF. I wanted to count these inclusive pronouns because I wanted to see whether the inclusivity of the pronouns aided in providing the policies with an inclusive voice. My interest lies in whether pronouns such as 'we' and 'our' aid in making the reader feel that they are part of the policy because the inclusive pronouns embrace the readers and makes them feel part of the strategic discourse.

Both NMC and NCF use inclusive pronouns yet, as a reader, I am more aware that I am an outsider in the policy making process when reading the NMC than while reading the NCF. This may be because the NMC also contains exclusive pronouns, such as you. On page 5 alone, there are three sentences starting with the pronoun "you …": "You will be pleased to find…", "You see, in a…", and "You will recognize…". However, the NMC juggles both inclusive and exclusive pronouns, as evidenced in the following extract:

> As a reader of this document you will find in it the instruments for making sure that there is continuity in our culture from the unique Maltese culture of the past to the Maltese culture of the future. This is because we do not wish to lose what is valuable in our character and outlook from one generation to the next. And you will also find in this document clear guidelines for making sure that there is adaptation and change in our whole culture (MEE, 1999, p.5).

Contrastingly, the NCF takes a different tone which has a more inclusive quality thus making the reader feel part of the policy enactment process. This discursive construction offers the reader the illusion of having prior knowledge and prior collaboration of the policy processes, a mode of legitimation:

> The framework must be read in the context of ambitious yet achievable targets which we are setting for ourselves. Our small population gives us an advantage of size that we must exploit to the children's benefit. We are capable of providing a quality education to all our children given the priority and support given to educational services in our country. This framework encourages us to exploit this advantage to the

benefit of our full range of our students including vulnerable groups and high-performing students (MEE, 2012, p.ix).

5.2.2.3.2 Passive & Active Forms. Hyatt (2005) proposes that passive and active verb choices can 'elide' the agents involved in the background of the policies and thus eluding any responsibility which eventually arose from the ramifications of the implementation and enactment of the policies (p.48). Both the NMC and NCF follow an active voice throughout their discourse, which may make the reader feel that they are not alone in the enactment and implementation of the policy. The following are examples from the NMC and NCF and the use of active verbs: "My colleagues and I are proud to present to you what you yourselves – experts, teachers, parents and other stakeholders – have wisely created" (MEE, 1999, p.5). In this quote, the then Minister of Education, Galea, wants the readers to feel their voices were included when this discourse was created, because the opinions of the stakeholders matter. It may also give the reader a sense of insider knowledge similar to the first mode of legitimation:

> As a reader of this document you will find in it the instruments for making sure that there is continuity in our culture from the unique Maltese culture of the past to the Maltese culture of the future. […] And you will also find in this document clear guidelines for making sure that there is adaptation and change in our whole culture (MEE, 1999, p.5).

On the other hand, even though the previous quote (taken from the same page) encourages the reader to feel part of the NMC implementation, the reference here distinguishes the reader from the writer, in the sense that the reader does not have inside knowledge, but that the discourse is the knowledge the reader needs for the NMC to be implemented. The NCF uses a different voice, one where the writers and the readers are assumed to be both on the same page and working towards one goal, depicted through the use of inclusive pronouns plus active verbs.

5.2.2.3.3 Time-Tense and Aspect. Hyatt (2005) describes how certain verb tenses are used to 'construct understanding about events' (p.48). Hyatt gives an example of the present simple tense and how this tense is used to present the claims as unquestionable. The use of the present simple tense in the previous quote (NCF) shows how such an action is to be taken over time in a productive manner, where the VPAS are to act as a means to continuously promote Maltese national identity along the years, and not just as a one-time phenomenon. The choice of the continuous tense represents that a time frame is not necessarily the focus of the discourse, but the outcome is, emphasising the importance of the Maltese place within Europe and the global picture for the reader. This action is thus epitomized as "true, relevant or significant" (Hyatt, 2005, p.48). Thus, the VPAS would serve to endorse identity and Maltese culture. The

use of the present simple tense and its continuous inference may mean that the VPAS are important but only to serve other subjects and other topics, and are not deemed important on their own.

I add to this the use of the present continuous tense which infers a continuation of the construction of an event or fact as being real. In the NMC there is the following sentence: "Aesthetic experience, as expressed through forms of art and architecture, should be given priority in the educational agenda. The school should expose students to the local, regional, continental and world cultural traditions and experience" (MEE, 1999, p.26). The implied notion here is that art as a subject 'should be given' importance, but the way it is portrayed puts all responsibility as to the level of importance given to the subject upon the teacher and the school. This implies that the teacher or school can deem that art is really not that important as the curriculum is vast and the teacher is under constant time constraints. Unless there are specific lessons reserved for the teaching of art, it is never going to be given its due importance. Moreover, if art is not being taught, then the onus is on the teacher or school because they are not managing to teach the subject.

Adding to this, the use of the command active verbs such as 'we will' and 'are to' in the following quote suggest that policy makers are stating that the sentences are unquestionable by commanding the reader to use the VPAS in a specific manner, and thus, presenting the sentence as unquestionable: "I am confident that we will achieve these targets because education has always been and will remain at the heart of the Maltese society" (MEE, 2012, p.viii); "Expressive arts (art, music, dance and drama), combined with environmental studies, history, and geography, are to give particular importance to our national identity and to the understanding of Malta's place in Europe and in the world" (MEE, 2012, p.60).

If the NMC was truly a holistic curriculum, the policy would make sure that art would be taught and catered for. An example taken from the NCF representing the present simple tense is the way the verbs '**develop'** and '**learn'** are used. The following quote is taken from "Visual and Performing Arts":

> **Learning** in this area involves the development of artistic and creative skills […] learners **develop** personal expression and ideas; appreciation and evaluation of both local and foreign art and culture; and communication, performance and interpretation skills. These skills are all transferable to other areas of learning. […] Children **learn** to explore and appreciate feelings, communicate them through different media, and **develop** their personal aesthetic dimension (MEE, 2012, 37).

'Learn' and 'develop' in the present simple tense show how the NCF promotes a learner-based curriculum, as previously mentioned in the Orientation Frame. The present simple tense also works to construct these claimed processes of development and learning as inevitable. What struck me was that VPAS are considered as teaching skills which are transferable to other areas of learning, hence hinting once again that the curriculum is not subject based but there is to be a cross-curricular method in the teachings. This shows that even though the VPAS are given more importance in the NCF than in the NMC, the NCF is nevertheless a curriculum which revolves around a CATS knowledge hierarchy. Here the authors are implying that the VPAS are there to serve other subjects due to transferability of skills. This refers to my second research question, in Chapter 2, section 2.3.5 as it shows that there is a hierarchy within the curriculum and also that the subject status from one curriculum to the other has changed.

5.2.2.3.4 Adjectives, Adverbs, Nouns, Verbs. Adjectives, adverbs and nouns are crucial to the structure of a discourse describing a person or an event, whether the discourse is negatively or positively constructed. Hyatt (2005) notes that even non-hedged adverbs used by policy makers such as 'clearly', 'obviously', 'surely' and others place a non-debatable tone on the text since these non-hedged adverbs imply an undisputable fact. This causes overgeneralization and, in my opinion also reveal the stance of the authors regarding the subject matter. It may also show a certain degree of bias and may, as a result, be rarely accurate. Other comments which may represent different point of views of the authors are propositions, such as 'absolutely', 'wholly', 'utterly', 'totally', 'entirely' and 'constantly'. Such statements are worthy of being analysed using CHEPDA.

In the NMC, propositions featured in the following excerpts reveal the patriotic slant of this document and consequently, how this curriculum is trying to promote Maltese nationalistic identity while encouraging inclusivity: "The document is truly national" (MEE, 1999, p.7); "An inclusive education is based on a commitment, on the part of the learning community, to fully acknowledge individual difference" (MEE, 1999, p.36). I choose to refer to these examples because I want to portray that the NMC focuses strongly on inclusivity. The NCF moves away from just focusing on nationalism and inclusivity but concentrates on various learning aspects of the education of the student which include the focus on the economic growth of the country and its work force:

> As a small Nation, our survival, freedom, well-being and identity will largely depend on qualified future generations who hold the key to our quality of life […] largely depend upon [...] younger generations who will be well-equipped to work productively and continuously (MEE, 2012, p.viii).

> The role of education should not be that of primarily satisfying Malta's economic needs. […] education should never be placed in a subservient role to the economy particularly if the child is to be placed at the very centre of the educational system. […] the NCF is primarily focused on the contribution of education to the economic dimension (MEE, 2012, p.6).

In the first example we see how schools as factories are creating the future generations needed for work. In the second example we see two opposing comments within the same paragraph: that education should not be compliant to the economic needs of the country, and later, that education primarily contributes to the economic dimension of the state. The role of non-hedged adverbs such as 'largely' and 'particularly' in the previous examples position the argument that education is being used to contribute to the Maltese economy as an unquestionable fact. This shows that indeed the global market does influence the primary school curriculum, and that the NCF is a curriculum which is responding to the demands of the market, thus answering the first research question.

"The NCF stresses the importance of all learners to acquire core competences particularly […] Maltese and English; mathematics; science and technology; and information technology/ digital literacy" (MEE, 2012, p.13). This is another example of how certain knowledge is deemed more important than others by the use of promoting CATS and using the word 'particularly'. This non-hedged adverb again stresses and constructs the indissoluble fact that Maltese, English, mathematics, science and technology and information technology/ digital literacy are subjects that are deemed more important than others. If it were not the case, these subjects would not have been given such prominence within the NCF. Moreover, the word 'stresses' shows how these subjects are truly imperative in Maltese education. I refer here to the first research question where CATS are stressed so as to be compulsorily taught as these subjects enjoy a high status. This shows that there is a hierarchy of the curriculum at place within the Maltese primary education system, and that what and whose knowledge is of most worth is a luxury reserved for policy makers within the government.

5.2.2.3.5 Metaphors. A metaphor is a literary device which portrays how people represent social reality. How an author positions a metaphor within a discourse describes the relationship the author has with the metaphor within the discourse (Hyatt, 2005). The NMC starts with a metaphor, comparing education to a womb: "Education is the womb in which our society reproduces itself and re-creates itself for the future" (MEE, 1999, p.5). I feel that this metaphor implies that education is something which is created, nurtured and developed. I refer to my introduction of the NMC in section 4.1.1 a) where I discussed the 'Knowledge and the Norm of Subject Hierarchy'. I used the example of Freire's 'banking concept' in education, where students receive the deposited chosen knowledge provided by the teachers in order to learn. The words 'reproduces' and 'recreates' may also imply that children are being reproduced and recreated into the models designed by the government. This shows that schools, if their role is solely to reproduce and recreate students for the future, have truly become a factory setting.

Another metaphor states that the NMC: "[…] is the breaking of a new dawn" (MEE, 1999, p.7). I can understand why the authors sought to compare the NCM to a "new dawn", since as stated in the NMC orientation frame, the NMC was written after the Education Act (Act XXIV of 1988) (Cap. 327) (MEE, 1988). Even the use of the present continuous tense in the verb 'break' in this sentence shows that there is a composition of the event, the new dawn, being constructed and portrayed as something real. This reflects the third lexico-grammatical point I previously mentioned, that of time-tense and aspect. The NMC only uses two metaphors while the NCF uses none. However, Halliday (1985) notes how a metaphor does not necessarily need to be lexical, where a discourse may incorporate grammatical metaphors, where the meaning of the metaphor is expressed by means of lexico-grammatical forms (Thompson, 1996). An example of a grammatical metaphor would be when the author presents a noun in a part of a speech, referred to as nominalization, a feature commonly found within discourses (Hyatt, 2005).

Having found no metaphors within the NCF, I delved into the discourse to see whether there are any nominalizations, of which many were found. Nominalizations have the effect making a written text more "lexically dense", that is, texts which rely heavily on information and are packed and dense with it (Hyatt, 2005, p.50). Nominalization can make texts seem more serious, academic and prestigious. Some examples include "a learning journey" (MEE, 2012, p.vii) as opposed to how one learns during the school years, "the development of the [LOF]" (MEE, 2012, p.viii) versus a framework which shows what the students learn throughout their school years. Another instance where the NCF uses a nominalization is: "The legacy that this document aims to achieve is […] to view lifelong learning as part and parcel of their development […]"

(MEE, 2012, p.vii). Here the authors promote a prestigious text which is seen as a legacy for education. The use of nominalization may thus imply an elite way of marginalising non-policy related people from the people in charge of the policy text. This may imply that the knowledge being chosen to be taught may be sacred knowledge chosen and known only by the few.

Since the use of metaphors shows the author's representation of their social reality and portrays the relationship the author has with the text, the lack of metaphors within the NCF may show that the authors are detached from the text, the authors did not give the text their personal touch or did not involve themselves beyond an academic level of writing. This may reflect Ivanic's (1997) statement where through the process of "nominalization", writers identify and engage with individuals who are similarly erudite by objectifying and encapsulating the similar practices (p.267). In choosing not to engage with the text, the writers represent themselves as 'intellectual', or knowledge holders. Thus, what and whose knowledge is of most worth? This issue links with my first research question and how, as a result of globalisation, knowledge becomes a luxury for the few capable students who achieve good marks in high-stakes tests and are able to fit into the mould of the design of the government.

5.2.2.3.6 Presupposition & Implication. Convincing realities are constructed and represented in a discourse by lexico-grammatical elements such as presuppositions. This can be achieved by using tags and negative questions which would presuppose a specified answer, usually using adverbs, adjectives and active verbs (Hyatt, 2005). There are numerous negations, that is, the setting of an idea or claim up by discussing what it is not, showing how the authors are presenting the policy as being (no matter what) a holistic curriculum, one which looks globally at education and promotes Maltese identity, even though the situation in the classrooms negates this, as I will discuss in the next chapter. The negations such as 'not only' represent the conjecture that the curriculum is a truly holistic one which encompasses diversity such as the following: "The holistic spirit of the document not only includes every aspect of human development […] but it also embraces the diversity of learning styles" (MEE, 1999, p.9); "Our country must look not only towards the North […] but also towards the Mediterranean […]" (MEE, 1999, p.21); "This is because we do not wish to lose what is valuable in our character and outlook from one generation to the next" (MEE, 1999, p.5).

The constructed reality portrayed in these negations show that the focus of the NMC was to keep Maltese identity alive at a time when Malta was not yet part of the EU. The NCF uses another point with reference to the presupposed negations examined: "[…] education must

drive statistics and cannot instead be shaped to accommodate statistics. […] education is to lead an individual to reach his/her full potential and this must not be overseen (MEE, 2012, p.xi); "The role of education should not be that of primarily satisfying Malta's economic needs. […] education should never be placed in a subservient role to the economy" (MEE, 2012, p.6); "[…] timetables proposed were too rigid and inflexible" (MEE, 2012, p.4).

Negations note how the policy was written with the aim that the student is placed before statistics or the economy. The last quote I chose to place here shows that even though the policy was written with the previously mentioned intentions, the timetable was too rigid and inflexible, and that even though our educational system is looking at global educational criteria, the same problems arising globally are also affecting Malta, such as the narrowing of the curriculum and the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon.

An example found in the NMC is: "[…] should one be blamed for wanting the best quality education for our country?" (MEE, 1999, p.9). Even though this question does not negate, it still uses the verb 'to blame' which imply negative connotations. The author feels that one should not be blamed for wanting what is best for their country. Hence, the answer would be presupposed, assumed that one would always want the best for their country. This question may also be seen through the lens of the use of a rhetorical question which indicate and presupposes an implied answer (Hyatt, 2005). The implication here is that the author wants to make a point and convince the readers that the constructed reality in this text is that the NMC has been created for the sole purpose of educating future Maltese citizens for the benefit of the country. There are no questions within the NCF, but this policy uses more factive verbs than the NMC.

Factive verbs presuppose their grammatical complements, while adverbs and adjectives describe processes and entities they presuppose and thus indicate them as facts. Both the NMC and NCF presuppose that their texts are written with the student and his or her well-being in mind, and that the texts are used in order to grow the student to serve the country. The Executive Summary of the NMC summarises the General Aims of the policy into points, where the 10th point includes the following quote: "Make good use of one's free time, namely that one: Knows […] the value of education and its social contribution, besides the economic possibilities that arise as a result of one's engagement in educational pursuits in one's free time" (MEE, 1999, p.99). The NCF provides more examples of factive verbs, such as: "The ethos of the NCF reflects the contribution that education makes to Malta's national social and economic development" (MEE, 2012, p.5), and: "[… an] education system cannot be divested from the

importance of the ability of Malta's future adults to successfully make the transition not just into employment, but into value-added employment" (MEE, 2012, p.7).

The use of the factive verb 'make' shows that policy makers are portraying the education system as a process whereby the student is 'made'. I here reflect back to the schools as factory settings once again, where the students are moulded into what the government wants. In this case, using these quotes, students are 'made' into what is being designed by the government by means of the education system. Hoey (2000) notes how factive verbs are used as a practice of embedded evaluation. I understood this as a tool for self-evaluation for policy makers in which the factive verbs prove that what the policy makers wrote is right, that the factive verbs used within the text emphasise its credibility. Hoey (2000) notes how through a group of words which include a factive verb, called a clause, there is self-evaluation and self-assessment on the words of the author, where the author tells the reader what they think about a situation and then offers a rationale. This leads again to the rhetoric part of a text as previously discussed.

The following example shows how through the statement of the author and the justification of why education: "should enable them to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that make them capable of sustaining their life chances in the changing world of employment" (MEE, 2012, p.33). The factive verbs makes this quote difficult to interpret in a different way from the implied meaning of the author and perspective (Hoey, 2000). The implied perspectives and meanings by the author are thus constructed as the only route educational stakeholders must take, thus conforming to the regulations of the text. Policies are implemented without being questioned, and teachers follow the guidelines. Students are assimilated and produced as abilities-machines in schools which conform to factory settings.

5.2.2.3.7 Medium & Audience. The medium of a text and the audience the text is written for have important consequences not only on the reader, but also on how the reader will perceive the text when reading it (Hyatt, 2005). The medium of a text shows the method used to write it. One characteristic of the medium used in a text is conversationalising, which does not only relate by way of intertextuality, which is the relationship a text has to other discourses, but how a text may infiltrate another text. Fairclough (1993) uses an example of interdiscursivity, of how the discourse of higher education has been imbued by the discourse of business. This interdiscursivity is also a feature of primary education discourse in Malta.

I follow with the example of the word "stakeholders", a word usually associated with business, referring to a person with interests or concerns in a business. Within the NCF, this word is found

42 times while in the NMC it is found 13 times. The students are the customers and their values lie in the successful completion of their schooling. Interdiscursivity is limited within the NMC, but it is felt more strongly within the NCF. The way the NCF uses business discourse to justify education and the need for life-long learning portrays the perception that students are commodities, a product of the assembly line which is the school. This reflects my capital-abilities-term where the students are seen as commodities which have an exchange-value within a market, meaning that their contribution to society is measured and exchanged for money. It also shows that globalisation has rooted itself within Maltese education; the fact that students are seen as objects and the outcome is the economic viability of a country is proof of this.

Another feature of lexico-grammatical analyses is the acknowledgement of the audience for whom the text was written for. In the orientation frames of both NMC and NCF, I noted how the addressees of the policies are educators and school management teams. When analysing the pronouns and passive and active forms, I mentioned how the use of inclusive pronouns used in the NCF give the reader the impression of camaraderie, drawing the reader into thinking that they share common goals and values with the author(s). If language is used to communicate something, the NCF shows that the social distance between the authors and the audience is far less than that of the NMC, since the NMC uses more exclusive pronouns. This was discussed in section i) Pronouns of this chapter.

5.2.2.3.8 Visual Images The NMC does not have any elements of visual images such as quotes, statistics, references, citations and other forms of intertextuality, however, the NCF does. My analysis does not include all the eleven criteria discussed in the CLF (2005) since not all are present in the analysed texts. The visual images criteria and the reference to other text criteria are not used in the NMC and the NCF and have thus been omitted from this analysis.

Visual images play an important role in the production construction of "reality" and "truth" (Hyatt, 2005, p.52). Although both the NMC and NCF do not use photographs, the NCF uses fabricated images of subject timetables throughout the document. I have been referring to the timetable of time allocation for primary school subjects since Chapter 1, section 1.3. The use of images to convey the time allocations for the different subjects shows how the CATS enjoy more teaching time than the VPAS as represented: 30% for languages, 15% each for mathematics and sciences, 5% for PE and another 5% for the VPAS besides other subjects (MEE, 2012, p.17).

5.2.2.3.9 Age, Class, Disability, Gender, Race/Ethnicity and Sexuality Issues. When texts are meant to include a whole population, there is usually a part which reveals that not all subjects are equal within a state. Some citizens are seen as less able, valued less socially, and are consequently labelled in a stereotypical manner using legitimised discourse within a policy text showcasing a commonly-shared perspective (Hyatt, 2005). The NMC refers to inclusion and special needs students within the discourse, as seen in the following examples: "We must add to all this […]: the trend of inclusion and the erosion of social barriers; and the strong emphasis on the affirmation of identity and difference" (MEE, 1999, p.22), "[…] to protect against clear and present dangers […] the emargination [sic] of those with special needs, social and personal apathy, and ignorance" (MEE, 1999, p.5), and:

> The holistic spirit of the document not only includes every aspect of human development and every phase of it but it also embraces the diversity of learning styles as well as the whole range of abilities, backgrounds, specific learning difficulties, and special needs that are bound to exist among the community of learners (MEE, 1999, p.9).

The use of the word 'special' as portrayed in these examples shows that the authors make a clear distinction between normal students and ones with different capabilities. In the last quote above, the then Minister Galea promised that the NMC contains the answers to the problems of "the emargination [sic] of those with special needs, social and personal apathy, and ignorance" (MEE, 1999, p.9). The way the sentence is built, linking special needs students with the subsequent negative traits, constructs these students as deficit. Is it because these students do not fit in the box of the exams to be taken and in the box where they serve society at a later stage in life and pay taxes? Can it be because students placed in a positive light are seen according to their capabilities, and students with 'special needs' are regarded in a negative light because of their lack of capabilities? This is a clear example of how students are seen as abilities-machines.

Contrary to the NMC, the NCF notes how diversity amongst students should be embraced and promoted, and that students with different capabilities should be addressed and catered for: "[…] diversity as a cohesive force rather than a dividing force" (MEE, 1999, p.23); "The NCF embraces diversity and requires that this is promoted through an inclusive environment. The NCF addresses the needs of: […] learners with special educational needs" (MEE, 2012, p.41). This shows an evolution from the NMC discourse to the NCF with regards to special needs students. It shows how the NCF marginalises students simply by putting students with special needs in a box, away from mainstream students. It others them, it excludes them, even though the NCF promotes inclusion. It promotes inclusion, but nevertheless labels the students as having different capabilities.

One may also see this through the capitalisation of the student. One does not see the deficit, but sees the potential in all learners. Another point may be that the NCF capitalises all capabilities of all students, reflecting that through life-long learning, the NCF seeks to empower all students to be independent workers and contributors for the state. All students are "entitled to a secondary school [leaving] certificate [… that] opens the doors to further and higher education, employability and a good quality of life" (MEE, 2012, p.ix); "[…] compulsory education provides students with key competences necessary for lifelong learning, employability and responsible citizenship. […] Inclusivity, the values of social justice and responsible citizenship and employability are our desired goals" (MEE, 2012, p.x), and:

> […]to use the NCF to develop learners' capacity to nurture values and learn key skills and competences that they require to establish their long-term quality of life as persons and as citizens – and in doing so educators are to regard learners as individuals with diverse capacities that must be supported to develop into lifelong learners equipped with employability-related attitudes and skills (MEE, 2012, p.10).

This would mean that students following the NCF objectives would turn into future adults who would depend less on the contribution provided by the state by implementing and "sustain[ing] personal growth and inclusivity, responsible citizenship and employability" (MEE, 2012, p.ix). This reasoning implies that all citizens are able-bodied, autonomous and productive individuals – 'normal' beings projected as the citizens who produce and give back to the state. But not everyone is the same, and human beings cannot be mass produced in factories. Here I mention Goodley's (2021) question: "Who's allowed to be human?" (p.21). If society demands children to be taught in a certain manner, following specific chosen knowledge by the state to become capital-abilities-machine, then no one is being "allowed to be human".

In this deconstruction of the NMC and the NCF, I have only used interdiscursivity and intertextuality, evaluation and lexico-grammatical elements of the texts. Since my thesis is about understanding the subjects status in Maltese primary schools, I found it relevant to focus on the deconstruction of the NCM and the NCF texts because I wanted to see how the written words of a document influence schools, parents, educators and students to regard certain subjects as more important than others. Moreover, the lexico-grammatical elements aid the construction of a "reality" (Hyatt, 2013, p.842). It is this construction of a reality which encourages education stakeholders such as parents, educators and students to acknowledge or perceive a subject as more important than others. It is why I have only focused on the lexico-grammatical elements of the NMC and the NCF in this thesis. It is this reality which by means of Foucault's *dispositif*, the NMC and the NCF are used as form of governance, previously discussed in section 2.2.2 in Chapter 2. Through governmentality, the NMC and the NCF are used as discourses to govern parents, educators and students to accept the reality of the policies. Through biopower, parents, educators and students become commodities and conform to what the state constructs as reality (Foucault, 2000).

5.3 Conclusion

Education as it stands now is losing the individuality of the being, and that is why the VPAS are being side-lined, becoming almost eliminated from the curriculum, because the VPAS promote the individual. There may be two factors why this is occurring in education: accountability and negative discourse. A subject status is allocated according to how visible the subject is, knowledge which is visible is knowledge which is objective, measurable and observable (Lilliedahl, 2021). Thus, subjects which are tested, nationally and supranationally become subjects which are considered as containing legitimate visible knowledge which is measurable. On the other hand, the VPAS become illegitimate knowledge, since the subjects are not assessable through marks (Lilliedahl, 2021). This history of measurement and accountability paved the way for empirical inquiry (Law et al, 2011; Savage, 2013). VPAS need to be regarded as subjects which are not measured, but evaluated, and as advocated by Vuyk (2010), should be regarded as experience mechanisms (p.173).

Deconstructing the NMC and NCF, I have seen how discourse may be used as a tool wielded by policy makers, giving the readers an impression of insider knowledge, while the outcomes of both policies go beyond the written word. The outcomes go beyond the school teaching years where the ultimate outcome becomes a new society, shaped by these discourses. As a result of this analysis, I feel I can claim that the economy, the pressure for the students to find good jobs,

for the state to mould the students into what the state deems fit, all point to the fact that the global market influences the primary school curriculum. As a result, the CATS are given more importance than the VPAS , creating a hierarchy of the curriculum. This answers question 4 of my research. With regards to question 5, *Has the status of VPAS in Maltese primary schools changed in the last 5 years?,* an analysis of the NMC and NCF clearly reveals that CATS have always been given importance, thus enjoying a high subject status. On the other hand, the status of VPAS has always been of lesser importance than the CATS.

'What' and 'whose' knowledge is of most worth is imparted by the higher authorities of the state, enabling the students to actualise into what the state deems fit, into the abilities-machine. This is done through the policy texts and the discourse in use. Utilising micro lexico-grammatical analyses by means of CFL and CHEPDA have helped me understand the various nuances policy authors have used within the NMC and NCF to construct a reality based on what the authors want readers to understand. The NMC and the NCF are warranted, justified texts, used with authority by policy makers to impose the education of the student according to the conduct customised by the Government. Education is a means used by the government to serve the economy of the state, thus being designated a political warrant.

Through my analyses of both NMC and NCF, I have investigated how Maltese education has evolved during the past thirty years, noting how different agendas such as globalization and economic growth have affected education in the 1990s and are still affecting education nowadays. Besides analysing the NMC and NCF, I wanted to understand whether these policies go beyond the texts and see whether what is written is being implemented. In order to investigate this, I distributed a questionnaire to all participants and twelve focus groups in four different schools. The following chapter is an analysis of the focus groups and the questionnaires utilised for the different participants of my research.

Chapter 6: Analyses

6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the focus groups and questionnaire answers using Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis (TA) (2006). I have chosen to analyse both datasets together to triangulate the answers based on the emergent themes under discussion.

6.2 Thematic Analysis of Focus Group & Questionnaires

My research was conducted at two primary church schools and two primary government schools as previously discussed in Chapter 4 section 4.7. I will not be mentioning the names of the schools for anonymity purposes, but will refer to them as schools A, B, C and D. Schools A and C were Church schools while B and D were Government schools. There were three categories per school: students, parents and educators. After analysing the NMC and the NCF through CHEPDA, reviewed in Chapter 5, I have chosen to lead this thematic analysis using the same themes to analyse the data collected from the questionnaires and focus group interviews.

The focus groups discussions were grouped according to the school and category. My justification behind this decision was because each focus group had a separate transcript which was then coded individually. These codes belong to step 2 of the 2 and Clarke (2006) TA method which I outlined in Chapter 4. Table 7 shows the codes of the focus groups of the four schools and the categories of participants in this research.

Table 7

List of codes pertaining to each focus group category and their respective school

	School A			School B			School C			School D		
	P	S	E	P	S	E	P	S	E	P	S	E
Importance of VPAS for the child	*						*	*	*			
VPAS not important at school							*		*			
Culture + general knowledge	*											
Time + opportunities	*	*	*				*	*		*		
More time on VPAS				*	*	*		*	*	*		
Hierarchy of subjects	*		*	*		*						
Broad and balanced curriculum	*						*			*		*
Holistic curriculum	*		*	*		*	*			*		*
Importance of Exams	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*
Exams infer importance of CATS	*		*	*			*		*	*	*	*
O'Level University requirements	*											
Teaching for a future job							*					
Learning difficulties	*	*					*	*		*		*
Perception that VPAS are subjects for students who are not academically good									*			
Lack of specialised VPAS teacher	*		*			*			*	*	*	*
Extracurricular need money	*											
Higher power	*					*	*					*
Change of curriculum	*	*										
Repetition of subjects in higher grades	*		*	*		*	*					
Narrowing of curriculum		*	*	*		*			*			*
Teaching-to-the-test			*			*			*			
Pressure/mental health			*				*			*		
Change teachers' teaching methods						*						
Pullouts						*			*		*	
Space and resources									*			
Concert- pride/satisfaction		*	*			*			*	*	*	*
Voice of child	*					*	*					
Freedom of expression through VPAS			*	*		*	*			*		

Note. P denotes Parents, E denotes Educators and S denotes students.

The codes revealed different and interesting features which resonated with the literature in Chapter 2. The grouping of the codes into individual categories was done so that the reader may understand the reasoning behind the creation and naming of the resulting themes used in this thesis. However, for the benefit of this research, I have also grouped the focus group codes into the three categories of educators, parents and students; these may be found in Appendix 30. On the other hand, the questionnaires were grouped only per category of participants and not per school. This was done because the participants had to input their answers electronically via a private server. After analysing the codes of the focus groups, I then moved onto analysing the questionnaires. Juxtaposing the answers of the questionnaires and the codes of the focus groups led to the following table of 19 codes.

Table 8

List of Codes

No. of Code	Title of Code
1	Importance of VPAS
2	More time on Art subjects
3	VPAS give confidence
4	Students enjoy the Concert and benefit from it
5	Pride/Satisfaction through artistic achievements through concert
6	New Opportunities with VPAS
7	Lack of VPAS due to lack of teacher
8	Importance of the Specialised Teacher
9	Curriculum was Exam oriented
10	Higher Power
11	Vast Curriculum – too many topics to cover
12	Topics repeated through the years
13	Too much time on CATS
14	Importance of a holistic curriculum
15	Homework
16	Family Situation – Norm of the Family
17	Mental Health
18	Opportunities for all students
19	Teaching for a Future Job

I then moved onto step 3 of TA, which involved grouping and merging the codes into sets, thus creating themes according to their topic similarities and according to the research questions the

code answered or represented. As I wrote in Chapter 4, the creation of the themes was an inductive process, since I followed the emerging patterns of the codes being analysed which then generated and developed into themes after my interpretation of the data. By using different methods for data collection, I was able to triangulate and crystallize the responses of the different categories of participants and juxtapose their answers according to the themes. I reviewed the themes I created following step 4 of the Braun and Clarke (2006) method, which then led to step 5 of this process, called the defining and naming of the theme. Table 9 shows the four main themes of this research.

Table 9

List of Key Themes following Braun and Clarke (2006) TA Method

Theme	
1	The Importance of the VPAS
2	Specialised Teachers,
3	Broad and Balanced Curriculum
4	Subject Status

The next part of this chapter presents an analysis of four main themes. Each theme will present the data gathered from the focus groups and questionnaires respectively, and conclude each section of each theme with an analyses and discussion of the results. For coding purposes the identifiers of the parents, educators and student participants of the focus groups have been grouped respectively. The first letter belongs to the category type: (P= Parents; S=Students; E=Educators) while the end letter belongs to the school (A=School A; B=School B; C=School C; D=School D). The numbers show the number of participant according to the category.

6.2.1 Theme 1: The Importance of the VPAS

This theme reflected and answered the second research question *How, and in what ways, do the VPAS contribute to primary education?* as well as the third research question: *What are the perceptions of students, educators, and parents regarding the status of the VPAS within the primary curriculum?*

      6.2.1.1 Focus Groups. I began by asking the participants whether they believed that VPAS were important. Starting with school A, all educators (n = 5) answered with a definite 'yes' while also asserting that the students really looked forward to the VPAS lessons. Within school B, all educators (n=6) understood that VPAS lessons were important for the student.

Educators in school C understood the importance of VPAS at school. From school C, TC2 mentioned how her son (who was in secondary school) perceived students who chose VPAS as: "those who aren't very good [at academic subjects]." She argued that: "this was a status going on in schools and between their peers". This scenario echoed Bleazby's (2015) article on the English Baccalaureate reform, which was a reorganisation in education premeditated to produce a more intellectual secondary curriculum by removing "soft options like the arts and vocational subjects" in lieu of the "hard" subjects like mathematics (p.679).

With regards to students, in school A, SA1 believed that they should have: "Art, music and drama at school because it helps [us] to grow up". In school C, students believed that VPAS were very important for them, where SC2 noted how: "you express your feelings", SC3 said that: "it's fun and you learn new things", SC1 noted that: "you can express how you were and that's you, no one else", SC4 said that: "it's fun and educational at the same time." All six students of this focus group felt that VPAS were important for them. SC3 and SC4 also believed that trying out new things would help them out in the future and, as SC3 noted: "maybe I don't know that I'm good at drama … but they express themselves very well and maybe it will be good … if they just try to see if they're good at it or not." Mason et al. (2004) researched how VPAS aid students with special needs because these subjects inspire and motivate students for their future. Even though it was a small focus group, the six students of school C all agree that VPAS can help all students explore while empowering them, thus strengthening the Mason et al (2004) argument that the VPAS can aid all students and not just students with special needs. However, in school D, SD1 mentioned that they do not need VPAS at school because they: "won't help you so much in the future". When asked why, SD1 answered that they wanted to become an accountant when they grew up. SD6 believed that if they were exposed to VPAS lessons at school, they: "can have fun and show what we're good at", but at the same time, if VPAS lessons were not undertaken at school: "it wouldn't make a difference because it was not like maths... you would need maths in life". These perceptions were expressed only in school D students' focus groups.

Parents in school D perceive VPAS as very important. PD1 mentioned that "because sometimes kids don't really know what they want" and one should help the students become exposed to different subjects at school. All parents (n = 4) in school A deem the VPAS as very important too, mainly because one gets to learn about artistic culture, general knowledge, appreciation of art and music. PA3 noted children should be able to go to a theatre, watch a play and appreciate it: "I think these are all good qualities that should be given importance by the school." Karseth

& Sivesind, (2010) noted how the VPAS raise cultural awareness. All 5 parents of school C understood the VPAS to be important, with one parent stating that VPAS are: "important in all schools for children." PC2 mentioned that: "the more opportunities offered to them [students] to participate, the better." This reflects the Psilos (2002) report on how the VPAS offer more opportunities to students, mainly because VPAS can improve the skills of the individuals, produce increased academic functioning and cut down the amount of nonattendance.

6.2.1.2 Questionnaires. In the educators' questionnaires, I asked educators in question 21 whether they thought VPAS were important for the students' education. On the ten-point Likert scale, where 1 represents the lowest and 10 represents the highest, the mean score of the educators (n=67) showed that 9.28 out of 10 of educators strongly believed in the importance of the VPAS. No labels were used in the Likert scale because the question explained to the participants that 1 was the lowest value in perceiving the importance of the VPAS while 10 have the highest level of importance in perceiving the VPAS as being important for the student. I then asked the educators their reasoning behind their answer of question 21, in question 22, educators cited a holistic education and a broad and balanced curriculum as ideal for the student to flourish in school. An educator mentioned how the VPAS "are part of the holistic education [of the child], if they don't learn them, they are missing a lot." Another educator mentioned how the VPAS "provide different opportunities for all, not everyone will be good at the academics" and that "through [the] VPAS children can express their emotions." One educator wrote that the VPAS were "just like other subjects" while another wrote "depends". I appreciate that not all educators perceive the VPAS as being important, and these two comments from question 22 show why the answer to question 21 was not a full 10, as only a small number of educators do not believe that the VPAS were important.

Within the students' questionnaire, question 15 sought to examine the participants' perceptions on whether drama, music and art were important for them. Response options were 'yes', 'no', 'don't know'. N=157 from the 204 participants believe that VPAS were important for them, while n=17 replied with 'no' and n=30 said 'they don't know'. Question 16 asked students to give the reason why they answered as such to question 15. The students' responses varied from how VPAS were not important: "No, because these subjects have nothing to do with maths, English and Maltese."; "Because they do not have exams."; "Because not all of them are important."; "They are unimportant. They are fun." These answers show that since there was not an exam for the subject, students feel that the subject was fun and thus, implying that these subjects were not important.

Other answers showed how the VPAS help students "express my feelings", "because they let us fell [feel] who we are," "because children can relax a bit". Other students mentioned that the VPAS were important to them because they learn "new things to help us for our future", "because I think I should know more subjects, not just maths, English, etc.....", while other students mentioned how the VPAS may be good for their future when they need to find a job, "because someone can be an artist or a music teacher or a person who teaches drama." The majority of students understood that the VPAS were subjects which offer diverse opportunities to the learner, and that the VPAS as subjects should be taught for what these can offer to the student, thus again quoting Fleming (2021) and how 'learning in' the VPAS was as important as learning CATS. I also observed that even though at this young age, students were already thinking of their future. This also reflects how students unconsciously regard themselves as the Maltese future work force, thus reflecting Foucault's theory of the abilities-machine (2010). This reflects the *dispositif* on how education regards schools as factory settings, where the child was objectified and regarded as a form of capital means for the state. It was why I have implemented my term of 'capital-abilities-machine' because the student was seen as a means of what they can do for the state according to their capabilities.

In question 13 of the parents' questionnaire, parents rated the level of importance of VPAS at school on a ten-point Likert scale with a mean score of 8.34, thus attesting their belief that VPAS were important for the students' education. Question 14 asked parents why they thought VPAS were important, and their answers ranged from parents not finding VPAS to be of importance to those in favour of VPAS at schools. Some answers showed that it was much more important to learn CATS for the students' exams: "More important are exams."; "Important to learn maths, English and Maltese for exams." A parent echoed the students' perception which I discussed earlier on in this section, on how since the VPAS do not lead to an exam, then the VPAS are not important: "No exams so not very important".

There is an 'unsaid' notion, echoing Foucault's *dispositif* (1980) that there is an association between exams, subject status and subject hierarchy. Participants perceive that subject status relies on whether the subject leads to an exam or not, that if the subject leads to an exam, it enjoys a high status, while subjects which do not lead to an exam hold a low status. It also implies that since the VPAS were just fun and that they do not lead to an exam, the 'unsaid' notion is that the VPAS were extra subjects. This was the reason why the VPAS hold a low subject status and lie at the bottom of the hierarchy of the subject curriculum. It was also the reason why the VPAS are sidelined and not taught in order for the CATS to enjoy more their

teaching time during the school hours, thus leading the way for the narrowing of the curriculum. In summation, the exam was what makes a subject important or not, and the reason behind the high status of a subject at school.

When I asked the participants (educators and parents) whether education should be broad and balanced, the majority agreed. The reasoning behind their answers ranged from how the VPAS "Give[s] them a lot of opportunities and they learn different things" and how a broad and balanced curriculum "Can provide different opportunities for all." Two parents noted how students who were not academically gifted "can evolve artistically" and that "those with no abilities in writing most times have potential in other aspects. Give them this opportunity!" Another comment by a parent concurred with the latter comments and said that a broad and balanced curriculum was important because "everything was important in life." A parent noted how the VPAS "can help in a future career. Art - architect etc; music teacher." This also reflects what I discussed earlier in this chapter, where children also believe that the VPAS will help them in their job-related future. One parent wrote: "School should not be seen merely as making children machines to pass exams to proceed to higher education". I believe that this encapsulates my thesis in a nutshell: students are human beings and have the right to learn, not to be programmed into machines and regarded as 'capital-abilities-machine'.

6.2.2 Theme 2: Specialised Teachers

The second theme relates to the importance of specialised teachers teaching VPAS at school. Table 10 shows the resident specialised teachers in schools.

Table 10

List of Resident Specialised Educators in Schools

	Drama educator	Art Educator	Music Educator
School A	+	-	+
School B	-	+	-
School C	-	+	+
School D	-	+	-

Note. - signifies that there was no resident specialised educator teaching the subject at school.

+ signifies that there was a resident specialised educator teaching the subject at school.

6.2.2.1 Focus Groups. When I asked the educators of school B whether peripatetic or specialised teachers help in scheduling and teaching an VPAS lesson, EB2 replied with a: "yes" while another one explained that if educators still had to follow the syllabus in use today: "I wouldn't stop to do Art. I'd rather finish off the comprehension which wasn't done the week before." EB4 explained that: "I wouldn't be able to teach the recorder to the kids… We cannot expect the educator to know everything." When I asked educators of school C whether specialised teachers help to teach VPAS EC3 commented on how: "when a teacher, like the art or music educator doesn't come, no one replaces [them]". EC1 mentioned that when the specialised educator was not present at school to give an VPAS lesson, the class educator does not deliver the VPAS lesson, but carries on with academic subjects: "because the curriculum has a deadline and needs to be finished". This statement showed how dense the curriculum was and that time at school was very limited to teach the vast curriculum. This reflected the narrowing of the curriculum phenomena, that in order for the educator to teach a subject, another subject was being side-lined. All five educators in school A noted that they find it difficult to teach art themselves since there was no specialised educator to teach the subject, and that the art lesson turned into a crafts lesson: "because I'm not an artist" as EA4 explained. EA2 noted that: "Art was not my forte. So I don't feel that I am giving the students the best I can." The seven educators in school D said that specialised VPAS educators helped a lot. When asked why, ED1 noted that since there was an educator specifically trained to teach the subject, and a particular slot was scheduled on the timetable, the lessons took place. If they had to teach the VPAS themselves, they would find it hard since, as ED5 explained:

> "we never had music during secondary [school] we only learnt literature stuff on music, like orchestra stuff. I never sang, and I never learnt an instrument. So, what would I do? Put a video on for them to sing along? I would feel funny to do that".

The 7 students in school D were asked what would happen to their VPAS lesson when the specialised educator was not at school. SD5 replied that: "Usually she [class educator] tells us she has no time because either we did the first lesson slowly and it took longer or because there's so much work left to do. Or the homework still needs to be corrected". This showed how the VPAS were being side-lined to accommodate the CATS, a clear representation of the narrowing of the curricula phenomenon as researched by Au (2008), Jones et al. (2003), Lipman (2011), and Lobascher (2011). In school A, PA1 voiced her concerns that her child did not have an art educator, and said that: "the school was failing art, it was investing in music, but art was still lacking." Parents in school D were asked about the lack of a music educator at this school, and

when asked about whether the lack of music was affecting the students, all 6 parents replied: "yes".

6.2.2.2 Questionnaires. Questions 14-20 asked educators their perceptions on specialised subject teachers and peripatetic teachers. I asked educators in question 14 whether a specialised teacher would make the teaching of a VPAS better and easier for them and to make sure that the children in reality partake of a specialised lesson. The majority of educators answered that the specialised teacher does indeed make it easier for VPAS to be taught at school, with an average of 9 out of 10 agreeing. I conflated this question with question 15 where I asked the educators why they thought so:

> "A fixed time slot in the timetable makes sure the lesson was done."; "Art subjects are very specific and need people who are specially trained in the area to be best effective."; "A sp[ecialised] VPAS t[eacher] does help if the class t[eacher] has no musical background. However, a creative t[eacher] can integrate VPAS in the cur[riculum]."; "An art teacher was more specialised in this area and so can promote the acquisition of important artistic skills."; "Peripatetic lessons are also important to help student improve in their future work."; "As due to the lack of time for the class teacher to get on with every subject, he/she can put her mind at rest."; and "Students will surely be taught the VPAS".

The answers varied from a fixed timetable with a specialised teacher would mean that the VPAS would be delivered and not skipped, and that the specialised teacher has specific training to teach the VPAS, whereas the classroom teacher was not trained to teach the VPAS. These answers reflect the 3 focus groups discussions with the educators.

In questions 8-9 and 12 of the parents' questionnaires, I asked the participants whether they thought that the amount of time spent on academic subjects was adequate or excessive. On the ten-point Likert scale, parents rated their level of agreement with an average of 5.95, where 1 represented adequate and 10 represented excessive. This question showed that parents thought that the time spent on academic subjects was slightly excessive. With regards to question 9, parents were asked whether the amount of time spent on VPAS was either adequate or excessive. They answer with an average of 3.82, showing that parents perceive that the time being spent on VPAS was adequate. Question 12 asked parents whether they thought that VPAS were promoted at school. The answer rated an average of 5.42. These answers noted that even though parents understood that CATS enjoyed a high status at school, they also believed that the time management of subjects being taught at schools was neither adequate nor excessive.

6.2.3 Theme 5: Broad and Balanced Curriculum

As analysed in Chapter 4, the NCM and NCF presented the curriculum as a holistic one. I decided to ask the participants of the focus groups and questionnaires whether they perceived the curriculum as holistic and/or broad and balanced.

6.2.3.1 Focus Groups. With regards to educators, EA3 from school A started the discussion by saying: "I don't think so. As an educator I don't think that I am being holistic because I feel that we were racing against time, because there's an exam." This perception was confirmed by all teachers from the four focus groups of schools A, B, C and D. From school A, EA4 commented on how some subjects were portrayed as more important than others:

> "The way the departments project these subjects. What message are we giving here? That science was not important. And even the fact that the assessment was based on maths, Maltese, English, social studies and religion. And art, drama and whatever are not given a grade."

EC4 from school C elaborated on how the curriculum: "is too academic, the focus was on academics." EC2 mentioned how exams ensure a subject was regarded as more important than others. EC1 gave an example of how science was not deemed an important subject, but since it has been introduced as part of the Benchmark exam: "whoops, it became important." When I asked the educators of school D whether they thought the curriculum was a holistic and broad and balanced one, 5 educators (ED1, 2, 4, 5 and 6) answered: "no" and 2 (ED3 and 7) answered: "I don't think so." ED2 said that:

> "Even the fact that they sent us the timetable where we have to do maths for 5 hours a week. Why? … when the kids can do art or crafts or whatever... when we should cater for all the different aspects of the needs of the child."

ED6 remarked that: "you have to focus more on the subjects which have an assessment." There was a perceived comprehension that mathematics and the languages were deemed more important than other subjects. This may be because of the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon, where the curriculum taught focuses on CATS (Jennings & Stark Rentner, 2006; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006; Sabol (2010); Urban (2017); Wasmuth and Nitecki, 2017). Ironically, the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 showed how the VPAS aid in improving mathematical and language skills, the tested CATS (Catterall et al., 1999; Catterall & Waldorf, 2002; Deasy, 2002; Kendall et al., 2008; PCAH, 2011). The perception that mathematics, English and Maltese were more important could also be because the VPAS were being viewed as subservient to other subjects, and not as subjects per se.

From school A, PA4 noted that since maths, English and Maltese were 'O' Level requirements in order to graduate to the UOM, and thus important for the students. PA2 mentioned that: "even if you don't want to, you'll need to focus on these subjects…" followed by another parent stating: "We're in a society where the exams determine everything." When I asked the parents of school B the same question, PB3 noted how: "If it was holistic, kids would be reached in every aspect." PB1 noted that: "Sometimes I think that teaching was only oriented for exams." This reflected the thoughts of the educators of this school. When I asked parents of school D about their perceptions of what they considered to be the most important subjects at school, one parent, PD5, out of the 6 interviewees noted how mathematics, English and Maltese were considered as the most important subjects. PD3 agreed: "because only maths, English and Maltese take you somewhere". PC4 from school C mentioned that the way their children were taught at school: "is streamlining our children into a job before they even know what it was they want to do." When asked if the curriculum was a holistic one, all 5 parents replied in the negative.

6.2.3.2 Questionnaires. With regards to the educators' questionnaires, I asked participants in questions 5 whether they believed the curriculum they were teaching was a holistic curriculum. The answer was an average of 6.87 on the ten-point Likert scale. In question 6, I asked the educators' opinion on whether students benefit from a holistic curriculum. Educators rated their agreement with an average of 8.82 on the ten-point Likert scale.

In the parents' questionnaires, question 10 asked parents for their perceptions on whether the curriculum being taught at school was a holistic curriculum. On the ten-point Likert scale, they agreed with an average of 6.97. I expanded on the curriculum in question 11, asking parents whether they believe that students benefited from a holistic curriculum. The answer given was an average of 8.06 on the ten-point Likert scale. All 19 parents and 23 educators of the 8 focus groups felt that the present curriculum was not a holistic and a broad and balanced one. The emphasis on tested subjects was noted overall, even by students, suggesting that mathematics, English, Maltese and science were the subjects which enjoyed a high status.

6.2.4 Theme 4: Subject Status

The last theme which has developed from the focus groups and questionnaires was the theme of subject status. This theme answered the first research questions *What was the relationship between global economic markets and the primary school curriculum, with particular focus on*

the VPAS? and third research questions *What are the perceptions of students, educators and parents on the VPAS within the primary curriculum?*

6.2.4.1 Focus Groups. From school B, all teachers noted how VPAS were not given importance at school. On the same lines, EC2 from school C noted that there is: "an overall message that these [VPAS] subjects are not given that much of importance… Not just our school". When I asked the educators why there was this perception in this school, and to elaborate, EC3 said that: "they only had art twice in 5 weeks. No parent came to complain so it's ok to lose the lesson. Only the kids complain." Even though in section 5.2.1 I explained how parents believed that the VPAS were important for the education of the child, this educator showed me another scenario: where the students complained because of the lack of art lesson, the parents did not. The implication here was that, as mentioned in section 5.2.1, since art was a VPAS and exams were not allocated to the subject, the subject was regarded as fun and extra. In this situation, the parents did not complain because it was the art subject, but complained if it were a CATS, as explained by EC5:

> "If the educator doesn't come or if the educator didn't do maths in one day the parents will come to complain but if the kids spend a year without an art educator maybe only 1 parent will come to complain. And the department only listens to the parents' opinions. Because they were their clients and we're just there to do the lesson."

This comment made me reflect on Bamford and Wimmer's (2012) compendium which incorporated different research on how parents choose schools with VPAS. School B's reality diverges from Bamford and Wimmer (2012) research on how parents choose schools because these include a VPAS programme, since parents voice their concerns when academic subjects were not being taught, rather than when a VPAS was not. Another reasoning behind EC3's and EC5's quotes was that since art does not lead to an exam, it was not important, and thus the subject does not enjoy a high status. It also shows that if instead of art the subject would have been maths, then parents would have complained, mainly because maths was a CATS and the subject was assessed. This concurs with what I also wrote in section 5.2.1 that the exam defines the subject status and subject hierarchy.

EB4 mentioned how parents do not understand the importance of VPAS, thus mirroring the thoughts of the educator from school C, and expanded that: "If these subjects are included more during the school day, students will do so much better at school." This reflected the research conducted by Bautista et al. (2016), Catterall and Waldorf, (2002), and Deasy, (2002) on how students do better in academic subjects if they participated or learned the VPAS. This

perception reflected my thoughts at the end of section 2.5 in the Literature Review on how the VPAS were serving the CATS by giving a break to the student during the school day.

ED3 from school D noted how the subject status was enacted: "…how it was portrayed by the department [of education]. For example, maths was allocated 5 times a day while social studies was allocated 1 and a half hour per week." The rest of the 7 educators from school D noted how the curriculum was vast, and that 6 of them do not always manage to finish the lessons in time. ED6 noted how the timetable allocated to them, which follows the NCF previously discussed in this thesis, proved that different subjects were more important than others, and thus proved my theory that different subjects enjoy different statuses:

> "Some subjects are time constrained by the department [of Education]. They give us the timetable which indicates the hours we have to allocate for religion, social studies so you have to follow it. They give you the syllabus according to that timetable. We follow it and we don't even manage to keep up sometimes."

The 5 educators in school C felt that certain subjects were regarded as being more important than others and thus the timetable was scheduled to provide more teaching lesson time to the CATS. As EC5 noted: "…for example maths you need to have 7 lessons per week, science we need to add. Since science was now being given more importance, some religion lessons had to be eliminated, crafts was removed too." As to the perception of the students, SC6 from school C mentioned how: "at home my mum and dad were all the time telling me that maths was the most important subject because you'll need it in life, when you go shopping and everywhere." SC5 replied that: "my mum and dad tell me that English, Maltese and maths are important." 4 students (SC2, 3, 4 and 6) said: "Maths, English and Maltese" were the most important, while another student added "ICT."

5 students (SA1, 2, 4, 5 and 6) out of 6 from school A chose mathematics and science as the most important subjects, while the SA3 added creative writing: "because we spend a lot of time on it". PD4 from school D explained that the timetable focused on mathematics, English and Maltese. 3 out of 4 parents (PB1, 2 and 3) in school B noted that students should have more drama, art, music, PE lessons. PC5 from school C and PB2 from school B complained respectively: "What I notice was that we give importance to subjects like maths, English literacy and give less importance to art," and: "Music and art once a week and drama sometimes [one lesson] every term. It's not enough. And if the educator doesn't come, they don't even do it." Parents in school C understood that VPAS were not being given their due importance at school, such as this quote from PC5 saying: "Not particularly." Again, school C shows that there were

different statuses to different subjects throughout the curriculum, and that the VPAS do not enjoy a high status.

6.2.4.2 Questionnaires. With regards to the educators' questionnaires, questions 3 & 4 related to educators' perceptions on VPAS at school. In question 3, I asked educators for their perception on how much status was given to the VPAS at their school. Educators rated their level of agreement on a ten-point Likert scale, with 1 representing low status and 10 representing a high status. The answer resulted in an average of 6.12 out of 10, showing that the majority of educators perceive the VPAS as being slightly above average important. In question 4, I asked the educators the perception on how much VPAS were being promoted at school. On the ten-point Likert scale, the answer resulted in an average of 5.55 of out 10. This answer was also slightly above average, and may show that educators believe that the VPAS were neither promoted nor demoted at schools. These answers diverge from the answers educators gave during the 4 focus groups conducted in the 4 schools.

In questions 7-13, I asked educators for their perceptions on subjects' status. Question 7 asked educators whether they perceived some subjects to be more important than others. 73.1% of participants agreed with a 'Yes'. Question 8 asked educators which subjects they thought were the most important at school, and English, mathematics and Maltese scored the highest percentage, while the VPAS, PSCD and social studies scored the lowest. For this question, educators were given a list of all the primary school subjects and asked to mark the subjects they believe were important according to rank. This answer reflected the focus group answers. Question 9 asked educators for the opposing view to question 8, and the answers correlate. They were asked which subjects they thought were the least important at school. Art and drama scored the highest percentage as represented in the table below, thus describing how these subjects experienced a low status. Table 11 below represents the answers:

Table 11

Educators Questionnaire Answers for Questions 8 and 9

Subject Choice	n	Subject Choice	n
English	52	Drama	29
Maltese	50	Art	28
Maths	51	Music	23
Science	33	PSCD	20
Religion	14	Religion	12
PE	13	PE	11
ICT	13	ICT	11
Art	8	Maltese	4
Drama	7	English	3
PSCD	7	Maths	3
Music	7	Social Studies	3
Social Studies	4	Science	2
I answered 'No'	14	I answered 'No'	13

The students' perceptions on the curriculum and subject status were examined by means of questions 6-9 in this questionnaire category. In question 6, I asked students whether they perceived when their class teacher wanted them to do well in a particular subject. This implied that the teacher was putting pressure on students to achieve high marks in these subjects. It was not a surprise when the CATS subjects of mathematics and Maltese scored the highest percentage, followed by English as per table below. This also showed that because the subjects lead to an exam, there was pressure on the students by the teachers to achieve high marks in the exam. It also shows that the teachers feel that they were accountable for the students to achieve high marks in these subjects' exams, and may reflect that the teacher was also under pressure of performativity.

Table 12

Students Questionnaire Answers for Question 6

Subject Choice	Total
Art	61
Drama	25
English	90
ICT	40
Maltese	129
Maths	117
Music	42
PE	61
PSCD	46
Religion	78
Science	86
Social Studies	42

Questions 7-9 asked students whether they thought some subjects were more important at school. The majority of students, 77.9% perceived some subjects to be more important than others, 12.3% did not perceive this, while 9.8% did not know. This was followed by question 8, asking students for their perception on which subjects were the most important at school. The students answered with English, Maltese, mathematics and science respectively. Question 8 asked the students for the reverse response to question 7, which subjects students think were the least important at school. Students answered with art, drama, PE and music, as shown in table 13.

Table 13

Students Questionnaire Answers for Question 8 and 9

Question 8		Question 9	
Subject	*n*	Subject	*n*
Art	92	Maths	162
Drama	89	Maltese	140
Music	70	English	128
PE	60	Science	104
ICT	42	Religion	99
PSCD	21	PE	67
Social Studies	20	PSCD	61
Religion	19	Art	45
Maltese	16	ICT	40
English	15	Social Studies	40
Maths	14	Music	28
Science	10	Drama	21

With regards to answers from the parents' questionnaires, questions 3-7 asked the participants for their perceptions on subject status. In question 3 I asked how much status was given to the VPAS. They answered with an average of 5.32 on the ten-point Likert scale. This answer was inconclusive, but then, questions 4 and 5 revealed that 62% of parents believed that some subjects more important at school, and that these subjects were English, mathematics and Maltese. These questions were also reflected in questions 6 and 7 of the questionnaire, where parents noted an average of 8.31 on the ten-point Likert scale on how much status was given to academic subjects at school for question 7. These answers showed that parents were aware that high status was awarded to academic subjects at the schools. On the other hand, parents noted how the VPAS and also social studies were the least important subjects at school.

Table 14

Parents Questionnaire Answers for Question 5 and 6

Question 5		Question 6	
Subject Choice	n	Subject Choice	n
English	59	Drama	35
Maths	58	Art	27
Maltese	52	Music	27
Science	31	PE	18
ICT	26	Religion	15
PE	19	PSCD	12
PSCD	18	ICT	9
Religion	18	Maltese	6
Drama	9	Maths	6
Art	8	English	6
Music	7	Science	2
Social Studies	5	Social Studies	1
I answered 'No'	30	I answered 'No'	30

6.3 Discussion

6.3.1 Theme 1: The Importance of the VPAS

My analysis of the focus groups and questionnaires juxtaposed with the literature researched on this topic reveal a link between the global literature and what was happening in Maltese primary schools. Studies such as Burton, et al., (1999), Mason et al. (2004), May & Robinson (2016), Robinson (2014) and Windsor-Liscombe (2014) to name a few, have looked at the perceptions of teachers, students and parents on VPAS. My study may now be linked with these researchers in that, up to this point, there was no peer-reviewed study on the perceptions of Maltese students, parents or educators on VPAS.

Many articles reviewed in Chapter 2 showed how VPAS in schools were incorporated to serve the curriculum subjects, particularly in literacy and numeracy. If the VPAS were helping CATS because they aid academic improvement, educators were then justifying the teaching of the VPAS according to their utilitarian value. This theme reflects Foucault's *dispositif* through the hidden curriculum theory, explained in Chapter 3, (see section 3.4.2.4), how the VPAS are regarded as a utilitarian commodity (see section 3.4.2.5) and also reflects Fleming's (2021)

article on the dichotomy of the 'learning through' and 'learning in' of the VPAS, (see section 3.6). Care was needed here as this may be regarded as a double-edged sword. According to diverse research, such as the research by Psilos (2002), Catterall, et al., (1999), Catterall and Waldorf (2002), and Deasy (2002), the VPAS aid academic subjects. These researches follow Fleming's (2021) 'learning through' notion, while putting aside the 'learning in' of the VPAS, regardless of the research by different academicians such as Penny et al. (2002) and Alexander (2017) who promote the importance of learning the VPAS as stand-alone subjects.

With regards to the third research question: *What are the perceptions of students, educators, and parents regarding the status of the VPAS within the primary curriculum?,* the majority of students, parents and educators in the focus groups perceive the VPAS as being important because students can express themselves more through the VPAS, as they learn new subjects and discover what they were good at. A reason behind this is that the VPAS offer different tools for their future, and teaches students about different cultures thus aiding the student for their future endeavours. Participants perceive the VPAS as important for the holistic teaching and learning experience of the child. However, even though participants believe that the VPAS are important, some acknowledge the subjects as not important because these subjects do not lead to an exam. In conclusion, the exam raises the status of the subject.

6.3.2 Theme 2: Specialised Educators

Education, as it is nowadays, faces a conundrum: there are too many subjects being covered in school during the short number of daily hours reserved for teaching, and each subject contains numerous topics. Educators are finding it very hard to teach all subjects and dedicate the appropriate amount of time to each. Within Maltese Primary educator training, VPAS were taught in one module at university level before 2015, where student educators were required to choose one VPAS and produce a lesson plan and teach one VPAS lesson. In 2016, there was a shift in the School of Education at the UOM and the Institute for Education was launched in 2015 (IfE, 2023). The IfE provides different courses for persons interested in becoming educators, one of which was 'Masters in Education' (IfE, 2019). In the 'Practicum Handbook Version 1.0' for teaching practice within this course, it was clearly stated that student educators were to prepare schemes of work for PE and art and teach the subject despite a specialised educator being employed by the school. There is, however, no mention of music and drama subjects. This reflects the *dispositif* of the hidden curriculum and different subjects status, which I will discuss in section 6.3.4. It may be the reason why Maltese schools employ specialised or

peripatetic educators to teach VPAS at schools as classroom educators were not being trained to teach these VPAS.

The specialised educator helps ensure that specialised lessons such as art, drama and music are taught, since the lessons are allocated a particular date and time. In this way, the time for the specialised lesson will not be used by the class educator to increase the teaching time of the CATS. When there are no resident specialised educators or a peripatetic educator to teach the VPAS, some subjects are side-lined to accommodate the teaching of other subject lessons. Reflecting on the NMC and NCF previously analysed in Chapter 5, I can understand why this occurs. Both the NMC and NCF adopt a core curricula-centred approach. This may lead to the *dispositif* of the hidden curriculum, where the implication is that VPAS are not deemed as important as CATS, leading to an augmentation of time on CATS and a reduction in time for the non-CATS such as the VPAS. This also pointed out to the *dispositif* of the narrowing of the curriculum and to the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon (see section 2.2.3.2, section 3.4.2.2 and section 3.4.2.4). When the class educator had to choose between teaching an VPAS or a CATS, this research has proven that the educator will choose the CATS for two main reasons: either they do not feel adequate in teaching the VPAS, or because they choose to spend the time on a CATS due to deadlines and curriculum vastness. It is why I now refer to 'powerful knowledge' (Young, 2013) (see section 2.2.3.1), and how through powerful knowledge, the teaching of different subjects, one is equipping all students of all capabilities with different opportunities, thus opportunities for all. This also reflects the next theme, that of a broad and balanced curriculum.

6.3.3 Theme 3: Broad and Balanced Curriculum

In my research with regards to the first research question, *What was the relationship between global economic markets and the primary school curriculum, with particular focus on the VPAS?* the VPAS were being pushed onto an extra curriculum context that was reinforced through the operation of organisations in the private sector. The result was a neoliberal approach of shifting the VPAS from being available to all through public education to being available outside school hours. One can regard the privatisation of the VPAS as a way where the government enterprises the VPAS and commercialises the education of the VPAS to expand the industry of education. Thus, VPAS' educators will increase their revenue by teaching privately during extra-curricular hours, thus increasing the commerciality of the subject.

In Malta, there were some Government based extra-curricular activities and schools which teach the VPAS, such as the Mikiel Anton Vassalli School of VPAS, which incorporates the School of Music, School of Art and School of Dance and Drama (MAVC, 2022). Unfortunately, Government-run extra-curricular activities and VPAS schools are few and places are limited. Students who do not manage to achieve a place in these schools or wish to learn privately resort to private VPAS lessons against a fee. This is a move towards the privatisation of the VPAS, leading to a neoliberal approach to VPAS teaching. Coffield (1999) and Field (2000) remarked that an education which was economically-driven puts the financial responsibility of learning on the individual, resulting in the removal of this responsibility from the state. Individuals were then expected to act for themselves. With the limited number of hours spent teaching, education prioritises CATS, the subjects which are tested and through which nations can compare and contrast their status. A neoliberal education connects with self-governance by Foucault and GERM (Sahlberg, 2011).

Penn (2010) explained how education becomes a commercial industry due to globalisation, leading to HCT. Through this theory, the VPAS become an extra subject only a few people will be able to access, and will eventually become the domain of the elite (those who can afford to pay). This discriminates against the students who want to learn but do not have the necessary means to do so, creating an inequality in social justice. Those who can pay will aid in commercialising the VPAS and increase the value of the VPAS educator through HCT, thus further promoting the neoliberal move of privatising the VAPS. On the other hand, students who shine in the VPAS will not have the opportunity to shine in these subjects. Foucault's *dispositif* (1980) shows how because of globalisation and neoliberalisation, the VPAS are being sidelined in favour of the CATS. The unsaid part of the *dispositif* exposes the theory of the hidden curriculum and the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon (see section 2.2.3.2, section 3.4.2.2 and section 3.4.2.4), in that the CATS are more important than the VPAS, because the CATS are tested. This imbalance was also felt in the participants of this research, leading to the creation of the next theme, that of subject status.

6.3.4 Theme 4: Subject Status

Part of this research has shown that the CATS enjoy high subject status, while VPAS lessons enjoy a low status. With regards to my third research question, *What are the perceptions of students, educators and parents on the VPAS within the primary curriculum?* this theme showed that even though the majority of the participants belonging to the three categories perceived the VPAS to be important, they also perceived that the emphasis at schools was

placed on the CATS. As I previously mentioned in section 6.2.1, participants perceive the CATS as more important than the VPAS mainly because the CATS lead to an exam, while the VPAS are not assessed and perceived as fun subjects. In conclusion, my research shows that participants perceive the CATS as having a higher status because the subjects lead to an exam, spearheading the way for the hierarchy of the curriculum within the primary school subjects in Maltese primary schools.

A hierarchy of the curriculum was perceived and noted by all educators and parents participating in the different focus groups. This correlates with Bleazby's (2015) article where it was noted that a hierarchy of the curriculum was present globally. The emergence of the fourth theme, the different status of primary school subjects, emerged after a discussion with all participants from the different categories, where their perceptions on how the timetables of each school were distributed between the subjects was discussed. The reason being that the curriculum focuses the teaching time on tested CATS rather than other subjects, mirroring the UK curriculum and the imbalance in the teaching time (Campbell, 1993). My research shows that the four Maltese schools I conducted my research at were cognizant of the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon. This theme reflects the work of researchers like Rabkin & Redmond (2006), Sabol (2010), Urban (2017) and Wasmuth & Nitecki (2017) when noting how teaching time was used to focus on the CATS at the expense of the VPAS, leading to the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon. Students were aware of a teaching-to-the-test phenomenon, albeit indirectly. I asked students in their questionnaires whether they have VPAS lessons during exam time in question 5, and the majority replied with a No, as shown in table 15.

Table 15

Students Questionnaires Answers for Question 5

Answer	Total
Yes	7
No	136
Not always	36
Don't know	25

The theme of subject status answered part of the third research question, *What are the perceptions of students, educators and parents on the VPAS within the primary curriculum?* as it looked into the perception of the participants on how they perceive the school day was being divided between the subjects being taught at school. It also answered the first research question *What was the relationship between global economic markets and the primary school curriculum, with particular focus on the VPAS?* because the theme of subject status has shown that despite a vast curriculum being taught, teaching time at school has remained the same. This leads to a cramming of a vast curriculum, accountability and performativity issues for educators and pressure on students to do well in exams, leading to the narrowing of the curriculum and the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon.

This theme may be explained through Foucault's *dispositif* (1980) and the use of the episteme. I understand and defend that this episteme is the reason why different subjects enjoy different status in primary schools. As discussed in Chapter 3 (see section 3.5), the episteme is the controlled formation and controlled distribution of a discourse (Foucault, 1998). The curriculum is chosen discourse, whose knowledge has been carefully controlled and chosen by policy makers and the state through governmentality. This thesis has shown through gathered data that some subjects enjoy a higher status than others (as analysed and discussed in this section). The different theories of Chapter 3 and the creation of the *dispositif* show that it is through the neoliberal influence and the effect of globalisation and high-stakes testing that schools increase their teaching time on tested subjects. This promotes an unsaid hidden curriculum, that certain subjects are more important than others, in this case the CATS are promoted over the VPAS. As a result, the CATS enjoy a higher subjects' status than the VPAS.

6.4 Conclusion

This research showed that different subjects enjoyed different status at primary school level, with the main point being that the CATS enjoy a higher subject status than the VPAS. The reasoning behind this was that the CATS lead to an exam, while the VPAS are not assessed and are thus considered as unimportant and fun subjects. The phenomenon of exams related to the CATS is not something which occurs only in Malta, but globally. These include PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA, as discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.3. I also discussed how the global high-stakes tests were helping the phenomenon of homogenization and heterogenization as nations look at different educational policies, adopt what other nations were doing and compare the different results globally (Rizvi and Lingard, 2000). This may be seen through global tests such as PISA,

PIRLS and TIMSS. As I also explained in Chapter 2, this globalisation of education has led to GERM (Sahlberg, 2011).

GERM was the symbolic idea of the implementation and the comparing of global policy problems and priorities being implemented worldwide (Verger et al., 2018). I am mentioning GERM here because I believe, as Sahlberg does, that GERM has negatively affected education globally, where teachers had to "steal teaching time from other subjects, especially from social studies, arts, and music" in order for students to excel in tests that measure the students' proficiency and performativity in literacy and numeracy (Sahlberg, 2011), leading to a narrowing of the curriculum.

In section 6.2.1, my research has shown that even though the majority of participants perceive the VPAS as important subjects, some feel that it was more important to learn the CATS because the students have to sit for an exam. There is the implication that the CATS were important and enjoy a high status because the CATS lead to an exam, while the VPAS do not lead to an exam, and thus considered as fun subjects. This research has shown that the exam takes priority over the subjects being taught at school and is the reason why the CATS enjoy more teaching time than the VPAS. While this statement is not written on paper, there is the phenomenon of the hidden curriculum occurring which was perceived by all participants. In section 6.2.2, my research has revealed that when the class educator has to choose between teaching an VPAS or a CATS, this research has proven that the educator will choose the CATS for two main reasons: either they do not feel adequate in teaching the VPAS, or because they chose to spend the time on a CATS due to deadlines and curriculum vastness.

What fascinated me in this, apart from the discussion on subject hierarchy, a phenomenon discussed by Bleazby (2015), is that participants also noted how exams were affecting subject teaching and how teaching has become exam oriented. This represents the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon previously discussed in Chapter 2, with researchers such as Wasmuth and Nitecki (2017) and Urban (2017) noting how the focus in the curriculum has shifted from non-tested subjects to tested subjects. The episteme of Foucault's *dispositif* (1980) shows how the unsaid part of the hidden curriculum is implied when there is a curriculum hierarchy and when certain subjects, in this case the CATS, are perceived as having a high status, while the VPAS have a low status. The NCF and NMC documents do not have a section where they explain why the VPAS enjoy less teaching time than the CATS, but the reality of these four Maltese schools shows this hierarchy. By following Foucault's *dispositif* (1980) and linking the different

theories of globalisation, GERM, the narrowing of the curriculum, curriculum hierarchy and the hidden curriculum, one may look at Maltese education and note how the state affects its governance of power over education to promote the CATS and not the VPAS.

This section analysed the four themes discovered after analysing the focus groups I conducted in the four different schools using TA. Having analysed the focus group discussions and coding out the four themes of i) The Importance of the VPAS, ii)) Specialised Teachers, iii) Broad and Balanced Curriculum, and iv) Subject Status, I could see how one theme relates to the other, and to each other. I now relate this to Foucault (1980) *dispositif*. The *dispositif* shows how each of these four themes is a result of the other, and a branching of the different network of forces at play. There is the implication of a hidden curriculum, the unsaid notion of the *dispositif*, where CATS, such as mathematics, English, Maltese and science are given more importance throughout the school year, even though the NMC and NCF advocated a holistic and broad and balanced curriculum. This was seen by the number of lessons these subjects were allocated compared to the one lesson each VPAS enjoys, thus linking the theme of the curriculum with the theme of allocation of time. If a specialised educator does not come to school, the VPAS lesson was circumvented and a CATS lesson takes its place. There is the perception that the tested CATS are more important, thus, enjoy a high status compared with VPAS, showing that the theme of the importance of the VPAS depends on how the VPAS are being used in education.

Even though the majority of participants believe that the VPAS are important, these subjects were demoted to a subservient role, that of serving the CATS. By focusing on CATS, education discriminates against the students who have different capabilities, thus implying a survival of the fittest mode of education. By means of this research and the studies reviewed in Chapter 2 it was clear that the VPAS belong to everyone; all students have different capabilities, and a curriculum for all needs to be a broad and balanced curriculum, one which teaches the VPAS. Each of the four themes discussed in this chapter recapitulates the different theories of the *dispositif* I discussed in Chapter 3. It is a circle where these theories echo the themes, while the themes echo the theories, demonstrating the network of how theories and themes form part of, and link, together and with each other, the *dispositif*. This shows how through TA I was able to circumvent an incongruity between the analytic claims and the theory, and thus identify and link the themes to the literature and to the theoretical framework of the *dispositif*, a point which Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasised as a possible consequence of TA (see section 4.7.1.3.3)

I now move onto the seventh and final chapter of this thesis, the Conclusion, where I recapitulate the previous chapters, appraise my study, formulate recommendations for future research as well as for Maltese primary schools practice and policy making, while also reflecting on the overall process of my dissertation journey.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into five sections and concludes my research on the status of VPAS in Maltese primary schools. . I begin by drawing upon the research questions and the overall conclusions made possible through my findings in section 7.2. Section 7.3 is a consideration of my research and its contribution to literature, curriculum and staff development on both a national and international level. In section 7.4, I review the strengths and limitations of my study. Section 7.5 represents the recommendations I put forward with regards to my study, and conclude with my reflections on this research journey in Section 7.6.

7.2 Research Questions and Findings

In this section I summarise the three research questions and the findings derived either via the focus group interviews, the questionnaires, or by means of literature research in relation to my study and findings.

Because of globalisation, and the competition involving all countries participating in high-stakes tests such as PIRLS and TIMSS, countries focus the majority of their teaching time on the CATS of mathematics, English, Maltese and science (Au, 2008; Jennings & Stark Rentner, 2006; Jones et al., 2003; Lobascher, 2011; Polesel et al., 2012; Sabol, 2010; Stobart, 2008; Wasmuth and Nitecki, 2017; Urban, 2017). These subjects, as also evidenced in section 2.2 of Chapter 2, are perceived by participants in my research to enjoy a high status because of the fact that these subjects are tested. Thus, examined subjects are given priority over subjects which are not tested, creating a hierarchy of subjects within the curriculum. This hierarchy of curriculum was discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2.7. As a result, VPAS do not have the same status as mathematics, English or Maltese, but are the servile subjects under the dominance of the CATS. The data collected also found that a few students perceive the VPAS as "fun subjects" since they are not tested and are thus considered as not important (Chapter 6, section 6.2.1). However, the majority believe that the VPAS are important in primary education.

In my data, some students see the VPAS as important because they pave the way to future jobs. This statement made me pause because it showed that children as young as 9 years old are already thinking of their future. This made me reflect on the term "abilities-machine" by Foucault (2010, p.229), and how schools can operate as the factories which produce children and mould them according to how the policy makers design the curriculum; the students are the

products of the schools as factories. The majority of parents' and teachers' answers which contributed to my study shared the belief that the VPAS are indeed important for the education of the child, but unfortunately, they are being marginalized because they were not CATS and there are no exams for students to take in the VPAS. This concluded my argument that a teaching-to-the-test phenomenon was occurring in Maltese primary schools, which in turn led to the narrowing of the curriculum.

In Chapter 2, section 2.3 I wrote how the VPAS as part of a broad and balanced curriculum help the student to be more tolerant, to appreciate the diverse global cultures and how through the VPAS one can advocate for peace (Mayor, 2000). I also reflected on literature which shows that through developmental education, students worldwide benefit from the VPAS not only academically but also socially (Deasy, 2002). The VPAS aid the student to process different behavioural, social, mental and educational problems (Bieleninik et al., 2017; Binzer et al., 2016; Broder-Fingert et al., 2017; Freeman et al., 2003; Merrell, 2005; Porter et al., 2017). Alexander (2017) noted how each student has a right to learn the VPAS, not just for what can be achieved academically through these subjects, but because through the VPAS the student can learn about culture and traditions, learn different abilities and have more choices for their future roles as adults within a society. The Alexander research echoes my own research, in that the VPAS help students to express themselves more. This research has also noted how through the VPAS, all students are given equal opportunities as not all students excel in the CATS. Equal opportunities for all children are what the presence of VPAS within the primary curriculum offers.

Through the data I gathered for this research, I examined the participants' perceptions about the status of VPAS in schools, and whether they thought the VPAS were important or not. My research concluded that parents and teachers understood the importance of VPAS, and believed that all subjects are important. Parents believed that the VPAS aid in raising the self-esteem of the student. Teachers believed that those children who are not proficient academically but fare well in the VPAS had a better chance in the future.

7.3 Original Contribution to Knowledge

7.3.1 Knowledge

My first original contribution is the policy analyses of the NMC and the NCF simultaneously by means of CHEPDA. In Chapter 5, I showed how the Maltese primary curriculum written by policy makers promoted CATS not only because these subjects are tested, but perhaps because

mainstream and high-flying students could be better used and moulded by the state to serve the state. By means of the CHEPDA analyses and utilising the Foucault *dispositif* framework, I have shown how students are subjectified, standardised and objectified in section 3.4.3 when I discussed the *dispositif* of the objectification of the child. This formed part of the section where I discussed how education is seen as a capital investment (section 3.4). Schools are not there to serve the child, but have become tools in the hands of the state to produce future workers, thus ultimately regarding schools as factory settings. If schools have indeed been designed as factories to recreate and reproduce students into the designed mould by the government, the mould itself showed that students needed to assimilate a certain prescribed knowledge, deciding what and whose knowledge is of most worth, and finally settling for the knowledge which belongs to the government. As such, the child is regarded as a capital-abilities-machine. This dissertation has shown that side-lining the VPAS to make way for the CATS in Maltese primary schools is diminishing the number of opportunities for students who are artistically inclined. The focus groups of the educators and parents in this dissertation have shown that the side-lining of the VPAS to accommodate the CATS falls under the narrowing of the curriculum phenomenon and that the VPAS has a low subject status as opposed to the high-status subjects enjoyed by the CATS (see sections 6.2.4 and 6.3.4). The implied or hidden message is that the VPAS are not important at school, but this dissertation has shown that the VPAS are significant in the development of the student in number of ways (see section 2.3). This concept leads to the next contribution to knowledge brought forward by my research.

7.3.2 Utilitarian Curriculum

My second contribution concerns the curriculum. This research has demonstrated that students benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum. This outcome was revealed through the analyses of the focus groups and questionnaires of both parents' and educators' categories in Chapter 6 (see Chapter 6, section 6.2.3), ultimately leading to the creation of the third thematic analysis, that of the importance of a broad and balanced curriculum. However, this research has also discovered that instead, Maltese education is not focusing on teaching and providing the student with a broad and balanced curriculum, but the curriculum design is being driven by means of globalisation to adopt global performance standards and frameworks. This in turn narrows the perspectives on teaching, and is thus narrowing the scope of the subjects the students are learning in Maltese primary schools.

My analysis of the monetarisation of the Maltese curriculum also shows the neoliberal approach to education, by side-lining the VPAS, narrowing the curriculum in order to accommodate the

CATS, resulting in an exam mark. This neoliberal approach is the result of globalisation in education (see section 2.2.1). High-status tested subjects in Maltese primary schools' curriculum enjoy more teaching time in schools, noting how the curriculum content is being managed to reflect the topics and subjects which are tested, reflecting the *dispositif* of the hidden curriculum and what is being said and unsaid, the narrowing of the curriculum and the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon (see sections 2.2.3.2, 3.4.2.2, 3.4.2.4).

My research has shown that subject status is assigned to the subject which has the most visibility, such as the CATS in the Maltese primary schools. This is because these subjects are tested on a national and supranational scale. The exams of these subjects is what makes the CATS more visible, and as a result, it is why the CATS enjoy a higher subject status than the VPAS. This thesis has shown that the VPAS lack visibility in Maltese primary schools and therefore, do not enjoy a high-status like CATS (see Chapter 6, section 6.2.4). My contribution towards academia shows that what and whose knowledge is of most worth relies on the visibility of the subjects' worth, value, productivity, measurement and subject status.

7.3.3 The 'Capital-Abilities-Machine'

My third contribution to literature is the construction of the term 'capital-abilities-machine'. Using Foucault's (1980) *dispositif*, which is an amalgamation of different theories interwoven together (see Chapters 2 and 3), I showed that the theories of governmentality, the narrowing of the curriculum, the hierarchy of the curriculum and the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon, globalisation, schools as factory settings, the objectification of the child, and the capital-abilities-machine do not just link in a linear manner, but are braided together in a very complex way. Through this interconnectivity of the different theories in the *dispositif*, I merged the Bennett (2010) 'capital-abilities' theory with the Foucault (2010) 'abilities-machine' into what I have termed the 'capital-abilities-machine' as discussed in Chapter 2.

Students are primarily talked about as prospective members of the workforce of a nation in both primary and secondary sections, and schools are considered to be the training site for the backbone of the Maltese waged and unwaged, prolific labour force (MEE, 1999). My CHEPDA analyses of the NMC and NCF in Chapter 5, (see sections 5.2.1.1.2 and 5.2.1.2.2) showed how the last two Maltese curricula accentuate a lifelong learning understanding and prepare the student for the labour force. As a result, the curriculum becomes utilitarian in nature, and places unnecessary stress on the student to prepare them for the labour market.

When students are seen as 'capital-abilities-machines' and not as individuals, students become pawns by the state which have to function and produce a product; the student is seen as a future pawn of the labour force. All of this is undertaken to profit the economy of the state. This shows that the value of education is diminished to its economic worth. Seeing how the VPAS are being side-lined through a neoliberal lens, my work has demonstrated that neoliberalism is trying to co-opt the VPAS in order to increase the economic value of the subjects.

By having the VPAS taught at primary school levels, all students have the opportunity to experience a broad and balanced curriculum. I endorse the teaching of a broad and balanced curriculum because I believe that each student should have the right to choose their own paths in life, and not to accommodate a path chosen by the state. My research has also shown how beneficial the VPAS are when these are included as singular subjects within the primary curriculum, thus following the 'learning in' outcome which I have discussed in sections 2.3.5, 6.2.1 and 6.3.1. This research has shown that when VPAS are added to education, these aid the development of the student, not only academically, but also aid the student emotionally, promote peace education, promote teamwork and group work and help the students express themselves more, so that eventually the student breaks away from this mould (see section 2.3). Thus, this research has also shown how the VPAS help the student to understand their own potential and choose future pathways which go beyond what the school-factory-settings request from the student (see section 3.4.1). It is as such that the VPAS counteract the capital-abilities-machine because the VPAS provide the student with the necessary means to think outside the box, beyond the limitations set by the school-factory-settings, beyond the mould set by the state.

The VPAS counteract the purpose of the assembly line of high-stakes testing productivity by encouraging the identity of the individual in a world where individualism is suppressed in favour of the assimilation of the individual into the being the state desires. The VPAS break down the power structure of manipulation by the state and give the individual the tools to become an independent being, coexisting alongside conditioned controlled individuals under the rigidity of an all-controlling state.

7.4 Strengths and limitations

In this part, I discuss the strengths of my study and its limitations. I start off with the four strengths of my research.

7.4.1 Strengths

One of the strengths my research represents is the original contribution towards understanding the perceptions of parents, teachers and students together in the same study on the status of primary school subjects. My study also provided a discourse analysis of both the NMC and NCF through CHEPDA (Hyatt, 2013), both of which have never been done before. Prior to my study, I could only find a few articles on the NMC, such as Borg et al. (1995) critical analysis of the NMC, but not on the NCF. Maltese research articles are few, and focus on different branches of education, which are not relevant to this research. My study thus fills a gap in the literature.

The second strength is the number of schools and participants of my research. Including four different schools allowed me to juxtapose the different data generated by the focus groups and questionnaires. This allowed me to compare the key issues resulting from the thematic analyses of these methods. Even though the four schools provide a non-representative sample, and the answers provided cannot be generalized, I do believe that the different localities and population of the schools should encourage further research in other schools after this dissertation.

The third strength may be seen in the twelve focus group discussions I led with the different participants belonging to the three categories. These categories allowed me to investigate my argument on the status of the VPAS in primary schools from the different perspectives of parents, teachers and students. The data generated was rich, and I was able to analyse and construct themes which I found were relevant in all the four schools. These themes were also generated through the questionnaires, and ultimately allowed me to draw the conclusions I wrote about previously in this chapter. The number of participants of the questionnaires went beyond my expectations as more participants chose to participate. Triangulating the data of the focus groups and questionnaires helped make my research credible, reliable and trustworthy, three imperative elements as mentioned in Chapter 3.

The fourth strength of this research is the range of recommendations I put forward. The recommendations branch out from the data generated and analysed in my research. I will be discussing these in the next part of this chapter. I now move on to the limitations of my study.

7.4.2 Limitations

Even though my research was conducted in four different schools, it is not large-scale nationwide research, but rather a small-scale one. Having said that, I would like to expand my research further nationwide after this dissertation. The second limitation was the fact that as a

musicologist, my Bachelor and Master degrees were music editing and research oriented. This EdD has challenged me and taught me different ways of research, from NVivo, to TA, to CHEPDA, to the Foucault *dispositif* (1980). As I previously mentioned in this chapter, before using the *dispositif* I was applying a linear pattern to map the different theories I used in Chapter 3.

The third limitation in this study was time. Being a fulltime music teacher in a school and teaching piano in my private practice left me with very limited time. However, because this study was very close to my heart, I decided to dedicate a year where I only worked part-time at school. During this year, I managed to spend time at the different schools to conduct the focus groups, distribute the questionnaires, and analyse the material and themes brought up by the chosen methods. At this point, COVID-19 struck. The trajectory of this research took a nose dive, because I had to take leave of absence from my studies in order to teach a primary school class as well as music lessons at my work place. It has truly been an eventful journey, one through which I have learnt much. In hindsight, I know that I have chosen the best method for my research and that I could not have used another approach; I am happy with the way the data was generated and pleased with the results. Considering these strengths and limitations which have brought me to the end of this journey, I now proceed to my recommendations.

7.5 Recommendations

7.5.1 Less is More

Each child has different abilities, different futures; what education needs to do is to cater for each student as an individual. As noted by the parents and educators, participants in this research (see section 6.2.2 and 6.2.4), the Maltese primary school curriculum is vast and dense, and at times, some material is repeated throughout the years. Unfortunately, as long as we still follow the dense curriculum, trying to accommodate the vast amount of knowledge to be taught will inevitably come at the expense of some subjects, and moreover, at the expense of the students' holistic development. We may ask whether this means that education has failed the student. If one had to reduce the curriculum's vastness and balance out the time spent on different subjects, then the status of the subjects would also balance out. In order to do this, Malta needs to look to other countries, like Japan and Singapore. These countries are embracing the idea that within the curriculum one should adopt the philosophy of "less is more" (Sahlberg, 2011, p.102).

My recommendation is that policy makers should either reduce the scope of the primary curriculum or reconsider the way certain topics are repeated throughout the years, a recommendation also suggested by some teachers during the focus group discussions. Another recommendation would be to focus more on the VPAS during the early years, since the curricula of the early years are not as dense as the curricula of grades 4-6 when students are obliged to participate in tests, both on a national and on a supranational level. I would still incorporate the VPAS in grades 4-6, but not to the extent of the early years. For example, in the early years I would accommodate to have two lessons per VPAS, while in grades 4-6 I would offer only one lesson. This would mean that grades 4-6 would still have had a VPAS education during their early years, and would not miss out on any of the VPAS during their exam years. As such, the students would know and appreciate the VPAS and if so desired, continue to further learn one the VPAS later in their future.

7.5.2 Specialised Teachers and Staff Development

Through the data collected in my focus group discussions and questionnaires (section 6.2.2), I recommend that specialised teachers are the way forward for VPAS lessons to have a place in the school timetable. Even though the NCF aims at a holistic curriculum and a holistic education (MEE, 2012), unfortunately this is not the reality. This is because Maltese education is very exam oriented. If there is the specialised teacher to teach the VPAS, the class teacher will hand over the class at a fixed time on the school timetable, and the class teacher would have some time to work on class related matters. Gathered data in this research suggests that educators believe that the way forward for VPAS to be thoroughly implemented and taught at school is through specialised teachers, as seen in Chapter 6, section 6.2.2. On the other hand, by means of the focus groups of educators, I have demonstrated that in Maltese schools, VPAS are being side-lined to accommodate the CATS, as seen in Chapter 6, section 6.2.3.

Besides recommending a specialised subject teacher, which might not always be feasible for various reasons such as not finding an VPAS teacher, or the school not having the monetary resources to employ extra staff, I recommend that through staff development programmes, the already qualified class teacher learns new pedagogical skills to be able to teach VPAS at school. Bautista et al., (2016) have proven that the way forward is to invest in teacher training, a direction chosen by Singaporean education, as I've discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2.2.

This reflects results achieved in Singapore where the government has endorsed VPAS and provided training for class teachers to teach the VPAS (Bautista et. al, 2016). This may also be

the way forward, but ultimately, there needs to be discipline in keeping to the scheduled timetable if the class teacher were to teach the VPAS too. In chapter I asked how Singapore manages to balance the academic with the non-academic subjects, and I believe that a structured timetable and a curriculum which does not solely focus on tests is the key. In whatever way governments endorse this recommendation, one thing remains certain: students have every right for education, and the education provided should incorporate all subjects. Therefore, I now move onto my next recommendation, that all students should be provided with a broad and balanced curriculum at school.

7.5.3 A Broad and Balanced Curriculum

Education should not just include the academic development of the individual, but the artistic and cultural development of each student with all their diverse, incredible capabilities. As I have expressed and proven by means of the third research questions in Chapter 2, section 2.3, the VPAS provide the student the tools to be able to understand the attitudes and values shared by the community they form part of. This may be the solution for the Maltese curriculum, where the NCF (2012) promotes the word 'holistic', a word which is used 17 times in the document. VPAS in primary schools are the key for a holistic endeavour, for a curriculum to be broad and balanced. VPAS can be validated as subjects which make an original and important contribution to the curriculum by engaging knowledge and understanding, cognitively, affectively, spiritually and morally beyond which other disciplines can educate (Hetland & Winner, 20101). My research has shown that the VPAS are indeed important for the education of the student. My recommendation to the curriculum is that if the NCF aim is to truly have a holistic curriculum and a holistic education (MEE, 2012), a broad and balanced education is needed for the student, and all subjects must be taught at school (see section 2.2.2).

7.6 Concluding Reflections

Maltese education has unfortunately shown how CATS oriented it is, by removing specialised and peripatetic teachers to supervise and teach CATS. An international NGO, InSEA (International Society for Education through Art) has written an open letter to the Maltese Education Minister to reflect on the lack of art teaching at schools and how the lack of VPAS may have negative effects on the education of the child, particularly on their emotional, cultural and social development (Galea Debono, 2020). Artists all around the world have taken to social media to fight for the VPAS , to champion the importance of VPAS. During the global COVID-19 pandemic, people turned to the VPAS to cheer them up, from listening to music, to watching

movies and series, to learning how to draw and paint, and overall trying to express themselves through the VPAS.

The expectations of society exist in contradiction to a broad and balanced curriculum, an argument which stands in direct opposition to the pressures and requirements of school tests (Bautista et al., 2016). STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and mathematics – and here I add the language subjects of English and Maltese - are indeed essential basics for learning, economic competitiveness and employment. But so are the VPAS. The VPAS should also be included in the rudimentary education of the child (Alexander, 2017). I hope that we do not lessen the teaching time of the VPAS in favour of economy and production for the state but learn how to celebrate the individual through the VPAS. I believe that the VPAS aid the overall wellbeing of the student by empowering and educating them. All subjects should be given equal importance, because every child deserves a broad and balanced education.

The research shows that in Maltese primary schools, there is a curriculum hierarchy, emphasised by the fact that teaching time is focused on tested subjects. This research also shows that mathematics, English, Maltese and science are the subjects which enjoy the highest status, while music, drama and art are the subjects with the lowest status. The irony is that research has shown that students participating in VPAS (both as taught in primary schools and in extra-curricular activities after school hours) have demonstrated an improvement in the learning of CATS (Burton et al., 1999; Catterall et al., 1999; Catterall & Waldorf, 2002; Catterall, 2007; Deasy, 2002; Psilos, 2002). Nevertheless, we must not fall into the trap of relegating the VPAS to a utilitarian role where the VPAS are encouraged in order to serve CATS.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical Approval Letter from the University of Sheffield

Maria Eloise Spiteri
Registration number: 150107794
School of Education
Programme: EdD

Dear Maria Eloise

PROJECT TITLE: The Changing Value of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools
APPLICATION: Reference Number 023562

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 11/03/2019 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 023562 (dated 05/03/2019).
- Participant information sheet 1057419 version 1 (05/03/2019).
- Participant information sheet 1057418 version 1 (05/03/2019).
- Participant information sheet 1057417 version 1 (05/03/2019).
- Participant consent form 1057422 version 1 (05/03/2019).
- Participant consent form 1057421 version 1 (05/03/2019).
- Participant consent form 1057420 version 1 (05/03/2019).

The following optional amendments were suggested:

Please give consideration to the following point raised by one of the reviewers: Need to clarify that you will be obtaining the teachers work email addresses. You need to clarify what you mean by approaching 'I will contact the teachers and parents via email and explain in the same manner I did with the principal'. How will you make initial contact with parents? How will you obtain email addresses? I do feel there are ethical concerns with obtaining email addresses without initially seeking consent for this communication with parents.

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

David Hyatt
Ethics Administrator
School of Education

Appendix 2 Participants Information Sheet in English for Parents (approved by the University of Sheffield)

Date: 01/03/19

Information Sheet: Parents/Guardians

The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

1.   What is the project about?
This project is part of my Educational Doctorate (EdD). The research focuses on the changing status of subjects in the Maltese school curriculum. I aim to explore if, and if so, how the market influences curriculum through high-stakes tests, and how these tests in turn may influence the curriculum that is being taught in Maltese schools. I would like to explore whether the arts subjects are being side-tracked, leading to a narrowing of the curriculum and the exclusion of non-tested subjects.

This research aims to explore teachers', parents' and students' perceptions of the role and status of arts education lessons within the primary school curriculum.

2.   Why have I been chosen?
As a parent/guardian with a child/ren attending a primary school, I would like to hear about your experiences and thoughts about the arts curriculum. The intended number for recruited participants in the focus groups will not exceed 7 members.

3.   What do I have to do?
I would like to invite you to take part in a focus group discussion. This will last no longer than 1 hour and will take place on school premises during/after working hours. The questions will focus on your experience as a parent/guardian with child/ren within the Maltese primary school level in relation to the role and status of the arts subjects. If you take part in the focus group, refreshments will be provided on the day to thank you for your time and your contribution to the research.

4.   Do I have to participate?
Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. You are free to end your participation at any time without needing to give any reason; this applies even if the focus group has already started. If for any reason you feel uncomfortable, you can leave. If you do decide to participate you will be given this information sheet to keep and a copy of the signed consent form.

5.   Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

Your personal details will be kept strictly confidential and your name will be removed in any work published as a result of this research. All information gathered will be accessible only to me. Neither you nor your school nor the location will be identified in any reports, presentations or publications. Identities of participants and schools will be protected. Before you take part in the research, I will ask you to fill in a consent form. I will not use your name in any publications that result from this research. With your permission, however, I may use anonymised quotes.

6.   What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?

According to data protection legislation, I am required to inform you that the legal basis I are applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University's Privacy Notice https://sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general. As I will be collecting some data that is defined in the legislation as sensitive (information about your views about arts subjects, tests, assessments, etc.) I also need to let you know that I am applying the following condition in law: that the use of your data is 'necessary for scientific or historical research purposes'.

7.   Will the focus group interview be recorded and how will this recording be used?

The focus group discussion will be recorded electronically. The recording will only be available to myself and it will be transcribed. The recordings will be stored in a secure Google drive and personal external hard disk and only I will have access to the recordings. These electronic recordings will be stored in an encrypted password protected electronic form and destroyed at the end of the research project. The data will be destroyed 12 months after the end of the project. The research results are expected to be published by September 2020 and I will send you a summary copy of the report. You will not be identified in any report or publication. The audio and/or video recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and for illustration in conference presentations and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

8.   What are the benefits and disadvantages of taking part?

I hope that you will find the process beneficial as an opportunity to reflect on your experiences as a parent/guardian with a child/ren in a primary school and how your input can aid research relating to Maltese education. There are a few risks or disadvantages to taking part. The main disadvantage is the time taken to participate.

9.   Who is organising the research?

Maria Eloise Spiteri, EdD contestant from the University of Sheffield is the sole researcher.

10.   Who is the Data Controller?

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using is properly.

11.   Ethical Review

This research has been ethically reviewed via the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the School of Education ethical review procedure. If there is any aspect of the project, or your participation that you would like to discuss further, or feel you

may need support with, please do not hesitate to get in touch with one of the key contacts listed below.

12.   What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research?
If you are unhappy about any aspect of the project, please contact me straight away and I will address any concern as soon as possible. You can contact me on 79548358 or mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk In the event of you still being dissatisfied, your complaint can be investigated by the University of Sheffield (Dr David Hyatt, Ethics Co-ordinator), d.hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk or the Head of the School of Education Professor Elizabeth Wood, E.A.Wood@sheffield.ac.uk

13.   Timescale
The research is planned to take place between the 1st May and 31st June 2019 with the outcomes of the project to be included in a report part of the EdD dissertation submitted to the faculty of Education of the University of Sheffield by May 2020. A summary report will be sent to the participating school for participants to access it should you wish to do so.

You will be given a copy of the information sheet for your perusal and, if appropriate, a signed consent form to keep.
I thank you in advance for taking the time and participating in the research project.

Key Contacts
Researcher
Maria E. Spiteri
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241 Glossop Road
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Supervisor
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Appendix 3: Participants Information Sheet in Maltese for Parents (approved by the University of Sheffield)

Date: 01/03/19

Formola ta' Informazzjoni: Ġenituri/Tuturi

"The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools"

Nixtieq nistiednek biex tipparteċipa fi proġett tar-riċerka. Qabel ma taċċetta jew le, int mitlub/a tifhem dak li hu meħtieġ minn għandek f'din ir-riċerka. Għaldaqstant, nitolbok tieħu l-ħin meħtieġ biex taqra l-informazzjoni mniżla fuq din il-folja. Tista' tiddiskuti u tistaqsi mistoqsijiet f'każ li ma tifhimx xi ħaġa jew f'kaz li teħtieġ aktar informazzjoni. Ħu l-ħin meħtieġ biex tagħżel jekk tixtieqx tipparteċipa jew le f'dan il-proġett ta' riċerka. Grazzi talli ħadt l-ħin biex taqra din il-parti.

1.   X'inhu il-proġett?

Il-proġett ta' riċerka huwa parti mil-kwalifika tad-Dottorat fl-Edukazzjoni mill-Universita ta' Sheffield (EdD). Ir-riċerka tiffoka fuq l-istat tas-suġġetti parti mill-kurrikulu ta' l-iskejjel primarji madwar Malta. Ir-riċerka tinvolvi li ngħaraf il-ħsieb tagħkom fuq kif is-suq globali qed jinfluenza is-suġġetti mgħalma fl-iskejjel Maltin permess ta' l-eżamijiet nazzjonali u supranazzjonali. Bħala riċerkatriċi, nixtieq ngħaraf jekk is-suġġetti ta' l-arti qed jiġux mwarba biex jakkomodaw suġġetti oħra li huma parti mil-eżamijiet nazzjonali u supranazzjonali jew le, fenomenu li qed iwassal għat-tidjieq tal-kurrikulu u l-esklużjoni ta' suġġetti li mhumiex eżaminati.

Din ir-riċerka għandha l-għan li tesplora il-perċezzjonijiet ta' l-istudenti, l-għalliema u l-ġenituri fuq is-suġġetti ta' l-arti u r-rwol li dawn is-suġġetti għandhom fil-kurrikulu ta' l-iskejjel primarji.

2.   Għalfejn intgħazilt?

Nixtieq nisma' l-esperjenzi u l-ħsiebijiet tiegħek fuq is-suġġetti tal-arti bħala ġenitur/tutur ta' studenti li jattendu skejjel primarji f'Malta.

3.   X'irrid nagħmel jekk niddeċiedi li nipparteċipa?

Jien nixtieq nistiednek għal-diskusjoni fi grupp. Kull grupp ta' diskussjoni mhux ħa jaqbeż is-7 membri. Id-diskussjoni m'għandiex għalfejn iddum aktar minn siegħa u ser isseħħ waqt il-ħinijiet ta' l-iskola u fil-bini ta' l-iskola. Il-mistoqsijiet magħmula ser jiddiskutu l-esperjenzi tiegħek bħala ġenitur/tutur ta' tfal fl-iskola fir-rigward ta' l-irwol u l-istatus tas-suġġetti ta' l-arti fi skejjel primarji Maltin. Provvisti żgħar ser jiġu servuti għal waqt il-ħin ta' diskussjoni bħala ringrazzjament tal-kontribuzzjoni tiegħek.

4.   Bilfors irrid nippartecipa?

Il-parteċipazzjoni f'din ir-riċerka hija fuq bazi volontarja. Għandek id-dritt ttemm il-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek fi kwalunkwe ħin u mingħajr ogligu li tagħti raġuni. Dan japplika anke jekk il-grupp ta' diskussjoni jkun diġà beda. Jekk tiddeċiedi li tipparteċipa, ser tingħatalek il-kopja ta' din il-folja tal-informazzjoni iffirmata mingħandek li turi il-kunsens tiegħek.

5.   Jekk nieħu parti f'dan il-proġett, id-dettalji tiegħi ser jinżammu kunfidenzjali?

Id-dettalji personali tiegħek ser jinżammu strettament kunfidenzjali u isemhek se jitneħħa fi kwalunkwe xogħol ippubblikat f'din ir-riċerka. Jien biss ser ikolli l-aċċess għal-informazzjoni li ġiet miġbura waqt din ir-riċerka. Qabel ma tieħu sehem fir-riċerka, inti mitlub/a sabiex timla l-formola tal-kunsens. La ismek, la l-isem ta' l-iskola u lanqas l-isem tal-post ser ikunu identifikati f'rapporti, preżentazzjonijiet jew pubblikazzjonijiet; l-identitajiet tal-parteċipanti u l-iskejjel se jkunu protetti. Madankollu, kwotazzjonijiet li jkunu anonimizzati jistgħu jiġu ntuzati bil-permess tiegħek biss.

6.   X'inhu l-bażi legali għall-ipproċessar tad-data personali tiegħi?

Skond il-leġislazzjoni tal-protezzjoni tad-data, jien meħtieġa ninfurmak li l-bażi legali li qegħda napplika biex nipproċessa l-informazzjoni personali tiegħek hija li "meħtieġa għat-twettiq ta' attività mwettqa fl-interess pubbliku" (Artiklu 6(1)(e)). Aktar informazzjoni tinsab fil-paġna eletronika ta' l-Universita' ta' Sheffiled fuq https://sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general Peress li jien ser inkun qed niġbor informazzjoni ta' natura sensittiva skond din il-leġislazzjoni (informazzjoni dwar l-opinjonijiet tiegħek dwar suġġetti ta' l-arti, eżamijiet fi skejjel primarji, eċċ.) għandi bżonn ngħarrfek li ser nkun qed napplika din il-kondizzjoni tal-liġi: li ser nkun qed nuża l-informazzjoni miġbura fuqek "bħala neċessita għal skopijiet ta' riċerka storika jew xjentifika".

7.   Id-diskussjoni fil-grupp ser tkun irrekordjata, u kif ser iseħħ dan?

Id-diskussjoni fil-grupp ser tiġi rrekordjata b'mod elettroniku; jien biss ser ikolli aċċess għalija u ħa nkun qed nagħmel traskritt tal-konversazzjonijiet għall-han tar-riċerka. Ir-reġistrazzjonijiet se jiġu maħżuna fuq 'Google drive' personali mogħti mil-Universita' ta' Sheffield u fuq ħardisk esterna, fejn ser ikunu protetti b'password u ser ikunu wkoll iċċifrati għal protezzjoni tiegħek; jien biss ser ikolli aċċess għalihom. L-informazzjoni kollha miġbura b'permezz tad-diskussjonijiet ser ikunu meqruda 12-il xahar wara t-tmiem tal-proġett. Ir-riżultati tar-riċerka huma mistennija li jiġu ppubblikati sa Settembru 2020; fl-aħħar tar-riċerka ser nibgħat kopja tar-rapport fil-qosor. Ħadd mhu ser ikun identifikat fil-pubblikazzjoni tar-rapport. Ir-reġistrazzjonijiet awdjo tiegħek meħudha matul din ir-riċerka ser jintużaw biss għall-analiżi tar-riċerka u waqt preżentazzjonijiet f'lezzjonijiet u eżamijiet. Mhux ser ikun hemm l-ebda użu ieħor mingħajr il-permess bil-miktub tiegħek, u l-ebda persuni involuti barra minn dan il-proġett mhu ser ikollhom aċċess għar-reġistrazzjonijiet oriġinali.

8.   X'inhuma l-vantaġġi u l-iżvantaġġi jekk nieħu sehem f'dan il-proġett?

Nispera li tara dan il-proċess bħala opportunità biex tirrifletti fuq l-esperjenzi tiegħek bħala ġenitur/tutur ta' tfal li għadhom fl-iskola primarja, u kif l-għajnuna tiegħek f'din ir-riċerka hija ta' għajnuna kbira. Hemm ftit ta' xejn riskji jew żvantaġġi jekk tieħu sehem. L-iżvantaġġ prinċipali huwa l-ħin meħud biex tipparteċipa.

9.   Min qed jorganizza din ir-riċerka?

Maria Eloise Spiteri li qeda tikkuntesta il-grad ta' EdD mill-Universita' ta' Sheffield hija l-unika riċerkatriċi.

10.   Min hu l-kontrollur ewlieni tal-informazzjoni?

L-Universita' ta' Sheffield ser taġixxi bħala l-kontrollur ewlieni tal-informazzjoni waqt din ir-riċerka. Dan ifisser li l-Università hija responsabbli għal kull informazzjoni meħuda mingħandek, u responsabbli biex din l-informazzjoni tiġi użata kif xieraq.

11. Eżami Etiku

Din ir-riċerka ġiet etikament ivverifikata mingħand l-Università ta' Sheffield, parti mill-proċedura ta' l-amminstrazzjoni mid-Dipartiment ta' l-Edukazzjoni. Jekk hemm xi aspett tal-proġett jew tal-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek li inti tixtieq tiddiskuti aktar, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntattja ir-riċerkaturi mill-kuntatti ewlenin elenkati hawn taħt.

12. X'jigri jekk xi ħaga tmur ħazin u nixtieq nilmenta fuq ir-riċerka?

Jekk int m'intix kuntent dwar kull aspett tal-proġett, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntatjani u jien nagħmel ħilti kollha biex nindirizza kwalunkwe tħassib fl-aktar fis possibli. Tista' tikkuntattjani fuq 79548358 jew mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk Fil-każ li inti xorta għadek mintix sodisfatt, l-ilment tiegħek jista' jiġi nvestigat mill-Universita' ta' Sheffield (Dr David Hyatt, Ko-Ordinatur ta' l-Etika), d.hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk jew il-kap tad-Dipartiment ta' l-Edukazzjoni Proff. Elizabeth Wood, E.A.Wood@sheffield.ac.uk

13. Zmien

Ir-riċerka hija ppjanata li sseħħ bejn l-1 ta' Mejju sal-31 ta' Ġunju 2019. Ir-riżultati tal-proġett ser ikunu inklużi f'rapport li jagħmel parti mit-tesi finali tal-EdD sottomessa lill-Fakultà tal-Edukazzjoni tal-Università ta' Sheffield sa Mejju 2020. Rapport fil-qosor se jintbagħat lill-iskejjel parteċipanti f'każ li int tkun tixtieq taqrah.

Ser tingħatalek kopja tal-folja tal-informazzjoni, u jekk taċċetta li tipparteċipa, ser tingħatalek ukoll kopja tal-formola tal-kunsens iffirmata minnek biex iżżommha.

Nirringrazzjak bil-quddiem tal-ħin u l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek f'dan il-proġett ta' riċerka.

Kuntatti Ewlenin
Riċerkatrici
Maria E. Spiteri
mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk
School of Education University of Sheffield
Edgar Allen House
241 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2GW
Tel +356 7954 8358

Supervisor
Dr Chris Winter
c.winter@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel +44 (0) 114 2228142

Appendix 4: Participants Information Sheet in English for Educators (approved by the University of Sheffield)

Date: 01/03/19

Information Sheet: Teachers

The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

1.   What is the project about?
This project is part of my Educational Doctorate (EdD). The research focuses on the changing status of subjects in the Maltese school curriculum. I aim to explore if, and if so, how the market influences curriculum through high-stakes tests, and how these tests in turn may influence the curriculum that is being taught in Maltese schools. I would like to explore whether the arts subjects are being side-tracked, leading to a narrowing of the curriculum and the exclusion of non-tested subjects.

This research aims to explore teachers', parents' and students' perceptions of the role and status of arts education lessons within the primary school curriculum.

2.   Why have I been chosen?
As a teacher teaching Grade 5 students in a primary school, I would like to hear about your experiences and thoughts about the arts curriculum. The intended number for recruited participants in the focus groups will not exceed 7 members.

3.   What do I have to do?
I would like to invite you to take part in a focus group discussion. This will last no longer than 1 hour and will take place on school premises during/after working hours. The questions will focus on your experience as a teacher within the Maltese primary school level in relation to the role and status of the arts subjects. If you take part in the focus group, refreshments will be provided on the day to thank you for your time and your contribution to the research.

4.   Do I have to participate?
Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. You must feel free to end your participation at any time and without needing to give any reason; this applies even if the focus group has already started. If for any reason you feel uncomfortable, you can leave. If you do decide to participate you will be given this information sheet to keep and a copy of the signed consent form.

5.   Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?
Your personal details will be kept strictly confidential and your name will be removed in any work published as a result of this research. All information gathered will be accessible only to me. Neither you nor your school nor the location will be identified in any reports, presentations

or publications. Identities of participants and schools will be protected. Before you take part in the research, I will ask you to fill in a consent form. I will not use your name in any publications that result from this research. With your permission, however, I may use anonymised quotes.

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8.   What are the benefits and disadvantages of taking part?

I hope that you will find the process beneficial as an opportunity to reflect on your experiences as a teacher of the Grade 5 level in a primary school and how your input can aid research relating to Maltese education. There are a few risks or disadvantages to taking part. The main disadvantage is the time taken to participate.

9.   Who is organising the research?

Maria Eloise Spiteri, EdD contestant from the University of Sheffield is the sole researcher.

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11.   Ethical Review

This research has been ethically reviewed via the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the School of Education ethical review procedure. If there is any aspect of the project, or your participation that you would like to discuss further, or feel you may need support with, please do not hesitate to get in touch with one of the key contacts listed below.

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If you are unhappy about any aspect of the project, please contact me straight away and I will address any concern as soon as possible.	You can contact me on 79548358 or mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk	In the event of you still being dissatisfied, your complaint can be investigated by the University of Sheffield (Dr David Hyatt, Ethics Co-ordinator), d.hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk or the Head of the School of Education Professor Elizabeth Wood, E.A.Wood@sheffield.ac.uk

**13.	Timescale**
The research is planned to take place between the 1st May and 31st June 2019 with the outcomes of the project to be included in a report part of the EdD dissertation submitted to the faculty of Education of the University of Sheffield by May 2020. A summary report will be sent to the participating school for participants to access it should you wish to do so.

You will be given a copy of the information sheet for your perusal and, if appropriate, a signed consent form to keep.
I thank you in advance for taking the time and participating in the research project.

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Appendix 5: Participants Information Sheet in Maltese for Educators (approved by the University of Sheffield)

Formola ta' Informazzjoni: Għalliema

"The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools"

Nixtieq nistiednek biex tipparteċipa fi proġett tar-riċerka. Qabel ma taċċetta jew le, int mitlub/a tifhem dak li hu meħtieġ minn għandek f'din ir-riċerka. Għaldaqstant, nitolbok tieħu l-ħin meħtieġ biex taqra l-informazzjoni mniżla fuq din il-folja. Tista' tiddiskuti u tistaqsi mistoqsijiet f'każ li ma tifhimx xi ħaġa jew f'kaz li teħtieġ aktar informazzjoni. Ħu l-ħin meħtieġ biex tagħżel jekk tixtieqx tipparteċipa jew le f'dan il-proġett ta' riċerka. Grazzi talli ħadt l-ħin biex taqra din il-parti.

1.　　X'inhu il-proġett?
Il-proġett ta' riċerka huwa parti mil-kwalifika tad-Dottorat fl-Edukazzjoni mill-Universita ta' Sheffield (EdD). Ir-riċerka tiffoka fuq l-istat tas-suġġetti parti mill-kurrikulu ta' l-iskejjel primarji madwar Malta. Ir-riċerka tinvolvi li ngħaraf il-ħsieb tagħkom fuq kif is-suq globali qed jinfluenza is-suġġetti mgħalma fl-iskejjel Maltin permess ta' l-eżamijiet nazzjonali u supranazzjonali. Bħala riċerkatriċi, nixtieq ngħaraf jekk is-suġġetti ta' l-arti qed jiġux mwarba biex jakkomodaw suġġetti oħra li huma parti mil-eżamijiet nazzjonali u supranazzjonali jew le, fenomenu li qed iwassal għat-tidjieq tal-kurrikulu u l-esklużjoni ta' suġġetti li mhumiex eżaminati.

Din ir-riċerka għandha l-għan li tesplora il-perċezzjonijiet ta' l-istudenti, l-għalliema u l-ġenituri fuq is-suġġetti ta' l-arti u r-rwol li dawn is-suġġetti għandhom fil-kurrikulu ta' l-iskejjel primarji.

2.　　Għalfejn intgħazilt?
Nixtieq nisma' l-esperjenzi u l-ħsiebijiet tiegħek fuq is-suġġetti tal-arti bħala għalliem/a ta' studenti li jattendu skejjel primarji f'Malta.

3.　　X'irrid nagħmel jekk niddeċiedi li nipparteċipa?
Jien nixtieq nistiednek għal-diskusjoni fi grupp. Kull grupp ta' diskussjoni mhux ħa jaqbeż is-7 membri. Id-diskussjoni m'għandiex għalfejn iddum aktar minn siegħa u ser sseħħ waqt il-ħinijiet ta' l-iskola u fil-bini ta' l-iskola. Il-mistoqsijiet magħmula ser jiddiskutu l-esperjenzi tiegħek bħala għalliem/a ta' tfal fl-iskola fir-rigward ta' l-irwol u l-istatus tas-suġġetti ta' l-arti fi skejjel primarji Maltin. Provvisti żgħar ser jiġu servuti għal waqt il-ħin ta' diskussjoni bħala ringrazzjament tal-kontribuzzjoni tiegħek.

4.　　Bilfors irrid nippartecipa?
Il-parteċipazzjoni f'din ir-riċerka hija fuq bazi volontarja. Għandek id-dritt ttemm il-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek fi kwalunkwe ħin u mingħajr ogligu li tagħti raġuni. Dan japplika anke jekk il-grupp ta' diskussjoni jkun diġà beda. Jekk tiddeċiedi li tipparteċipa, ser tingħatalek il-kopja ta' din il-folja tal-informazzjoni iffirmata mingħandek li turi il-kunsens tiegħek.

5.   Jekk nieħu parti f'dan il-proġett, id-dettalji tiegħi ser jinżammu kunfidenzjali?

Id-dettalji personali tiegħek ser jinżammu strettament kunfidenzjali u isemhek se jitneħħa fi kwalunkwe xogħol ippubblikat f'din ir-riċerka. Jien biss ser ikolli l-aċċess għal-informazzjoni li ġiet miġbura waqt din ir-riċerka. Qabel ma tieħu sehem fir-riċerka, inti mitlub/a sabiex timla l-formola tal-kunsens. La ismek, la l-isem ta' l-iskola u lanqas l-isem tal-post ser ikunu identifikati f'rapporti, preżentazzjonijiet jew pubblikazzjonijiet; l-identitajiet tal-parteċipanti u l-iskejjel se jkunu protetti. Madankollu, kwotazzjonijiet li jkunu anonimizzati jistgħu jiġu ntuzati bil-permess tiegħek biss.

6.   X'inhu l-baġi legali għall-ipproċessar tad-data personali tiegħi?

Skond il-leġislazzjoni tal-protezzjoni tad-data, jien meħtieġa ninfurmak li l-baġi legali li qegħda napplika biex nipproċessa l-informazzjoni personali tiegħek hija li "meħtieġa għat-twettiq ta' attività mwettqa fl-interess pubbliku" (Artiklu 6(1)(e)). Aktar informazzjoni tinsab fil-paġna eletronika ta' l-Universita' ta' Sheffiled fuq https://sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general Peress li jien ser inkun qed niġbor informazzjoni ta' natura sensittiva skond din il-leġislazzjoni (informazzjoni dwar l-opinjonijiet tiegħek dwar suġġetti ta' l-arti, eżamijiet fi skejjel primarji, eċċ.) għandi bżonn ngħarrfek li ser nkun qed napplika din il-kondizzjoni tal-liġi: li ser nkun qed nuża l-informazzjoni miġbura fuqek "bħala neċessita għal skopijiet ta' riċerka storika jew xjentifika".

7.   Id-diskussjoni fil-grupp ser tkun irrekordjata, u kif ser iseħħ dan?

Id-diskussjoni fil-grupp ser tiġi rrekordjata b'mod elettroniku; jien biss ser ikolli aċċess għalija u ħa nkun qed nagħmel traskritt tal-konversazzjonijiet għall-han tar-riċerka. Ir-reġistrazzjonijiet se jiġu maħżuna fuq 'Google drive' personali mogħti mil-Universita' ta' Sheffield u fuq ħardisk esterna, fejn ser ikunu protetti b'password u ser ikunu wkoll iċċifrati għal protezzjoni tiegħek; jien biss ser ikolli aċċess għalihom. L-informazzjoni kollha miġbura b'permezz tad-diskussjonijiet ser ikunu meqruda 12-il xahar wara t-tmiem tal-proġett. Ir-riżultati tar-riċerka huma mistennija li jiġu ppubblikati sa Settembru 2020; fl-aħħar tar-riċerka ser nibgħat kopja tar-rapport fil-qosor. Ħadd mhu ser ikun identifikat fil-pubblikazzjoni tar-rapport. Ir-reġistrazzjonijiet awdjo tiegħek meħudha matul din ir-riċerka ser jintużaw biss għall-analiżi tar-riċerka u waqt preżentazzjonijiet f'lezzjonijiet u eżamijiet. Mhux ser ikun hemm l-ebda użu ieħor mingħajr il-permess bil-miktub tiegħek, u l-ebda persuni involuti barra minn dan il-proġett mhu ser ikollhom aċċess għar-reġistrazzjonijiet oriġinali.

8.   X'inhuma l-vantaġġi u l-iżvantaġġi jekk nieħu sehem f'dan il-proġett?

Nispera li tara dan il-proċess bħala opportunità biex tirrifletti fuq l-esperjenzi tiegħek bħala għalliem/a ta' tfal li għadhom fl-iskola primarja, u kif l-għajnuna tiegħek f'din ir-riċerka hija ta' għajnuna kbira. Hemm ftit ta' xejn riskji jew żvantaġġi jekk tieħu sehem. L-iżvantaġġ prinċipali huwa l-ħin meħud biex tipparteċipa.

9.   Min qed jorganizza din ir-riċerka?

Maria Eloise Spiteri li qeda tikkuntesta il-grad ta' EdD mill-Universita' ta' Sheffield hija l-unika riċerkatriċi.

10.   Min hu l-kontrollur ewlieni tal-informazzjoni?

L-Universita' ta' Sheffield ser taġixxi bħala l-kontrollur ewlieni tal-informazzjoni waqt din ir-riċerka. Dan ifisser li l-Università hija responsabbli għal kull informazzjoni meħuda mingħandek, u responsabbli biex din l-informazzjoni tiġi użata kif xieraq.

11.   Eżami Etiku

Din ir-riċerka ġiet etikament ivverifikata mingħand l-Università ta' Sheffield, parti mill-proċedura ta' l-amministrazzjoni mid-Dipartiment ta' l-Edukazzjoni. Jekk hemm xi aspett tal-proġett jew tal-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek li inti tixtieq tiddiskuti aktar, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntattja ir-riċerkaturi mill-kuntatti ewlenin elenkati hawn taħt.

12.   X'jigri jekk xi ħaga tmur ħazin u nixtieq nilmenta fuq ir-riċerka?

Jekk int m'intix kuntent dwar kull aspett tal-proġett, jekk jogħġbok ikkuntatjani u jien nagħmel ħilti kollha biex nindirizza kwalunkwe tħassib fl-aktar fis possibli. Tista' tikkuntattjani fuq 79548358 jew mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk Fil-każ li inti xorta għadek mintix sodisfatt, l-ilment tiegħek jista' jiġi nvestigat mill-Universita' ta' Sheffield (Dr David Hyatt, Ko-Ordinatur ta' l-Etika), d.hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk jew il-kap tad-Dipartiment ta' l-Edukazzjoni Proff. Elizabeth Wood, E.A.Wood@sheffield.ac.uk

13.   Zmien

Ir-riċerka hija ppjanata li sseħħ matul ix-xahar t'Ottubru 2019. Ir-riżultati tal-proġett ser ikunu inklużi f'rapport li jagħmel parti mit-tesi finali tal-EdD sottomessa lill-Fakultà tal-Edukazzjoni tal-Università ta' Sheffield sa Mejju 2020. Rapport fil-qosor se jintbagħat lill-iskejjel parteċipanti f'każ li int tkun tixtieq taqrah.

Ser tingħatalek kopja tal-folja tal-informazzjoni, u jekk taċċetta li tipparteċipa, ser tingħatalek ukoll kopja tal-formola tal-kunsens iffirmata minnek biex iżżommha.

Nirringrazzjak bil-quddiem tal-ħin u l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek f'dan il-proġett ta' riċerka.

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Appendix 6: Participants Information Sheet in English for Students (approved by the University of Sheffield)

Date: 01/03/19

<u>**Information Sheet: Students**</u>

Are Music, Art and Drama Important in School?

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether to take part participate or not, read the following information carefully. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

1.   What is the project about?

This project is part of my Educational Doctorate. The research looks at whether arts subjects (music, drama, art) are important in primary schools.

I want to explore if tests and assessments may influence the primary school curriculum in Malta.

I plan to ask teachers, parents and students what they think about arts lessons in primary schools.

My research may produce a report and may be published in a journal, on a website or presented at a conference.

2. Why have I been chosen?

As a primary school student, I would like to hear about your experiences and thoughts about the arts subjects at school.

3. What do I have to do?

Would you like to take part in a group chat? This will last no longer than 1 hour and will take place in school.

4. Do I have to participate?

Participation in the research is up to you. Feel free to stop anytime you want.

If you want to take part, I will give you a paper with all the information for you to keep and a copy of this paper.

5. Will my taking part in this project be kept private?

Yes. I will not use your name or the name of your school.

6. Will the focus group be recorded and how will these recordings be used?

Yes. I will be the only one who can hear the recordings. The recordings will be kept safely in my laptop. No one will know the password of my laptop. I will delete all the recordings one year after I write my thesis.

7. What are the rewards and difficulties of taking part?

I hope that you will enjoy having a chat with me and the other children. Your help in my research will hopefully make Maltese education better. The only difficulty may be finding the time to chat together.

8. Who is organising the research?

Maria Eloise Spiteri, EdD student from the University of Sheffield.

9.   Who controls the collected information?

The University of Sheffield will manage all the information collected from our chats.

10.   What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research?

You can talk to me the research anytime on 79548358 or

mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk If you are still unhappy, you can talk to

the person in charge at my university, who is Dr David Hyatt, Ethics

Co-ordinator), d.hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk or the Head of the School of

Education Professor Elizabeth Wood, E.A.Wood@sheffield.ac.uk

I thank you in advance for taking the time and participating in the research project.

Key Contacts

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Appendix 7: Participants Information Sheet in Maltese for Students (approved by the University of Sheffield)

Date: 01/03/19

<u>Folja ta' Informazzjoni: Studenti</u>
Huma importanti il-mużika, l-arti u d-drama fl-iskola?

Qed tiġi mistieden/na tieħu sehem fi proġett ta' riċerka. Qabel ma tiddeċiedi jekk tiħux sehem jew le, aqra sew l-informazzjoni li hawn miktub. Tista' ssaqsini jekk hemm xi ħaġa li mhix ċara jew jekk tixtieq aktar informazzjoni.

Grazzi!

1. Fuq xiex inhu l-proġett?

Dan il-proġett huwa parti mill-kors tad-dottorat edukattiv tiegħi. F'din ir-riċerka nħarsu lejn is-suġġetti tal-arti (mużika, drama, arti) u naraw jekk humiex importanti fl-iskejjel primarji.

Irrid nesplora jekk it-testijiet jistgħux jinfluwenzaw il-kurrikulu tal-iskola primarja f'Malta.

Qed nippjana li nistaqsi lill-għalliema, il-ġenituri u l-istudenti x'jaħsbu dwar il-lezzjonijiet tal-arti fl-iskejjel primarji.

Ir-riċerka tiegħi tista' tipproduċi rapport u tista' tiġi ppubblikata f'ġurnal, fuq websajt jew ippreżentata f'konferenza.

2. Għalfejn ġejt magħżul/a?

Nixtieq nisma' dwar l-esperjenzi u l-ħsibijiet tiegħek dwar is-suġġetti tal-arti fl-iskola bħala student/a ta' l-iskola primarja.

3. X'irrid nagħmel?

Tixtieq tieħu sehem fi grupp ta' diskussjoni? Dan se jdum mhux aktar minn siegħa u se jseħħ fl-iskola.

4. Irrid nipparteċipa bilfors?

Il-parteċipazzjoni fir-riċerka hija fuq basi voluntarja; tgħażel int jekk tipparteċipax jew le. Ħossok liberu/a li tieqaf meta tixtieq. Jekk trid tieħu sehem, se nagħtik karta bl-informazzjoni kollha meħtieġa biex iżżomm, kif ukoll kopja ta' din il-karta.

5. Is-sehem tiegħi f'dan il-proġett se jinżamm kunfidenzjali?

Iva. La ismek u lanqas l-isem tal-iskola tiegħek ser ikunu intużżati.

6. Il-konversazzjonijiet tal-grupp ta' discussjoni ser jiġu rreġistrati u kif se jintużaw dawn ir-reġistrazzjonijiet?

Iva. Jien se nkun l-unika waħda li b'aċċess għar-reġistrazzjonijiet. Ir-reġistrazzjonijiet se jinżammu siguri fil-laptop tiegħi u protetti b'password. Ħadd ma jaf il-password tal-laptop tiegħi. Se nħassar ir-reġistrazzjonijiet kollha sena wara li nikteb it-teżi tiegħi.

7. X'inhuma l-faċilitajiet u d-diffikultajiet li tieħu sehem fir-riċerka?

Nittama li tieħu gost tipparteċipa fid-diskussjoni miegħi u mat-tfal l-oħra. L-għajnuna tiegħek fir-riċerka se tiprovdi għajnun għall-edukazzjoni Maltija. L-unika diffikultà tista' tkun biex il-ħin meħtieġ għad-diskussjoni.

8. Min qed jorganizza din ir-riċerka?

Maria Eloise Spiteri, EdD studenta mill-Universita' ta' Sheffield.

9. Min jikkontrolla l-informazzjoni miġbura waqt din ir-riċerka?

L-Universita' ta' Sheffield ser tkun qed tikkontrolla l-informazzjoni miġbura waqt din ir-riċerka.

10. X'jiġri jekk xi ħaġa tmur ħażin u nkun nixtieq nressaq x'ilment dwar ir-riċerka?

Tista' titkellem miegħi fuq ir-riċerka meta trid fuq in-numru 79548358 jew fuq l-indirizz eletroniku mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk Jekk għadek mintix kuntent/a, tista' titkellem mal-persuna inkarigata fl-Università tiegħi, li hu Dr David Hyatt, l-Ko-Ordinatur ta' l-Etika), d.hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk jew il-Kap ta' L-Iskola ta' l-Edukazzjoni Proff. Elizabeth Wood, E.A.Wood@sheffield.ac.uk

Nirringrazzjak bil-quddiem talli ser tieħu l-ħin u tipparteċipa fil-proġett tar-riċerka.

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Tmiem

Appendix 8: Consent Form in English for Parents (approved by the University of Sheffield)

'The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools' Consent Form

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
Taking Part in the Project		
I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 01/07/2019 or the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.)	☐	☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include completing a questionnaire, being recorded (audio), participating in a focus group.	☐	☐
I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw.	☐	☐
How my information will be used during and after the project		
I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use my data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers		
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield.	☐	☐

Name of participant [printed]   Signature   Date

Name of Researcher [printed]   Signature   Date

Project contact details for further information:
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Appendix 9: Consent Form in Maltese for Parents (approved by the University of Sheffield)

'The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools'

Jekk jogħgbok, agħżel it-tajba	Iva	Le
Parteċipazzjoni fil-proġett		
Qrajt u fhimt il-informazzjoni għal-parteċipant tal-1/07/19, jew fehmuni il-proġett. (Jekk ħa twieġeb *Le* għal din il-mistoqsija, jekk jgħoġbok ieqaf imla din il-formola sakemm ikunlek magħruf ir-rwol tiegħek f'dan il-proġett.)	☐	☐
Nifhem li tawni u kelli ċans insaqsi mistoqsijiet dwar il-proġett.	☐	☐
Naqbel li nipparteċipa f'dan il-proġett. Nifhem li jekk nieħu sehem f'dan il-proġett jien ħa nkun qed nieħu sehem billi nimla kwestjonarju, niġi rrekordjat/a (awdjo), u nipparteċipa f'grupp ta' diskussjoni.	☐	☐
Nifhem li l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħi hija fuq bażi volontarja u nista nieqaf milli nkompli nipparteċipa meta rrid; m'għandix għalfejn nagħti raġuni il-għala nkun se nieqaf nipparteċipa u nagħraf li mhux ħa jkun hemm konsegwenzi jekk niddeċiedi li nieqaf.	☐	☐
Kif ser tiġi użata l-informazzjoni tiegħi waqt u wara il-proġett		
Nifhem li d-dettalji personali tiegħi bħal ismi, numru tat-telefon, indirizz tad-dar u l-indirizz eletroniku tiegħi etċ. mhumiex ħa jitqasmu ma' terzi persuni barra minn-nies involuti f'dan il-proġett.	☐	☐
Nifhem u naqbel li kliemi jafu jkunu ikwotati f'publikazzjonijiet, rapporti, paġni eletroniċi u produzzjonijiet oħra għal-ġustifikazzjoni tar-riċerka. Nifhem li ismi mhux ħa jintuża meta kliemi jkunu kwotati sakemm jien ma nispeċifikax l-iva tiegħi u nagħti il-kunsens.	☐	☐
Nifhem u naqbel li r-riċerkaturi awtorizati jista jkollhom aċċess għal-informazzjoni fuqi biss jekk jaċċettaw li jżommu l-kunfidenzjalita meħtieġa kif inhu miktub fuq din il-formola.	☐	☐
Nifhem u naqbel li r-riċerkaturi awtorizati jistgħu jużaw l-informazzjoni tiegħi f'publikazzjonijiet, rapporti, paġni eletroniċi u produzzjonijiet oħra għal-ġustifikazzjoni tar-riċerka biss jekk jaċċettaw li jżommu l-kunfidenzjalita meħtieġa f'din il-formola.	☐	☐
Sabiex l-informazzjoni li tagħti tkun tista tiġi użata legalment mingħand ir-riċerkaturi		
Naċċetta li nagħti l-kunsens tiegħi sabiex il-materjal miġbur mingħandi waqt dan il-proġett jkun jista jiġi użat mill-Universita ta' Sheffield.	☐	☐

Isem tal-partecipant   Firma   Data
Isem tar-Ricerkatur   Firma   Data

Għal aktar informazzjoni, tista tikkuntatja lir-riċerkaturi fuq:
Maria E. Spiteri
Lead Researcher
mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel +356 7954 8358
School of Education University of Sheffield
Edgar Allen House
241 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2GW

Dr Chris Winter
Supervisor
c.winter@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel +44 (0) 114 2228142

Professor Elizabeth Wood
Head of Department
e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

Appendix 10: Consent Form in English for Educators (approved by the University of Sheffield)

'The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools' Consent Form

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
Taking Part in the Project		
I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 01/07/2019 or the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.)	☐	☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include completing a questionnaire, being recorded (audio), participating in a focus group.	☐	☐
I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw.	☐	☐
How my information will be used during and after the project		
I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use my data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers		
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield.	☐	☐

Name of participant [printed]   Signature   Date

Name of Researcher [printed]   Signature   Date

Project contact details for further information:

Maria E. Spiteri
Lead Researcher
mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk

School of Education University of Sheffield
Edgar Allen House
241 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2GW
Tel +356 7954 8358
Dr Chris Winter
Supervisor
c.winter@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel +44 (0) 114 2228142

Professor Elizabeth Wood
Head of Department
e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

Appendix 11: Consent Form in Maltese for Educators (approved by the University of Sheffield)

'The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools'

Jekk jogħgbok, agħżel it-tajba	Iva	Le
Parteċipazzjoni fil-proġett		
Qrajt u fhimt il-informazzjoni għal-parteċipant tal-1/07/19, jew fehmuni il-proġett. (Jekk ħa twieġeb *Le* għal din il-mistoqsija, jekk jgħoġbok ieqaf imla din il-formola sakemm ikunlek magħruf ir-rwol tiegħek f'dan il-proġett.)	☐	☐
Nifhem li tawni u kelli ċans insaqsi mistoqsijiet dwar il-proġett.	☐	☐
Naqbel li nipparteċipa f'dan il-proġett. Nifhem li jekk nieħu sehem f'dan il-proġett jien ħa nkun qed nieħu sehem billi nimla kwestjonarju, niġi rrekordjat/a (awdjo), u nipparteċipa f'grupp ta' diskussjoni.	☐	☐
Nifhem li l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħi hija fuq bażi volontarja u nista nieqaf milli nkompli nipparteċipa meta rrid; m'għandix għalfejn nagħti raġuni il-għala nkun se nieqaf nipparteċipa u nagħraf li mhux ħa jkun hemm konsegwenzi jekk niddeċiedi li nieqaf.	☐	☐
Kif ser tiġi uzata l-informazzjoni tiegħi waqt u wara il-proġett		
Nifhem li d-dettalji personali tiegħi bħal ismi, numru tat-telefon, indirizz tad-dar u l-indirizz eletroniku tiegħi etċ. mhumiex ħa jitqasmu ma' terzi persuni barra minn-nies involuti f'dan il-proġett.	☐	☐
Nifhem u naqbel li kliemi jafu jkunu ikwotati f'publikazzjonijiet, rapporti, paġni eletroniċi u produzzjonijiet oħra għal-ġustifikazzjoni tar-riċerka. Nifhem li ismi mhux ħa jintuża meta kliemi jkunu kwotati sakemm jien ma nispeċifikax l-iva tiegħi u nagħti il-kunsens.	☐	☐
Nifhem u naqbel li r-riċerkaturi awtorizati jista jkollhom aċċess għal-informazzjoni fuqi biss jekk jaċċettaw li jżommu l-kunfidenzjalita meħtieġa kif inhu miktub fuq din il-formola.	☐	☐
Nifhem u naqbel li r-riċerkaturi awtorizati jistghu jużaw l-informazzjoni tiegħi f'publikazzjonijiet, rapporti, paġni eletroniċi u produzzjonijiet oħra għal-ġustifikazzjoni tar-riċerka biss jekk jaċċettaw li jżommu l-kunfidenzjalita meħtieġa f'din il-formola.	☐	☐
Sabiex l-informazzjoni li tagħti tkun tista tiġi użata legalment mingħand ir-riċerkaturi		
Naċċetta li nagħti l-kunsens tiegħi sabiex il-materjal miġbur mingħandi waqt dan il-proġett jkun jista jiġi użat mill-Universita ta' Sheffield.	☐	☐

Isem tal-partecipant   Firma   Data

Isem tar-Ricerkatur   Firma   Data

Għal aktar informazzjoni, tista tikkuntatja lir-riċerkaturi fuq:

Maria E. Spiteri	Edgar Allen House
Ricerkatur Principali	241 Glossop Road
mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk	Sheffield S10 2GW
	Tel +356 7954 8358
School of Education University of Sheffield	Dr Chris Winter
	Supervisor

c.winter@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel +44 (0) 114 2228142

Professor Elizabeth Wood
Head of Department
e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

Appendix 12: Consent Form in English for Students (approved by the University of Sheffield)

<u>Consent form for Children</u>

1. Has Maria explained her plan to you?

2. Did she allow you to ask questions?

3. Do you understand what you and Maria are going to do?

4. Do you want to help Maria with her plan?

5. Do you allow Maria to audio record your conversation?

6. Do you know you can stop helping Maria at any time?

Please write your name here:

Thank you!

Appendix 13: Consent Form in Maltese for Students (approved by the University of Sheffield)

Formola ta' Kunsens għat-Tfal

1. Fehmitek il-pjan li għandha Maria?

2. Maria ħallietek tistaqsi mistoqsijiet?

3. Fhimt b'dak kollu li int u Maria ħa tagħmlu fir-riċerka?

4. Tixtieq tgħin lil Maria fir-riċerka tagħha?

5. Tagħti permess lil Maria biex tirrekordja il-konverżazzjoni tagħkom?

6. Taf li tista' tieqaf tgħin lil Maria meta trid?

Jekk jogħġbok ikteb ismek f'din il-kaxxa:

Grazzi!

Appendix 14: Ethical Approval Letter from the Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta

DIPARTIMENT GHALL-KURRIKULU, TAGHLIM
TUL IL-HAJJA U IMPJEGABILITA
FLORIANA FRN 1810

DEPARTMENT FOR THE CURRICULUM, LIFELONG
LEARNING AND EMPLOYABILITY (DCLE)
FLORIANA FRN 1810

Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability

Tel: 25982743

researchandinnovation@ilearn.edu.mt

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Date: 12th September 2019

Ref: R08-2019 / 019

To: Head of School
From: Director

Title of Research Study: *The Changing Value of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools.*

The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability would like to inform that approval is granted to **Maria Eloise Spiteri** to conduct the research in State Schools according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the Ethics Committee of the respective Higher Educational Institution.

The researcher is committed to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research. The researcher will be sending letters with clear information about the research, as well as consent forms to all data subjects and their parents/guardians when minors are involved. Consent forms should be signed in all cases particularly for the participation of minors in research.

For further details about our policy for research in schools, kindly visit www.research.gov.mt.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.

Claire Mamo
MA Ed (Open)
Research Support Teacher
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability

f/ Alex Farrugia
Director
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability
Great Siege Road | Floriana | VLT 2000
t: +356 25982443 e: alex.farrugia@gov.mt | www.education.gov.mt

MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

MINISTERU GHALL-EDUKAZZJONI U X-XOGHOL

Appendix 15: Informed Consent Form in English for Parents (approved by the Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta)

Informed Consent Form for Parents

Name of the Researcher: <u>Maria Eloise Spiteri</u>

Title of Research: <u>The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools</u>

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- Information sheet (to share information about the study with you).

- Declaration of Consent (for signatures should you choose to participate)

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

I am Maria Eloise Spiteri, an EdD (Educational Doctorate) candidate from the University of Sheffield. My research focuses on the changing status of subjects in the Maltese school curriculum. I aim to explore if, and if so, how the market influences curriculum through high-stakes tests, and how these tests in turn may influence the curriculum that is being taught in Maltese schools.

My project aims at exploring the teachers', parents' and students' perceptions of the role and status of arts education lessons within the primary school curriculum. This research will result in a printed thesis which is part fulfilment of the EdD. My supervisor is Dr Christine Winter, Director EdD Educational Studies, University of Sheffield.

Purpose of Research

The focus of this research is the changing importance of subjects in the Maltese primary school curriculum. The purpose of this research is to explore whether the arts subjects (Music, Art, Drama) are being side-tracked to accommodate the focus on literacy and numeracy, leading to a narrowing of the curriculum and if this is aiding the exclusion of non-tested subjects from the day-to-day school activities. I also plan to investigate how the arts subjects may contribute to a holistic education.

Type of Research Intervention / Procedure

I will be researching the perception and point of views of the teachers using a questionnaire and/or participating in a focus group discussion. Each focus group will consist of 5 to 7 participants, where I will act as moderator to facilitate group interaction and encourage the discussion of the topic. I intend to audio-record each session of the discussion groups. The discussions will take place at school.

The questions asked both in the questionnaire and in the focus group discussion are not of a sensitive nature and will not potentially cause embarrassment to the participant. The participants will be informed about this. The questions will focus on the participants' experiences within the Maltese primary school level in relation to the role and status of the arts subjects.

Participant Selection

I would like to invite you to participate in my research. You have been chosen because you are a parent/guardian of a child who is in Grade 5 primary school level.

Voluntary Participation – Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. Anyone can choose not to participate. By choosing your child to participate or not will not affect your child's rights negatively in any way. All participants must feel free to end their participation at any time and without needing to give any reason; this applies even if the focus group has already started. There will be no consequences if your child decides to stop the research at any point in time. If for any reason someone feels uncomfortable, they can leave whenever they choose and will not affect them adversely in any way.

If you do decide to participate, you will be given an information sheet to keep and a copy of the signed consent form as per Ministry of Education and University of Sheffield protocol. Once the consent forms have been collected and signed, I will then be able to start my research.

Duration

I aim to conduct my research through the month of October 2019. My research in your child's school involves a questionnaire which will not take more than 10 minutes to complete, and/or a focus group discussion which will occur on school premises and will not last longer than an hour. I will coordinate with the Head of School to find the appropriate time for these meetings to occur.

Risks and Benefits

I hope that you will find the process beneficial. It is an opportunity for students to reflect on their experiences at school and how their input can aid research relating to Maltese education. There are a few risks or disadvantages to taking part. The main disadvantage is the time taken to participate.

Confidentiality

All participants' information will be kept confidential at all times and will not be exposed in any way. Anonymisation in the form of pseudonyms will take place from transcription phase onwards. I as the sole researcher will act as custodian of the data. All personal details will be kept strictly confidential and names will be removed in any work published as a result of this research. All information gathered will be accessible only to me. Neither you nor school nor the location will be identified in any reports, presentations or publications. Identities of participants and schools will be protected. Names will not be used; however, with the participants' permission, I may use anonymised quotes. Only I will have access to the data which will be stored on an encrypted hard drive. The data will be kept up to one year after thesis publication and then deleted.

You are hereby informed about your rights according to the Data Protection Act Chapter 586 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU2016/679), you have every right to access, rectify or erase the data concerning you. This is why, before participating in the research you will be asked to fill in consent/assent forms.

As per University of Sheffield protocol, according to data protection legislation, I am required to inform you that the legal basis I are applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University's Privacy Notice https://sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general. As I will be collecting some data that is defined in the legislation as sensitive (information about your views about arts subjects, tests, assessments, etc.) I also need to let you know that I am applying the following condition in law: that the use of your data is 'necessary for scientific or historical research purposes'.

Sharing the Results

The findings of my research will be published in my dissertation as part-fulfilment of the EdD. I will send the Head of School a soft copy of my thesis. The school will be able to forward you the soft copy of my thesis should you wish to read it. If the research finding are to be shared more broadly, for example, in publications or conferences, the data will only be made available for future use with the fully informed consent of participants. The full details of the future project will be made known to participants and a consent form deployed. Confidentiality and anonymity will be kept at all times.

Who to Contact

In case you would like to request further information about the research, and to request information about how their personal information is being processed, are kindly requested to contact me and supervisor on the information below:

Researcher

Maria E. Spiteri
mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk
School of Education University of Sheffield
Edgar Allen House
241 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2GW
Tel +356 7954 8358

Supervisor
Dr Chris Winter
c.winter@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel +44 (0) 114 2228142

Professor Elizabeth Wood
Head of Department
e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

Part II: Declaration of Consent

○ I have been invited to participate in a research titled _____

_____.

○ I confirm that I have read and understood the above information, or it has been read to me, and that I agree to participate in this study.

○ I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

○ I understand that I am free to contact the researcher or the researcher's supervisor to seek further clarification and information.

○ I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without consequence of any kind.

○ I understand that all data are anonymous and that there will not be any connection between the personal information provided and the data.

○ I understand that there are no known risks or hazards associated with participating in this study.

○ I consent to being audio-recorded for the purpose of the research.

○ I consent to my data being transcribed, and that the data from the transcriptions will be kept on the researcher's encrypted hard drive, secured by a password only Ms Maria knows, and that only she has access until one year after publication of the thesis.

○ I understand that my identity will remain anonymous in any form of dissemination, written or otherwise.

_____

Name of Participant   Signature of Participant   Date

Appendix 16: Informed Consent Form in Maltese for Parents (approved by the Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta)

Formola ta' Kunsens Infurmat għall-Ġenituri

Isem ir-riċerkatriċi: Maria Eloise Spiteri

Titlu tar-riċerka: 'The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools'

Din il-formola ta' kunsens infurmat għandha żewġ partijiet:

- Paġna ta' informazzjoni (biex naqsam informazzjoni dwar l-istudju miegħek).
- Dikjarazzjoni ta' kunsens (għall-firem jekk inti tagħżel li ipparteċipa)

L-Ewwel Taqsima: Informazzjoni dwar ir-Riċerka

Introduzjoni

Jiena Maria Eloise Spiteri, studenta fl-Universita' ta' Sheffield fejn qeda naqra l-kors bit-titlu ta' Dottorat f'edukazzjoni [EdD (Educational Doctorate)]. Ir-riċerka li hi parti mid-dottorat tiegħi tiffoka fuq l-istat tas-suġġetti parti mill-kurrikulu ta' l-iskejjel primarji madwar Malta. Din ir-riċerka għandha l-għan li tesplora il-perċezzjonijiet ta' l-istudenti, l-għalliema u l-ġenituri fuq is-suġġetti ta' l-arti u r-rwol li dawn is-suġġetti għandhom fil-kurrikulu ta' l-iskejjel primarji.

Din ir-riċerka ser tirriżulta f'teżi li hi parti mil-kors tad-dottorat. Is-superviżura tiegħi hi Dr. Christine Winter, Diretriċi tal-Istudji Edukattivi fl-Università ta' Sheffield.

L-Għan tar-Riċerka

L-għan ta' din ir-riċerka hija l-importanza tas-suġġetti fil-kurrikulu tal-iskola primarja Maltija. L-għan huwa li nesplora jekk is-suġġetti tal-Arti (mużika, Arti, drama) humiex qed jiġu mwarba fill-ġenb biex jakkomodaw aktar il-litteriżmu u n-numeriżmu, li jwassal għal tidjiq tal-kurrikulu, u jekk dan qed ikunx ta' għajnuna għall-esklużjoni minn l-attivitajiet ta' kuljum tal-iskola tas-suġġetti li mhumhiex qed jiġu ittestjati. Qed nippjana ukoll li ninvestiga kif is-suġġetti tal-Arti jistgħu jikkontribwixxu għal edukazzjoni olistika.

Tip ta' Intervent/Proċedura ta' Riċerka

Se nkun qed nagħmel riċerka dwar il-perċezzjoni u l-fehmiet tal-ġenituri billi nqassam kwestjonarju u nagħżel ftit parteċipanti biex jieħdu sehem f'diskussjoni fi grupp żgħir. Kull grupp ta' diskussjoni se jikkonsisti minn 5 sa 7 parteċipanti; jien se nkun qed naħdem bħala moderatriċ biex niffaċilita l-interazzjoni tal-grupp u ninkoraġġixxi d-diskussjoni dwar is-suġġett. Għandi l-intenzjoni li nirrekordja l-awdjo ta' kull sessjoni tal-gruppi ta' diskussjoni. Id-diskussjonijiet ser iseħħu fl-iskola stess.

Il-mistoqsijiet li se jiġu mistoqsija m'humiex ta' natura sensittiva u mhux se jikkawżaw imbarazzament lill-parteċipanti. Il-parteċipanti se jiġu nfurmati dwar dan. Il-mistoqsijiet se jiffukaw fuq l-esperjenzi tal-parteċipanti fi ħdan il-livell tal-iskola primarja Maltija fir-rigward tar-rwol u l-istatus tas-suġġetti tal-Arti.

Għażla tal-Parteċipanti

Nixtieq nistiednek biex tipparteċipa fir-riċerka tiegħi. Int ġejt mgħażul/a peress li int ġenitur/tutur ta' tifel/tifla li hu/hi fil-ħames sena fl-iskola primarja.

Parteċipazzjoni Volontarja – Dritt li Tirrifjuta jew Tirtira

Il-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek hija kompletament volontarja. Kulħadd jista' jagħżel li ma jipparteċipax. D-drittijiet tiegħek mhux se jiġu affettwati bl-ebda mod negattiv jekk int tagħżel jekk it-tifel/tifla tiegħek jipparteċipawx jew le. Il-parteċipanti kollha għandhom iħossuhom liberi li jtemmu l-parteċipazzjoni tagħhom fi kwalunkwe ħin u mingħajr il-bżonn li jagħtu xi raġuni; dan japplika anki jekk il-grupp ta' diskussjoni jkun diġà beda. Mhux se jkun hemm konsegwenzi jekk tiddeċiedi li tieqaf tipparteċipa fi kwalunkwe moment, u mhux se taffettwawak b'xi mod ħażin.

Jekk tiddeċiedi li tipparteċipa, int se tingħata karta ta' informazzjoni biex iżomm u kopja tal-formola tal-kunsens iffirmata skont il-protokol mill-Ministeru tal-Edukazzjoni u mill-Università ta' Sheffield. Ladarba l-formoli tal-kunsens ikunu nġabru u ġew iffirmati, imbagħad inkun nista' nibda r-riċerka tiegħi.

Tul ta' Żmien tar-Riċerka

Jien għandi l-għan li nagħmel ir-riċerka tiegħi matul ix-xahar ta' Ottubru 2019. Ir-riċerka tiegħi fl-iskola tinvolvi kwestjonarju li mhux se jieħu aktar minn 10 minuti biex tlesti, u/jew diskussjoni fi grupp li se jseħħ fil-bini tal-iskola u mhux se jdum aktar minn siegħa. Jien se nikkoordina mal-kap ta' l-iskola biex insib il-ħin xieraq biex iseħħu dawn il-laqgħat.

Riskji u Benefiċċji

Nispera li inti se ssib l-proċess ta' benefiċċju. Din hija opportunità biex tirrifletti fuq l-esperjenzi tiegħek bħala membru tal-komunita skolastika. L-għajnuna tiegħek f'din ir-riċerka hija ta' għajnuna kbira. Hemm ftit ta' xejn riskji jew żvantaġġi jekk tieħu sehem. L-iżvantaġġ prinċipali huwa l-ħin meħud biex tipparteċipa.

Kunfidenzjalita'

L-informazzjoni kollha tal-parteċipanti se tinżpamm kunfidenzjali f'kull ħin u mhux se tkun esposta bl-ebda mod. Jiena bħala l-unika riċerkatriċi se nkun l-unika kustodju tad-data. L-informazzjoni miġbura se tkun aċċessibbli biss għalija. Id-dettalji personali kollha se jinżammu strettament kunfidenzjali u l-ismijiet jitneħħew f'kull xogħol ippubblikat bħala riżultat ta' din ir-riċerka. L-anonimizzazzjoni ta' l-ismijiet tal-persuni u postijiet ser jsiru bil-forma ta' psewdonimmi ser jintużaw mill-fażi ta' traskrizzjoni 'l quddiem. La inti u lanqas l-iskola u lanqas il-post mhu se jiġu identifikati f'xi rapporti, preżentazzjonijiet jew pubblikazzjonijiet. Jien biss se jkolli aċċess għad-data li se tkun maħżuna fuq hard drive kriptata. Id-data se tinżamm sa sena wara l-pubblikazzjoni tat-teżi u mbagħad titħassar.L-identitajiet tal-parteċipanti u l-iskejjel se jkunu protetti. L-ismijiet ma jintużawx; madankollu, bil-permess tal-parteċipanti, nista' nuża kwotazzjonijiet anonimizzati.

Inti hawnhekk infurmat dwar drittijietek skont l-Att dwar il-Protezzjoni tad-Data tal-Kapitolu 586 u r-Regolament Ġenerali dwar il-Protezzjoni tad-Data (GDPR) (EU2016/679), għandek kull dritt li taċċessa, tirrettifika jew tħassar id-data li tikkonċernak. Din hija r-raġuni għaliex, qabel ma tipparteċipa fir-riċerka se tintalab timla l-formola tal-kunsens.

Skond il-protokol rigward il-leġislazzjoni tal-protezzjoni tad-data mill-University ta' Sheffield, jien meħtieġa ninfurmak li l-bażi legali li qegħda napplika biex nipproċessa l-informazzjoni personali tiegħek hija li "meħtieġa għat-twettiq ta' attività mwettqa fl-interess pubbliku" (Artiklu 6(1)(e)). Aktar informazzjoni tinsab fil-paġna eletronika ta' l-Universita' ta' Sheffiled fuq https://sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general Peress li jien ser inkun qed niġbor informazzjoni ta' natura sensittiva skond din il-leġislazzjoni (informazzjoni dwar l-opinjonijiet tiegħek dwar suġġetti ta' l-arti, eżamijiet fi skejjel primarji, eċċ.) għandi bżonn ngħarrfek li ser nkun qed napplika din il-kondizzjoni tal-liġi: li ser nkun qed nuża l-informazzjoni miġbura fuqek "bħala neċessita għal skopijiet ta' riċerka storika jew xjentifika".

Il-Qsim tar-Riżultati

Is-sejbiet tar-riċerka tiegħi se jiġu ppubblikati fid-dissertazzjoni tiegħi bħala parti mill-issodisfar tal-kors tal-EdD. Se nibgħat lill-Kap tal-iskola kopja eletronika tat-teżi. L-iskola se tkun tista' tgħaddilek il-kopja eletronika tat-teżi jekk tixtieq taqraha. Jekk ikun hemm bżonn li r-riċerka ser tinqasam b'mod ieħor barra mit-teżi, l-informazzjoni li ser tati int bħala parteċipant ser tkun disponibbli biss jekk tiġi nfurmat/a b'din id-deċiżjoni u terġa' tagħti l-kunsens tiegħek mill-ġdid, u tiġi mogħtija formola oħra ta' kunsens. Il-kunfidenzjalità u l-anonimità jinżammu f' kull ħin.

Lil Min Għandek Tikkuntattja

F'każ li tixtieq titlob aktar informazzjoni dwar ir-riċerka, u biex titlob informazzjoni dwar kif qed tiġi pproċessata l-informazzjoni personali tal-parteċipanti,inti ġentilment mitluba biex tikkuntattja lili u lis-superviżur tiegħi fuq l-informazzjoni hawn taħt:

Riċerkatriċi
Maria E. Spiteri
mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk
School of Education University of Sheffield
Edgar Allen House
241 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2GW
Tel +356 7954 8358

Superviżura
Dr Christine Winter
c.winter@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel +44 (0) 114 2228142

Professor Elizabeth Wood
Kap tad-Dipartiment
e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

It-Tieni Taqsima: Dikjarazzjoni ta' Kunsens

○ Ġejt   mitlub/a   biex   nipparteċipaw   fir-riċerka   intitolata

_____

_____

○ Nikkonferma li qrajt u fhimt l-informazzjoni t'hawn fuq, jew xi ħadd qrali l-informazzjoni, u li naqbel li nipparteċipa f'din ir-riċerka.

○ Kelli l-opportunità li nistaqsi mistoqsijiet dwar ir-riċerka, u kwalunkwe mistoqsija li saqsejt ġiet imwieġba għas-sodisfazzjon tiegħi.

○ Kelli l-opportunità li nistaqsi mistoqsijiet dwar ir-riċerka, u kwalunkwe mistoqsija li saqsejt ġiet imwieġba għas-sodisfazzjon tiegħi.

○ Nifhem li l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħi f'dan l-istudju hija volontarja u li jien liberu/a li nirtira mill-istudju fi kwalunkwe ħin, mingħajr ma jagħtu raġuni u mingħajr konsegwenza ta' ebda tip.

○ Nifhem li d-data kollha hija anonima u li mhu se jkun hemm l-ebda konnessjoni bejn l-informazzjoni personali pprovduta u d-data miktuba fit-teżi.

○ Nifhem li m'hemm l-ebda riskji jew perikli magħrufa assoċjati mal-parteċipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju.

○ Nagħti l-kunsens li niġi awdjo-rrekordjat/a għall-iskop tar-riċerka.

○ Nagħti l-kunsens biex id-data tiegħi tiġi traskritta, u li d-data mit-traskrizzjoni se tinżamm fuq l-kompjuter iċċifrat tar-riċerkatriċi, iggarantiti minn password li biss Sa Maria taf, u li hija biss għandha aċċess sa sena wara l-pubblikazzjoni tat-teżi.

○ Nifhem li l-identità tiegħi se tibqa' anonima fi kwalunkwe forma ta' tixrid, miktuba jew mod ieħor.

Nirringrazzjak bil-quddiem tal-ħin u l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek f'dan il-proġett ta' riċerka.

_____

Isem il-Parteċipant   **Firma tal-Parteċipant**   **Data**

Appendix 17: Informed Consent Form in English for Educators (approved by the Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta)

Informed Consent Form for Teachers

Name of the Researcher: Maria Eloise Spiteri

Title of Research: The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- Information sheet (to share information about the study with you).

- Declaration of Consent (for signatures should you choose to participate)

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

I am Maria Eloise Spiteri, an EdD (Educational Doctorate) candidate from the University of Sheffield. My research focuses on the changing status of subjects in the Maltese school curriculum. I aim to explore if, and if so, how the market influences curriculum through high-stakes tests, and how these tests in turn may influence the curriculum that is being taught in Maltese schools.

My project aims at exploring the teachers', parents' and students' perceptions of the role and status of arts education lessons within the primary school curriculum. This research will result in a printed thesis which is part fulfilment of the EdD. My supervisor is Dr Christine Winter, Director EdD Educational Studies, University of Sheffield.

Purpose of Research

The focus of this research is the changing importance of subjects in the Maltese primary school curriculum. The purpose of this research is to explore whether the arts subjects (Music, Art, Drama) are being side-tracked to accommodate the focus on literacy and numeracy, leading to a narrowing of the curriculum and if this is aiding the exclusion of non-tested subjects from the day to day school activities. I also plan to investigate how the arts subjects may contribute to a holistic education.

Type of Research Intervention / Procedure

I will be researching the perception and point of views of the teachers using a questionnaire and/or participating in a focus group discussion. Each focus group will consist of 5 to 7 participants, where I will act as moderator to facilitate group interaction and encourage the discussion of the topic. I intend to audio-record each session of the discussion groups. The discussions will take place at school.

The questions asked both in the questionnaire and in the focus group discussion are not of a sensitive nature and will not potentially cause embarrassment to the participant. The participants will be informed about this. The questions will focus on the participants' experiences within the Maltese primary school level in relation to the role and status of the arts subjects.

Participant Selection

I would like to invite you to participate in my research. You have been chosen because you are a primary teacher at a Maltese primary school.

Voluntary Participation – Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. Anyone can choose not to participate. By choosing your child to participate or not will not affect your child's rights negatively in any way. All participants must feel free to end their participation at any time and without needing to give any reason; this applies even if the focus group has already started. There will be no consequences if your child decides to stop the research at any point in time. If for any reason someone feels uncomfortable, they can leave whenever they choose and will not affect them adversely in any way.

If you do decide to participate, you will be given an information sheet to keep and a copy of the signed consent form as per Ministry of Education and University of Sheffield protocol. Once the consent forms have been collected and signed, I will then be able to start my research.

Duration

I aim to conduct my research through the month of October 2019. My research in your school involves a questionnaire which will not take more than 10 minutes to complete, and/or a focus group discussion which will occur on school premises and will not last longer than an hour. I will coordinate with the Head of School to find the appropriate time for these meetings to occur.

Risks and Benefits

I hope that you will find the process beneficial. It is an opportunity for students to reflect on their experiences at school and how their input can aid research relating to Maltese education. There are a few risks or disadvantages to taking part. The main disadvantage is the time taken to participate.

Confidentiality

All participants' information will be kept confidential at all times and will not be exposed in any way. Anonymisation in the form of pseudonyms will take place from transcription phase onwards. I as the sole researcher will act as custodian of the data. All personal details will be kept strictly confidential and names will be removed in any work published as a result of this research. All information gathered will be accessible only to me. Neither you nor school nor the location will be identified in any reports, presentations or publications. Identities of participants and schools will be protected. Names will not be used; however, with the participants' permission, I may use anonymised quotes. Only I will have access to the data which will be stored on an encrypted hard drive. The data will be kept up to one year after thesis publication and then deleted.

You are hereby informed about your rights according to the Data Protection Act Chapter 586 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU2016/679), you have every right to access, rectify or erase the data concerning you. This is why, before participating in the research you will be asked to fill in consent/assent forms.

As per University of Sheffield protocol, according to data protection legislation, I am required to inform you that the legal basis I are applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University's Privacy Notice https://sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general. As I will be collecting some data that is defined in the legislation as sensitive (information about your views about arts subjects, tests, assessments, etc.) I also need to let you know that I am applying the following condition in law: that the use of your data is 'necessary for scientific or historical research purposes'.

Sharing the Results

The findings of my research will be published in my dissertation as part-fulfilment of the EdD. I will send the Head of School a soft copy of my thesis. The school will be able to forward you the soft copy of my thesis should you wish to read it. If the research finding are to be shared more broadly, for example, in publications or conferences, the data will only be made available for future use with the fully informed consent of participants. The full details of the future project will be made known to participants and a consent form deployed. Confidentiality and anonymity will be kept at all times.

Who to Contact

In case you would like to request further information about the research, and to request information about how their personal information is being processed, are kindly requested to contact me and supervisor on the information below:

Researcher

Maria E. Spiteri
mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk
School of Education University of Sheffield
Edgar Allen House
241 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2GW
Tel +356 7954 8358

Supervisor
Dr Chris Winter
c.winter@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel +44 (0) 114 2228142

Professor Elizabeth Wood
Head of Department
e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

Part II: Declaration of Consent

○ I have been invited to participate in a research titled

_____

_____.

○ I confirm that I have read and understood the above information, or it has been read to me, and that I agree to participate in this study.

○ I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

○ I understand that I am free to contact the researcher or the researcher's supervisor to seek further clarification and information.

○ I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without consequence of any kind.

○ I understand that all data are anonymous and that there will not be any connection between the personal information provided and the data.

○ I understand that there are no known risks or hazards associated with participating in this study.

○ I consent to being audio-recorded for the purpose of the research.

○ I consent to my data being transcribed, and that the data from the transcriptions will be kept on the researcher's encrypted hard drive, secured by a password only Ms Maria knows, and that only she has access until one year after publication of the thesis.

○ I understand that my identity will remain anonymous in any form of dissemination, written or otherwise.

Name of Participant   **Signature of Participant**   **Date**

Appendix 18: Informed Consent Form in English for Educators (approved by the Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta)

Formola ta' Kunsens Infurmat għall-Għalliema

Isem ir-riċerkatriċi: <u>Maria Eloise Spiteri</u>

Titlu tar-riċerka: '<u>The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools</u>'

Din il-formola ta' kunsens infurmat għandha żewġ partijiet:

- Paġna ta' informazzjoni (biex naqsam informazzjoni dwar l-istudju miegħek).
- Dikjarazzjoni ta' kunsens (għall-firem jekk inti tagħżel li tipparteċipa)

L-Ewwel Taqsima: Informazzjoni dwar ir-Riċerka

Introduzjoni

Jiena Maria Eloise Spiteri, studenta fl-Universita' ta' Sheffield fejn qeda naqra l-kors bit-titlu ta' Dottorat f'edukazzjoni [EdD (Educational Doctorate)]. Ir-riċerka li hi parti mid-dottorat tiegħi tiffoka fuq l-istat tas-suġġetti parti mill-kurrikulu ta' l-iskejjel primarji madwar Malta. Din ir-riċerka għandha l-għan li tesplora il-perċezzjonijiet ta' l-istudenti, l-għalliema u l-ġenituri fuq is-suġġetti ta' l-arti u r-rwol li dawn is-suġġetti għandhom fil-kurrikulu ta' l-iskejjel primarji.

Din ir-riċerka ser tirriżulta f'teżi li hi parti mil-kors tad-dottorat. Is-superviżura tiegħi hi Dr. Christine Winter, Diretriċi tal-Istudji Edukattivi fl-Università ta' Sheffield.

L-Għan tar-Riċerka

L-għan ta' din ir-riċerka hija l-importanza tas-suġġetti fil-kurrikulu tal-iskola primarja Maltija. L-għan huwa li nesplora jekk is-suġġetti tal-Arti (mużika, Arti, drama) humiex qed jiġu mwarba fill-ġenb biex jakkomodaw aktar il-litteriżmu u n-numeriżmu, li jwassal għal tidjiq tal-kurrikulu, u jekk dan qed ikunx ta' għajnuna għall-esklużjoni minn l-attivitajiet ta' kuljum tal-iskola tas-suġġetti li mhumhiex qed jiġu ittestjati. Qed nippjana ukoll li ninvestiga kif is-suġġetti tal-Arti jistgħu jikkontribwixxu għal edukazzjoni olistika.

Tip ta' Intervent/Proċedura ta' Riċerka

Se nkun qed nagħmel riċerka dwar il-perċezzjoni u l-fehmiet tal-għalliema billi nqassam kwestjonarju u nagħżel ftit parteċipanti biex jieħdu sehem f'diskussjoni fi grupp żgħir. Kull grupp ta' diskussjoni se jikkonsisti minn 5 sa 7 parteċipanti; jien se nkun qed naħdem bħala moderatriċ biex niffaċilita l-interazzjoni tal-grupp u ninkoraġġixxi d-diskussjoni dwar is-suġġett. Għandi l-intenzjoni li nirrekordja l-awdjo ta' kull sessjoni tal-gruppi ta' diskussjoni. Id-diskussjonijiet ser iseħħu fl-iskola stess.

Il-mistoqsijiet li se jiġu mistoqsija m'humiex ta' natura sensittiva u mhux se jikkawżaw imbarazzament lill-parteċipanti. Il-parteċipanti se jiġu nfurmati dwar dan. Il-mistoqsijiet se jiffukaw fuq l-esperjenzi tal-parteċipanti fi ħdan il-livell tal-iskola primarja Maltija fir-rigward tar-rwol u l-istatus tas-suġġetti tal-Arti.

Għażla tal-Parteċipanti

Nixtieq nistiednek biex tipparteċipa fir-riċerka tiegħi. Int ġejt mgħażul/a peress li int għalliem/a fi skola primarja Maltija.

Parteċipazzjoni Volontarja – Dritt li Tirrifjuta jew Tirtira

Il-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek hija kompletament volontarja. Kulħadd jista' jagħżel li ma jipparteċipax. D-drittijiet tiegħek mhux se jiġu affettwati bl-ebda mod negattiv jekk int tagħżel jekk it-tifel/tifla tiegħek jipparteċipawx jew le. Il-parteċipanti kollha għandhom iħossuhom liberi li jtemmu l-parteċipazzjoni tagħhom fi kwalunkwe ħin u mingħajr il-bżonn li jagħtu xi raġuni; dan japplika anki jekk il-grupp ta' diskussjoni jkun diġà beda. Mhux se jkun hemm konsegwenzi jekk tiddeċiedi li tieqaf tipparteċipa fi kwalunkwe moment, u mhux se taffettwawak b'xi mod ħażin.

Jekk tiddeċiedi li tipparteċipa, int se tingħata karta ta' informazzjoni biex iżomm u kopja tal-formola tal-kunsens iffirmata skont il-protokol mill-Ministeru tal-Edukazzjoni u mill-Università ta' Sheffield. Ladarba l-formoli tal-kunsens ikunu nġabru u ġew iffirmati, imbagħad inkun nista' nibda r-riċerka tiegħi.

Tul ta' Żmien tar-Riċerka

Jien għandi l-għan li nagħmel ir-riċerka tiegħi matul ix-xahar ta' Ottubru 2019. Ir-riċerka tiegħi fl-iskola tinvolvi kwestjonarju li mhux se jieħu aktar minn 10 minuti biex tlesti, u/jew diskussjoni fi grupp li se jseħħ fil-bini tal-iskola u mhux se jdum aktar minn siegħa. Jien se nikkoordina mal-kap ta' l-iskola biex insib il-ħin xieraq biex iseħħu dawn il-laqgħat.

Riskji u Benefiċċji

Nispera li inti se ssib l-proċess ta' benefiċċju. Din hija opportunità biex tirrifletti fuq l-esperjenzi tiegħek bħala membru tal-komunita skolastika. L-għajnuna tiegħek f'din ir-riċerka hija ta' għajnuna kbira. Hemm ftit ta' xejn riskji jew żvantaġġi jekk tieħu sehem. L-iżvantaġġ prinċipali huwa l-ħin meħud biex tipparteċipa.

Kunfidenzjalita'

L-informazzjoni kollha tal-parteċipanti se tinżpamm kunfidenzjali f'kull ħin u mhux se tkun esposta bl-ebda mod. Jiena bħala l-unika riċerkatriċi se nkun l-unika kustodju tad-data. L-informazzjoni miġbura se tkun aċċessibbli biss għalija. Id-dettalji personali kollha se jinżammu strettament kunfidenzjali u l-ismijiet jitneħħew f'kull xogħol ippubblikat bħala riżultat ta' din ir-riċerka. L-anonimizzazzjoni ta' l-ismijiet tal-persuni u postijiet ser jsiru bil-forma ta' psewdonimmi ser jintużaw mill-fażi ta' traskrizzjoni 'l quddiem. La inti u lanqas l-iskola u lanqas il-post mhu se jiġu identifikati f'xi rapporti, preżentazzjonijiet jew pubblikazzjonijiet. Jien biss se jkolli aċċess għad-data li se tkun maħżuna fuq hard drive kriptata. Id-data se tinżamm sa sena wara l-pubblikazzjoni tat-teżi u mbagħad titħassar.L-identitajiet tal-parteċipanti u l-iskejjel se jkunu protetti. L-ismijiet ma jintużawx; madankollu, bil-permess tal-parteċipanti, nista' nuża kwotazzjonijiet anonimizzati.

Inti hawnhekk infurmat dwar drittijietek skont l-Att dwar il-Protezzjoni tad-Data tal-Kapitolu 586 u r-Regolament Ġenerali dwar il-Protezzjoni tad-Data (GDPR) (EU2016/679), għandek kull dritt li taċċessa, tirrettifika jew tħassar id-data li tikkonċernak. Din hija r-raġuni għaliex, qabel ma tipparteċipa fir-riċerka se tintalab timla l-formola tal-kunsens.

Skond il-protokol rigward il-leġislazzjoni tal-protezzjoni tad-data mill-University ta' Sheffield, jien meħtieġa ninfurmak li l-bażi legali li qegħda napplika biex nipproċessa l-informazzjoni personali tiegħek hija li "meħtieġa għat-twettiq ta' attività mwettqa fl-interess pubbliku" (Artiklu 6(1)(e)). Aktar informazzjoni tinsab fil-paġna eletronika ta' l-Universita' ta' Sheffiled fuq https://sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general Peress li jien ser inkun qed niġbor informazzjoni ta' natura sensittiva skond din il-leġislazzjoni (informazzjoni dwar l-opinjonijiet tiegħek dwar suġġetti ta' l-arti, eżamijiet fi skejjel primarji, eċċ.) għandi bżonn ngħarrfek li ser nkun qed napplika din il-kondizzjoni tal-liġi: li ser nkun qed nuża l-informazzjoni miġbura fuqek "bħala neċessita għal skopijiet ta' riċerka storika jew xjentifika".

Il-Qsim tar-Riżultati

Is-sejbiet tar-riċerka tiegħi se jiġu ppubblikati fid-dissertazzjoni tiegħi bħala parti mill-issodisfar tal-kors tal-EdD. Se nibgħat lill-Kap tal-iskola kopja eletronika tat-teżi. L-iskola se tkun tista' tgħaddilek il-kopja eletronika tat-teżi jekk tixtieq taqraha. Jekk ikun hemm bżonn li r-riċerka ser tinqasam b'mod ieħor barra mit-teżi, l-informazzjoni li ser tati int bħala parteċipant ser tkun disponibbli biss jekk tiġi nfurmat/a b'din id-deċiżjoni u terġa' tagħti l-kunsens tiegħek mill-ġdid, u tiġi mogħtija formola oħra ta' kunsens. Il-kunfidenzjalità u l-anonimità jinżammu f' kull ħin.

Lil Min Għandek Tikkuntattja

F'każ li tixtieq titlob aktar informazzjoni dwar ir-riċerka, u biex titlob informazzjoni dwar kif qed tiġi pproċessata l-informazzjoni personali tal-parteċipanti,inti ġentilment mitluba biex tikkuntattja lili u lis-superviżur tiegħi fuq l-informazzjoni hawn taħt:

Riċerkatriċi
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School of Education University of
Sheffield
Edgar Allen House
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Superviżura
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Professor Elizabeth Wood
Kap tad-Dipartiment
e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

Appendix 19: Informed Assent Form for Grade 5 Students in English (approved by the Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta)

Informed Assent Form for Grade 5 students

Name of the Researcher: Maria Eloise Spiteri

Title of Research: Are Music, Art and Drama Important in School?

This Informed Assent Form has two parts:

- Information sheet (this gives you information about the study)

- Declaration of Assent (this is where you write your name if you agree to participate)

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

Hello, I am Maria Spiteri, and I am a Music Teacher. I am doing a research about the school subjects you have at school. This project is part of my Educational Doctorate. The research looks at whether arts subjects (music, drama, art) are important in primary schools.

I am inviting you participate in a questionnaire and/or a chat about the subjects you have at school.

I have spoken to your parents/guardians about this project. I have asked them for permission to be able to talk to you and ask you if you would like to participate in the research. If there is anything that is not clear, please ask me and I will be happy to explain any words or situations.

Purpose: why are you doing the Research?

I want to explore if tests and assessments may influence the primary school curriculum in Malta. I plan to ask teachers, parents and students what they think about arts lessons in primary schools.

Choice of Participant: Why are you asking me?

As a primary school student, I would like to hear about your experiences and thoughts about the arts subjects at school.

Participation is voluntary – Do I have to do this?

Participation in the research is up to you. Feel free to stop anytime you want. If you want to take part, I will give you a paper with all the information for you to keep and a copy of this paper. Your parents / guardians have been asked for their permission for you to participate or not.

Right to refuse or withdraw – Can I choose not to be in the research? Can I change my mind?

If you do not have to take part in the research, you can say no. You can also start participating and then stop at any time you want to do so, without telling me why. It will not be a problem for you if you decide to stop or not participate.

Procedure: What is going to happen to me?

You will be given a questionnaire where you will answer some questions. No answer is right or wrong, as all answers are good! I want to understand what you think about the subjects you learn at school.

Some of you will be chosen to take part in a chat. The number of students taking part in this chat will be between 5 to 7 students. We will talk about the subjects you have at school. Our chat will be audio recorded only. I will write some notes down.

Duration

The questionnaire will take around 20 minutes to finish.
The group chat will only take around one hour to finish.

Risks and Benefits

I hope that you will enjoy having a chat with me and the other children. Your help in my research will hopefully make Maltese education better. The only difficulty may be finding the time to chat together.

Confidentiality: Is everybody going to know about this?

The focus group chat will be recorded. Out chats will be kept private. I will be the only one who can hear the recordings. The recordings will be kept safely in my laptop. No one will know the password of my laptop. I will delete all the recordings one year after I write my thesis. I will not use your name or the name of your school when I am writing things down in my thesis.

Sharing the Results: will you tell me the results?

My research will be written in a thesis. I will give a softcopy of my thesis to the head of school. You can have access to it anytime you want. My research may produce a report and may be published in a journal, on a website or presented at a conference. Your name and the name of your school will always be kept private at all times.

Who to Contact: Who can I talk to or ask more questions?

You can talk to me the researcher anytime on 79548358 or mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk
You can also talk to my supervisor, Dr Christine Winter on c.winter@sheffield.ac.uk , or Dr David Hyatt, (Ethics Co-ordinator), d.hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk or the Head of the School of Education Professor Elizabeth Wood, E.A.Wood@sheffield.ac.uk

Part II: Declaration of Assent (for older children)

❍ I have been invited to participate in a research study by _____

❍ I have read and understood the above information, or it has been read to me, and I agree to participate in this study	☺	☹
❍ I have had my questions answered, and I know that I can ask questions later if I have any	☺	☹
❍ I understand that I do not have to take part in the research if I do not wish to do so	☺	☹
❍ I know that I can stop participating in the research at any time, without giving any reasons and without any consequences	☺	☹
❍ I understand that all information about me, or what I say, will remain private	☺	☹

_____   _____

Name of Child   **Date**

Appendix 20: Informed Assent Form for Grade 5 Students in Maltese (approved by the Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta)

Formola ta' Kunsens Informata għal Studenti tal-Ħames Sena

Isem ir-riċerkatriċi: Maria Eloise Spiteri

Titlu tar-riċerka: 'The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools'

Din il-formola ta ' kunsens infurmata għandha żewġ partijiet:

• Folja ta' informazzjoni (din tagħtik l-informazzjoni meħtieġa dwar din ir-riċerka)
• Dikjarazzjoni ta' kunsens (hawnhekk int mitlub tikteb ismek jekk taqbel li tipparteċipa f'din ir-riċerka)

L-Ewwel Taqsima: Informazzjoni dwar ir-Riċerka

Introduzzjoni

Jiena Maria Spiteri, għalliema tal-mużika. Qed nagħmel riċerka dwar is-suġġetti li għandek fl-iskola. Dan il-proġett huwa parti mid-dottorat tiegħi. Ir-riċerka teżamina jekk is-suġġetti tal-Arti (mużika, drama, art) humiex jew le importanti fl-iskejjel primarji.

Qed nistiednek tipparteċipa fi kwestjonarju u/jew gruppmta' diskussjoni dwar is-suġġetti li għandek fl-iskola.

Tkellimt mal-ġenituri/tuturi tiegħek dwar dan il-proġett. Staqsejthom għall-permess biex nkun nista' nkellem u nistaqsik jekk tixtieq tipparteċipa fir-riċerka. Jekk hemm xi ħaġa li mhix ċara, jekk trid tista ssaqsini u nispjega kwalunkwe kliem jew sitwazzjonijiet li mhumiex ċari.

Għan: għaliex qed nagħmel din ir-riċerka?

Irrid nesplora jekk it-testijiet jistgħux jinfluwenzaw il-kurrikulu tal-iskola primarja f'Malta. Qed nippjana li nistaqsi lill-għalliema, il-ġenituri u l-istudenti x'jaħsbu dwar il-lezzjonijiet tal-arti fl-iskejjel primarji.

Għażla tal-Parteċipant: għaliex qed nistaqsi lilek?

Nixtieq nisma' dwar l-esperjenzi u l-ħsibijiet tiegħek dwar is-suġġetti tal-arti fl-iskola bħala student/a ta' l-iskola primarja.

Il-parteċipazzjoni hija volontarja – bilfors irrid nieħu sehem?

Il-parteċipazzjoni fir-riċerka hija fuq basi voluntarja; tgħażel int jekk tipparteċipax jew le. Ħossok liberu/a li tieqaf meta tixtieq. Jekk trid tieħu sehem, se nagħtik karta bl-informazzjoni kollha meħtieġa biex iżżomm, kif ukoll kopja ta' din il-karta.

Jien tlabt il-permess tal-ġenituri/tuturi tiegħek biex nkun nista' nkelmek u biex nistaqsik jekk tixtieqx tipparteċipaw jew le.

Id-dritt li nirrifjuta jew nirtira – Nista' nagħżel li ma nipparteċipax f'din ir-riċerka? Nista' nbiddel fhemti?

Jekk ma tridx tieħu sehem fir-riċerka, tista' tgħid le. Tista' wkoll tibda tipparteċipa u mbagħad tieqaf meta tixtieq mingħajr ma tagħti l'ebda raġun. Mhux se tkun problema għalik jekk tiddeċiedi li ma tipparteċipax jew tieqaf tipparteċipa.

Proċedura: X'se jiġri minni?

Int se tingħata kwestjonarju fejn se twieġeb xi mistoqsijiet. L-ebda tweġiba m'hi tajba jew ħażina, għax it-tweġibiet kollha huma tajbin! Irrid nifhem x'taħseb int dwar is-suġġetti li titgħallem fl-iskola.

Xi studenti se jintgħażlu wkoll biex jieħdu sehem fi grupp ta' diskussjoni. Ser ikun hemm bejn ħames u seba' studenti li se jipparteċipaw f'din id-diskussjoni. Ser nitkellmu dwar is-suġġetti li għandek fl-iskola. L-awdjo biss tad-diskussjoni tagħna se tiġi rrekordjata u jien se nikteb xi noti.

Tul ta' Żmien

Il-kwestjonarju se jieħu madwar 20 minuta biex jinħadem.
Il- grupp ta' diskussjoni se jieħu madwar siegħa.

Riskji u Benefiċċji

Nittama li tieħu gost tipparteċipa fid-diskussjoni miegħi u mat-tfal l-oħra. L-għajnuna tiegħek fir-riċerka se tiprovdi għajnuna għall-edukazzjoni Maltija. L-unika diffikultà tista' tkun biex tieħu l-ħin meħtieġ biextipparteċipa fid-diskussjoni.

Kunfidenzjalità: kulħadd se jkun jaf dwar dan?

L-awdjo biss tad-diskussjoni tagħna se tiġi rrekordjata u se jinżammu private. Jien se nkun l-unika waħda li b'aċċess għar-reġistrazzjonijiet. Ir-reġistrazzjonijiet se jinżammu siguri fil-laptop tiegħi u protetti b'password. Ħadd ma jaf il-password tal-laptop tiegħi. Se nħassar ir-reġistrazzjonijiet kollha sena wara li nikteb it-teżi. Jien mhux se nuża ismek jew l-isem tal-iskola tiegħek meta nkun qed nikteb l-informazzjoni li nkun ġbart waqt id-diskussjonijiet tagħna fit-teżi.

Tqassim tar-Riżultati: Ser tqasam ir-riżultati tar-riċerka miegħi?

Ir-riċerka tiegħi se tinkiteb f'teżi. Jiena se nagħti kopja eletronika tat-teżi tiegħi lill-Kap tal-iskola tiegħek. Inti se jkollok aċċess għaliha meta trid. Ir-riċerka tiegħi tista' tipproduċi rapport u tista' tiġi ppubblikata f'ġurnali, fuq websajt jew ippreżentata waqt konferenza. Ismek u l-isem tal-iskola tiegħek dejjem se jinżammu privati f'kull ħin.

Lil min għandek tikkuntattja: Lil min nista' nkellem jew nsaqsi aktar mistoqsijiet?
Tista' titkellem miegħi fuq ir-riċerka meta trid fuq in-numru 79548358 jew fuq l-indirizz eletroniku mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk   Tista' wkoll titkellem mas-superviżura tiegħi Dr Christine Winter fuq on c.winter@sheffield.ac.uk, jew lil Dr David Hyatt, l-Ko-Ordinatur ta' l-Etika), d.hyatt@sheffield.ac.uk jew il-Kap ta' L-Iskola ta' l-Edukazzjoni Proff. Elizabeth Wood, E.A.Wood@sheffield.ac.uk

It-Tieni Taqsima: Dikjarazzjoni ta' Kunsens (għal tfal akbar)

○ Ġejt   mistieden/na   biex   nipparteċipa   fi   studju   ta'   riċerka   minn _____

○ Qrajt u fhimt l-informazzjoni t'hawn fuq, jew xi ħadd qrali l-informazzjoni, u naqbel li nipparteċipa f'dan l-istudju	☺	☹
○ Il-mistoqsijiet li kelli ġew mwieġba, u naf li nista' nsaqsi aktar mistoqsijiet aktar tard jekk ikolli bżonn	☺	☹
○ Nifhem li m'hemmx għalfejn nieħu sehem fir-riċerka jekk ma nixtieqx	☺	☹
○ Naf li nista' nieqaf nipparteċipa fir-riċerka fi kwalunkwe ħin, mingħajr ma nagħti raġunijiet u mingħajr konsegwenzi	☺	☹
○ Nifhem li l-informazzjoni kollha dwari, jew dak li ngħid, se jibqa' privat	☺	☹

_____   _____

Isem l-istudent/a   Data

Appendix 21: Informed Consent Form in English for Parents involving children or minors (approved by the Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta)

Informed Consent Form

For the Legally Responsible Parents/Guardians of Children/Minors

Name of the Researcher: Maria Eloise Spiteri

Title of Research: The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- Information sheet (to share information about the study with you).

- Declaration of Consent (for signatures if you agree that your child may participate)

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

I am Maria Eloise Spiteri, an EdD (Educational Doctorate) candidate from the University of Sheffield. My research focuses on the changing status of subjects in the Maltese school curriculum. I aim to explore if, and if so, how the market influences curriculum through high-stakes tests, and how these tests in turn may influence the curriculum that is being taught in Maltese schools.

My project aims at exploring the teachers', parents' and students' perceptions of the role and status of arts education lessons within the primary school curriculum. This research will result in a printed thesis which is part fulfilment of the EdD. My supervisor is Dr Christine Winter, Director EdD Educational Studies, University of Sheffield.

Purpose of Research

The focus of this research is the changing importance of subjects in the Maltese primary school curriculum. The purpose of this research is to explore whether the arts subjects (Music, Art, Drama) are being side-tracked to accommodate the focus on literacy and numeracy, leading to a narrowing of the curriculum and if this is aiding the exclusion of non-tested subjects from the day to day school activities. I also plan to investigate how the arts subjects may contribute to a holistic education.

Type of Research Intervention / Procedure

I would like to invite your child to participate in my research.

I will be researching the perception and point of views of the students using a questionnaire and/or participating in a focus group discussion. The questionnaires will be distributed on school premises and will be filled in on site. Each focus group will consist of 5 to 7 participants, where I will act as moderator to facilitate group interaction and encourage the discussion of the topic. I intend to audio-record each session of the discussion groups. The discussions will take place at school.

The questions asked both in the questionnaire and in the focus group discussion are not of a sensitive nature and will not potentially cause embarrassment to the participant. The participants will be informed about this. The questions will focus on the participants' experiences within the Maltese primary school level in relation to the role and status of the arts subjects.

Participant Selection

I have chosen the students from the Grade 5 level to participate for my research. I am asking all Grade 5 students to participate by filling in a questionnaire. I will then choose students using a ballot system, where students will be chosen randomly to participate in the focus group discussion.

The Grade 5 level has been chosen mainly because the students in Grade 5s already know that there are exams and have already experiences sitting for exams during the end of year and/or half-yearly exams.

Voluntary Participation – Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. Anyone can choose not to participate. By choosing your child to participate or not will not affect your child's rights negatively in any way. All participants must feel free to end their participation at any time and without needing to give any reason; this applies even if the focus group has already started. There will be no consequences if your child decides to stop the research at any point in time. If for any reason someone feels uncomfortable, they can leave whenever they choose and will not affect them adversely in any way.

If you do decide to give permission for your child to participate, he/she will be given an information sheet to keep as per Ministry of Education and University of Sheffield protocol. Each child will be given an Assent Form to read and write their name on if they agree and wish to participate. Once the consent forms have been collected and signed, I will then be able to start my research. I will then ask your child whether they wish to participate. Your child's concerns and wishes will be taken very seriously.

Duration

I aim to conduct my research through the month of October 2019. My research in your child's school will only take a lesson for the Questionnaire to be filled in, and a lesson for the Focus Group Discussion if your child is chosen for the Focus Group Discussion. I will coordinate with the Head of School to find the appropriate time for these meetings to occur.

Risks and Benefits

I hope that you and your child will find the process beneficial. It is an opportunity for students to reflect on their experiences at school and how their input can aid research relating to Maltese education. There are a few risks or disadvantages to taking part. The main disadvantage is the time taken to participate.

Confidentiality

Extra precautions will be taken to ensure safety and anonymity of your child. All students' information will be kept confidential at all times and will not be exposed in any way. Anonymisation in the form of pseudonyms will take place from transcription phase onwards. I as the sole researcher will act as custodian of the data. All personal details will be kept strictly confidential and names will be removed in any work published as a result of this research. All information gathered will be accessible only to me. Neither you nor school nor the location will be identified in any reports, presentations or publications. Identities of participants and schools will be protected. Names will not be used; however, with the participants' permission, I may use anonymised quotes. Only I will have access to the data which will be stored on an encrypted hard drive. The data will be kept up to one year after thesis publication and then deleted.

You are hereby informed about your rights as a parent/guardian, and about the rights of your child, that under the Data Protection Act Chapter 586 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU2016/679), you have every right to access, rectify or erase the data concerning you or your child. This is why, before participating in the research, you and your child will be asked to fill in consent/assent forms.

As per University of Sheffield protocol, according to data protection legislation, I am required to inform you that the legal basis I are applying in order to process your personal data is that 'processing is necessary for the performance of task carried out in the public interest' (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University's Privacy Notice https://sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general. As I will be collecting some data that is defined in the legislation as sensitive (information about your views about arts subjects, tests, assessments, etc.) I also need to let you know that I am applying the following condition in law: that the use of your data is 'necessary for scientific or historical research purposes'.

Sharing the Results

The findings of my research will be published in my dissertation as part-fulfilment of the EdD. I will send the Head of School a soft copy of my thesis. The school will be able to forward you the soft copy of my thesis should you wish to read it. If the research finding are to be shared more broadly, for example, in publications or conferences, the data will only be made available for future use with the fully informed consent of participants. The full details of the future project will be made known to participants and a consent form deployed. Confidentiality and anonymity will be kept at all times.

Who to Contact

In case you would like to request further information about the research, and to request information about how their personal information is being processed, are kindly requested to contact me and supervisor on the information below:

Researcher
Maria E. Spiteri
mespiteri1@sheffield.ac.uk
School of Education University of Sheffield
Edgar Allen House
241 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2GW
Tel +356 7954 8358

Supervisor
Dr Chris Winter
c.winter@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel +44 (0) 114 2228142

Professor Elizabeth Wood
Head of Department
e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

Part II: Declaration of Consent

○ I have been asked to give consent for my child to participate in a research titled

_____

○ I confirm that I have read and understood the above information, or it has been read to me, and that I agree for my child to participate in this study.

○ I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

○ I understand that I am free to contact the researcher or the researcher's supervisor to seek further clarification and information.

○ I understand that my child's participation in this study is voluntary and that my child is free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and without consequence of any kind.

○ I understand that all data are anonymous and that there will not be any connection between the personal information provided and the data.

○ I understand that there are no known risks or hazards associated with participating in this study.

○ I consent to my child being audio-recorded for the purpose of the research.

○ I consent to my child's data being transcribed, and that the data from the transcriptions will be kept on the researcher's encrypted hard drive, secured by a password only Ms Maria knows, and that only she has access until one year after publication of the thesis.

○ I understand that my child's identity will remain anonymous in any form of dissemination, written or otherwise.

Name of Parents/Guardians   **Signature of Parents/Guardians**   **Date**

Appendix 22: Informed Consent Form in Maltese for Parents involving children or minors (approved by the Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta)

Formola ta' Kunsens Infurmat

Għall-Ġenituri/Tuturi Legalment Responsabbli tat-Tfal/Minorenni

Isem ir-riċerkatriċi: Maria Eloise Spiteri

Titlu tar-riċerka: 'The Changing Status of Subjects in Maltese Primary Schools'

Din il-formola ta' kunsens infurmat għandha żewġ partijiet:

• Paġna ta' informazzjoni (biex naqsam informazzjoni dwar l-istudju miegħek).
• Dikjarazzjoni ta' kunsens (għall-firem jekk inti taqbel li t-ifla/tifel/tfal tiegħek jistgħu jipparteċipaw)

L-Ewwel Taqsima: Informazzjoni dwar ir-Riċerka

Introduzjoni

Jiena Maria Eloise Spiteri, studenta fl-Universita' ta' Sheffield fejn qeda naqra l-kors bit-titlu ta' Dottorat f'edukazzjoni [EdD (Educational Doctorate)]. Ir-riċerka li hi parti mid-dottorat tiegħi tiffoka fuq l-istat tas-suġġetti parti mill-kurrikulu ta' l-iskejjel primarji madwar Malta. Din ir-riċerka għandha l-għan li tesplora il-perċezzjonijiet ta' l-istudenti, l-għalliema u l-ġenituri fuq is-suġġetti ta' l-arti u r-rwol li dawn is-suġġetti għandhom fil-kurrikulu ta' l-iskejjel primarji.

Din ir-riċerka ser tirriżulta f'teżi li hi parti mil-kors tad-dottorat. Is-superviżura tiegħi hi Dr. Christine Winter, Diretriċi tal-Istudji Edukattivi fl-Università ta' Sheffield.

L-Għan tar-Riċerka

Ir-riċerka tinvolvi li ngħaraf il-ħsieb tagħkom fuq kif is-suq globali qed jinfluenza is-suġġetti mgħalma fl-iskejjel Maltin permess ta' l-eżamijiet nazzjonali u supranazzjonali. Bħala riċerkatriċi, nixtieq ngħaraf jekk is-suġġetti ta' l-arti qed jiġux mwarba biex jakkomodaw suġġetti oħra li huma parti mil-eżamijiet nazzjonali u supranazzjonali jew le, fenomenu li qed iwassal għat-tidjieq tal-kurrikulu u l-eskluzjoni ta' suġġetti li mhumiex eżaminati.

L-għan ta' din ir-riċerka huwa li ninvestiga kif is-suġġetti tal-Arti jikkontribwixxu għal edukazzjoni olistika. Hemm l-għan li bħala riċerkatriċi ngħaraf il-perċezzjonijiet tal-istudenti, l-edukaturi u l-ġenituri dwar l-importanza tas-suġġetti tal-Arti fi ħdan il-kurrikulu primarju, u jekk l-istudenti iqisux s-suġġetti ta' l-Arti jekk jikkontribwixxux jew le għall-inklużjoni u sens ta' identita' ta' kull student.

Tip ta' Intervent/Proċedura ta' Riċerka

Nixtieq nistieden lit-tifla/tifel tiegħek biex jipparteċipaw fir-riċerka tiegħi.

Se nkun qed nagħmel riċerka dwar il-perċezzjoni u l-fehmiet tal-istudenti billi nqassam kwestjonarju u nsqasi lil xi wħud biex jipparteċipaw f'diskussjoni fi grupp żgħir. Il-kwestjonarju se jitqassam fil-bini tal-iskola u se jimtlew fuq il-post. Kull grupp ta' diskussjoni se jikkonsisti minn 5 sa 7 parteċipanti, fejn se nkun qed naħdem bħala moderatriċi biex niffaċilita l-interazzjoni tal-grupp u ninkoraġġixxi d-diskussjoni dwar is-suġġett. Għandi l-intenzjoni li nirrekordja l-awdjo ta' kull sessjoni tal-gruppi ta' diskussjoni. Id-diskussjonijiet ser isiru fl-iskola.

Il-mistoqsijiet li jsiru kemm fil-kwestjonarju kif ukoll fid-diskussjoni fil-grupp mhumiex ta' natura sensittiva u mhux se jikkawżaw imbarazzament lill-parteċipanti. Il-part ċipanti se jiġu nfurmati dwar dan. Il-mistoqsijiet se jiffukaw fuq l-esperjenzi tal-parteċipanti fi ħdan il-livell tal-iskola primarja Maltija fir-rigward tar-rwol u l-istatus tas-suġġetti tal-Arti.

Għażla tal-Parteċipanti

Għażilt l-istudenti mil-ħames livell biex jipparteċipaw għar-riċerka tiegħi. Qed nitlob lill-istudenti kollha tal-ħames livell biex jipparteċipaw billi jimlew kwestjonarju. Imbagħad se nagħżel xi studenti każwali biex jipparteċipaw fid-diskussjoni fi grupp.

Il-livell tal-ħames sena ġie magħżul l-aktar minħabba li l-istudenti ta' din is-sena diġà jafu li hemm eżamijiet u diġà għandhom esperjenza tal-eżamijiet ta' l-aħħar tas-sena u/jew l-eżamijiet ta' nofs is-sena.

Parteċipazzjoni volontarja – dritt li tirrifjuta jew tirtira

Il-parteċipazzjoni f'din ir-riċerka hija fuq bazi volontarja. It-tifel/tifla jistgħu jagħżlu li ma jipparteċipawx. Jekk tagħżel li t-tifel/tifla tiegħek jistgħu jipparteċipaw jew le mhux se taffettwa d-drittijiet tat-tfal bl-ebda mod negattiv. Il-parteċipanti kollha għandhom iħossuhom liberi li jtemmu l-parteċipazzjoni tagħhom fi kwalunkwe ħin u mingħajr il-bżonn li jagħtu xi raġuni; dan japplika anki jekk il-grupp ta' diskussjoni jkun diġà beda. Mhux se jkun hemm konsegwenzi jekk it-tifel/tifla tiegħek jiddeċiedu li jwaqqfu l-parteċipazzjoni tagħhom fir-riċerka fi kwalunkwe mument. Jekk għal xi raġuni xi ħadd iħossu skomdu, jistgħu jitilqu meta jagħżlu u mhux se taffettwawhom bl-ebda mod ħażin.

Jekk tiddeċiedi li tagħti permess lit-tifel/tifla tiegħek biex jieħdu sehem, huma se jingħataw folja ta' informazzjoni biex iżommu skont protocol mill-Ministeru tal-Edukazzjoni u mill-Università ta' Sheffield. Se nibda' billi nistaqsi lit-tifel/tifla tiegħek jekk jixtiequx jipparteċipaw. Kull tifel jew tifla se jingħataw formola ta' kunsens biex jaqraw u jiktbu isimhom dwar jekk jaqblux u jixtiequ jipparteċipaw. Ladarba l-formoli tal-kunsens ikunu ġew iffirmati u nġabru, imbagħad inkun nista' nibda r-riċerka tiegħi. It-tħassib u x-xewqat tat-tifel/tifla tiegħek se jittieħdu bis-serjetà ħafna.

Tul tar-Riċerka

L-għan hu li din ir-riċerka sseħħ matul ix-xahar t'Ottubru 2019. Ir-riċerka tiegħi fl-iskola tiegħek se tieħu biss lezzjoni biex il-kwestjonarju jimtela, u lezzjoni għall-grupp tad-diskussjoni. Jien se nikkoordina mal-Kap ta' l-iskola biex insib il-ħin xieraq biex iseħħu dawn il-laqgħat.

Riskji u Benefiċċji

Nispera li inti u t-tifel/tifla tiegħek se ssibu l-proċess ta' benefiċċju. Din hija opportunità biex l-istudenti jirriflettu fuq l-esperjenzi tagħkom bħala membri tal-komunita skolastika. L-għajnuna tagħkom f'din ir-riċerka hija ta' għajnuna kbira. Hemm ftit ta' xejn riskji jew żvantaġġi jekk tieħu sehem. L-iżvantaġġ prinċipali huwa l-ħin meħud biex tipparteċipa.

Kunfidenzjalita

Prekawzjonijiet addizzjonali se jittieħdu biex jiżguraw is-sigurtà u l-anonimità tat-tifel/tifla tiegħek. L-informazzjoni tal-istudenti kollha se jinżammu kunfidenzjali f'kull ħin u mhux se tkun esposta bl-ebda mod. Psewdonimmi ser jintużaw biex janonimizzaw kull parteċipant mill-fażi tat-traskrizzjoni 'l quddiem. Jiena bħala l-unika riċerkatriċi se nkun l-unika kustodju tad-data. Id-dettalji personali kollha se jinżammu strettament kunfidenzjali u l-ismijiet jitneħħew f'kull xogħol ippubblikat bħala riżultat ta' din ir-riċerka. L-informazzjoni miġbura se tkun aċċessibbli biss minni. La inti u lanqas l-iskola u lanqas il-post mhu se jiġu identifikati fl-ebda rapporti, preżentazzjonijiet jew pubblikazzjonijiet. L-identitajiet tal-parteċipanti u l-iskejjel se jkunu protetti. L-ismijiet mhux se jintużaw; madankollu, bil-permess tal-parteċipanti, nista' nuża kwotazzjonijiet anonimizzati. Jien biss se jkolli aċċess għad-data li se tkun maħżuna fuq kompjuter kriptat. Id-data se tinżamm sa sena wara l-pubblikazzjoni tat-teżi u mbagħad titħassar.

Inti qed tiġi nfurmat/a dwar id-drittijiet tiegħek bħala ġenitur/tutur, u dwar id-drittijiet tat-tifel/tifla tiegħek, li taħt l-Att dwar il-Protezzjoni tad-Data, Kapitolu 586, u r-Regolament Ġenerali dwar il-Protezzjoni tad-Data (GDPR) (EU2016/679), għandek kull dritt li taċċessa, tirrettifika jew tħassar id-data li tikkonċerna lilek jew lit-tifel/tifla tiegħek. Din hija r-raġuni għaliex, qabel ma tipparteċipa fir-riċerka, int u t-tifel/tifla tiegħek se tiġu mitluba timlew l-formoli tal-kunsens.

Tqassim tar-Riżultati

Is-sejbiet tar-riċerka tiegħi se jiġu ppubblikati fit-teżi tiegħi bħala parti mill-issodisfar tal-EdD. Se nibgħat lill-Kap tal-iskola kopja eletrnoika tat-teżi tiegħi. L-iskola se tkun tista' tgħaddilek il- eletrnoika tat-teżi jekk tixtieq taqraha. Jekk is-sejbien tar-riċerka ser jitqassam b'xi mod ieħor, per eżempju, f'xi pubblikazzjonijiet jew konferenzi, id-data miġbur tista' tkun disponibbli biss għall-użu fil-futur bil-kunsens tal-parteċipanti. Id-dettalji sħaħ ta' kull proġett futur jiġu magħrfa lill-parteċipanti u formola ta' kunsens oħra tiġi użata. Il-kunfidenzjalità u l-anonimità se jinżammu f'kull ħin.

Il-Qsim tar-Riżultati

Is-sejbiet tar-riċerka tiegħi se jiġu ppubblikati fid-dissertazzjoni tiegħi bħala parti mill-issodisfar tal-kors tal-EdD. Se nibgħat lill-Kap tal-iskola kopja eletronika tat-teżi. L-iskola se tkun tista' tgħaddilek il-kopja eletronika tat-teżi jekk tixtieq taqraha. Jekk ikun hemm bżonn li r-riċerka ser tinqasam b'mod ieħor barra mit-teżi, l-informazzjoni li ser jatu l-parteċipanti ser ikunu disponibbli biss jekk il-parteċipanti jiġu nfurmati b'din id-deċiżjoni u jerġgħu jatu l-kunsens tagħhom mill-ġdid, u tiġi mogħtija formola oħra ta' kunsens.

Lil Min Għandek Tikkuntattja

F'każ li tixtieq titlob aktar informazzjoni dwar ir-riċerka, u biex titlob informazzjoni dwar kif qed tiġi pproċessata l-informazzjoni personali tal-parteċipanti,inti ġentilment mitluba biex tikkuntattja lili u lis-superviżur tiegħi fuq l-informazzjoni hawn taħt:

Riċerkatriċi
Maria E. Spiteri
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Sheffield
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Superviżura
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Tel +44 (0) 114 2228142

Professor Elizabeth Wood
Kap tad-Dipartiment
e.a.wood@sheffield.ac.uk

It-Tieni Taqsima: Dikjarazzjoni ta' Kunsens

○ Ġejt mitlub/a biex nagħti l-kunsens għat-tifel/tifla tiegħi biex jipparteċipaw fir-riċerka intitolata

_____

○ Nikkonferma li qrajt u fhimt l-informazzjoni t'hawn fuq, jew xi ħadd qrali l-informazzjoni, u li naqbel lit-tifel/tifla tiegħi jipparteċipa f'din ir-riċerka.

○ Kelli l-opportunità li nistaqsi mistoqsijiet dwar ir-riċerka, u kwalunkwe mistoqsija li saqsejt ġiet imwieġba għas-sodisfazzjon tiegħi.

○ Kelli l-opportunità li nistaqsi mistoqsijiet dwar ir-riċerka, u kwalunkwe mistoqsija li saqsejt ġiet imwieġba għas-sodisfazzjon tiegħi.

○ Nifhem li l-parteċipazzjoni tat-tifel/tifla tiegħi f'dan l-istudju hija volontarja u li t-tifel/tifla tiegħi huma liberi li jirtiraw mill-istudju fi kwalunkwe ħin, mingħajr ma jagħtu raġuni u mingħajr konsegwenza ta' ebda tip.

○ Nifhem li d-data kollha hija anonima u li mhu se jkun hemm l-ebda konnessjoni bejn l-informazzjoni personali pprovduta u d-data miktuba fit-teżi.

○ Nifhem li m'hemm l-ebda riskji jew perikli magħrufa assoċjati mal-parteċipazzjoni f'dan l-istudju.

○ Nagħti l-kunsens għat-tifel/tifla tiegħi j/tkun awdjo-rrekordjat/a għall-iskop tar-riċerka.

○ Nagħti l-kunsens biex id-data tat-tifel/tifla tiegħi tiġi traskritta, u li d-data mit-traskrizzjoni se tinżamm fuq l-kompjuter iċċifrat tar-riċerkatriċi, iggarantiti minn password li biss Sa Maria taf, u li hija biss għandha aċċess sa sena wara l-pubblikazzjoni tat-teżi.

○ Nifhem li l-identità tat-tifel/tifla tiegħi se tibqa' anonima fi kwalunkwe forma ta' tixrid, miktuba jew mod ieħor.

Nirringrazzjak bil-quddiem tal-ħin u l-parteċipazzjoni tiegħek f'dan il-proġett ta' riċerka.

Isem il-Ġenitur/Tutur   **Firma tal-Ġenitur/Tutur**   **Data**

Appendix 23: Secretariat for Catholic Education permission for research

Segretarjat għall-Edukazzjoni Nisranija
16, Il-Mall, Furjana FRN 1472
Num. ta' Tel. 27790060
Num. Tal-Fax 27790078

Secretariat for Catholic Education,
16, The Mall, Floriana FRN 1472
Tel. No. 27790060
Fax No. 27790078

The Head
St Joseph School, Sliema (Jr)
Archbishop's Seminary, Rabat (Jr)

18ᵗʰ September 2019

Ms Maria Eloise Spiteri, currently reading for a Doctorate in Education (EdD) at the University of Sheffield, requests permission to distribute some questionnaires to students, parents and teachers of grade 5. Furthermore, Ms Spiteri will then carry out an audio-recorded focus group with some students at the above mentioned schools.

The Secretariat for Catholic Education finds no objection for Ms Maria Eloise Spiteri, to carry out the stated exercises subject to adhering to the policies and directives of the schools concerned.

Mr Ian Mifsud
Director for Curriculum and Standards

Parents' Perceptions on Maltese Primary Education

Thank-you for taking the time to participate in this questionnaire. This is a survey of what you think about the school subjects children study in primary school.

The subjects currently studied by primary aged children are: Maths, English, Maltese, Art, Drama, Music, Science, ICT, Physical Education (PE), Religion and Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD).

You can answer by clicking on the circle near the answer or by underling or circling the answer which best describes the sentence you agree with most. You might pick one or more than one answer.

Some questions require your personal opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. Everyone completing the survey will have his or her own thoughts about different school subjects.

_____

Section 1

Art, Music and Drama are the arts subjects found in most Maltese primary schools.

1. Are arts subjects (art, drama, music) being taught at your child's school?
    Yes / No / Don't know

2. Which of these arts subjects are being taught at your child's school?
    Art/ Drama/ Music/ Other ……

3. How much status (significance) is given to the arts subjects at your child's school?
    Lowest Status   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Highest Status

Section 2

Maths, English, Maltese and Science are the core academic subjects in school. These are then tested during half-yearly exams and end of year exams in some schools.

4. Do you think some subjects are more important at your child's school?
    Yes / No / Don't know

5. If you answered 'Yes' in question no.6, which subjects do you think are the most important at your child's school?

Art / Drama / English / ICT / Maltese / Maths / Music / PE / PSCD / Religion / Social Studies / Science

6. If you answered 'Yes' in question no.6, which subjects do you think are the least important at your child's school?

Art / Drama / English / ICT / Maltese / Maths / Music / PE / PSCD / Religion / Social Studies / Science

7. How much status (significance/importance) is given to the academic subjects at your child's school?

Lowest Status   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Highest Status

8. Do you think the amount of time spent on academic subjects is adequate or excessive?

Adequate   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Excessive

9. Do you think the amount of time spent on arts subjects is adequate or excessive?

Adequate   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Excessive

Section 3

The National Curriculum Framework (2012) promotes that the Maltese curriculum is a 'holistic' curriculum. According to the Maltese Government, a holistic education concerns the development of every child's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual potential.

10.   Does your school provide a holistic curriculum?

No   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Yes

11.   Do you think students benefit from a holistic curriculum (relating to the child's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual development)?

Not at all   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Definitely

12.   Do you think arts subjects are promoted at your child's school?

Not at All   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Definitely

Section 4

13. Do you think arts subjects are important for the students' education?
    No   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Yes

14. Why do you think so? Please write 1 or 2 short sentences about your previous answer.

_____

_____

Section 6

15. What is your gender?
    Female / Male

Thank you for taking the time to participate!

Educators' Perceptions on Maltese Primary Education

Thank-you for taking the time to participate in this questionnaire. This is a survey of what you think about the school subjects children study in primary school.

The subjects currently studied by primary aged children are: Maths, English, Maltese, Art, Drama, Music, Science, ICT, Physical Education (PE), Religion and Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD).

You can answer by clicking on the circle near the answer or by underling or circling the answer which best describes the sentence you agree with most. You might pick one or more than one answer.

Some questions require your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. Everyone completing the survey will have his or her own thoughts about different school subjects.
_____

Section 1

Art, Music and Drama are the arts subjects found in most Maltese primary schools.

1. Are any arts subjects (Drama, Music, Art, other) being taught at your school?
   Yes / No

2. Which of these arts subjects are being taught at your school?
   Art / Drama / Music / Other ……

3. How much status (significance) is given to the arts subjects at your school?
   Lowest Status   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Highest Status

4. Do you think arts subjects are promoted at school?
   Not at All   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Definitely

Section 2

The National Curriculum Framework (2012) promotes that the Maltese curriculum is a 'holistic' curriculum. According to the Maltese Government, a holistic education concerns the development of every child's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual potential.

5. Does your school provide a holistic curriculum?

No   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Yes

6. Do you think students benefit from a holistic curriculum (relating to the child's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual development)?

Not at all   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Definitely

Section 3

Maths, English, Maltese and Science are the core academic subjects in school. These are then tested during half-yearly exams and end of year exams in some schools.

7. Do you think some subjects are more important at school?

Yes / No / Don't know

8. If you answered 'Yes' in question no.7, which subjects do you think are the most important at school?

Art / Drama / English / ICT / Maltese / Maths / Music / PE / PSCD / Religion / Social Studies / Science

9. If you answered 'Yes' in question no.7, which subjects do you think are the least important at school?

Art / Drama / English / ICT / Maltese / Maths / Music / PE / PSCD / Religion / Social Studies / Science

10.   How much status (significance/importance) is given to the academic subjects at school?

Lowest Status   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Highest Status

11.   Do you think the amount of time spent on academic subjects is adequate or excessive?

Adequate   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Excessive

12.   Do you think the amount of time spent on arts subjects is adequate or excessive?

Adequate   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Excessive

Section 4

13.   Are arts subjects being taught by specialized full-time resident teachers in your school?

Yes / No

14.   Do you think a specialized teacher teaching an arts subject makes it easier for the class teacher to make sure that arts subjects are being taught at school, or not?

Not at all   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Definitely

15.   Why do you think so? Please write 1 or 2 short sentences about your previous answer.

_____

_____

16.   Are arts subjects being taught by part-time peripatetic teachers in your school?
    Yes / No

17.   Having a peripatetic teacher teaching an arts subject, does it make it easier for the
   class teacher to make sure that arts subjects are being taught at school, or not?
       Not at all   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Definitely

18.   Why do you think so? Please write 1 or 2 short sentences about your previous answer.

_____

_____

19.   If there aren't any specialized or peripatetic teachers, do you as the class teacher teach
   the arts subjects lesson instead, or would the arts subjects lessons be cancelled?
       o   **I would teach the Arts subjects lessons**
       o   **The Arts subjects lessons would be cancelled**

20.   What would be your ideal scenario?
       o   **Full-time resident specialized Arts subject teacher teaches Arts subjects**
       o   **Part-time peripatetic specialized Arts subject teacher teaches Arts subjects**
       o   **Class teacher teaches Arts subjects**
       o   **No Arts subjects lessons are taught**
       o   **Other:**

_____

_____

Section 5

21. Do you think arts subjects are important for the students' education?
    No   1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10   Yes

22. Why do you think so? Please write 1 or 2 short sentences about your previous answer.

Section 6

What is your gender?
    Female / Male

Thank you for taking the time to participate!

Appendix 26: Students' Questionnaires

Students' Perceptions on Maltese Primary School Subjects

Thank-you for taking the time to participate in this questionnaire. This is a survey of what you think about the school subjects you learn in primary school.

The subjects are: Art, Drama, English, ICT, Maltese, Maths, Music, Physical Education (PE), Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD), Religion and Science.

You can answer by underling or by clicking on the circle near the answer which best describes the sentence you agree with most. You might pick one or more than one answer.

Some questions require your personal opinion. There are no right or wrong answers. Everyone completing the survey will have his or her own thoughts about different school subjects.

Section 1

1. This is my favourite subject at school. Please choose as many as you feel are applicable to your answer.
Art / Drama / English / ICT / Maltese / Maths / Music / PE / PSCD / Religion / Social Studies / Science

2. Art, Drama and Music are referred to as 'Arts Subjects'. Do you have any of the following subjects at school?
Art / Music / Drama / Other
………………

3. Are any of these subjects not taught at school?
Art / Music / Drama / Other
………………

4. I would like to have more time for this subject in school. Please choose as many as you feel are applicable to your answer.
Art / Drama / English / ICT / Maltese / Maths / Music / PE / PSCD / Religion / Social Studies / Science

5. Do you have Art, Drama and Music when you have exams?
Yes / No / Not always / Don't know

6. My class teacher wants me to do well in this subject. Please choose as many as you feel are applicable to your answer.
Art / Drama / English / ICT / Maltese / Maths / Music / PE / PSCD / Religion / Social Studies / Science

7. Do you think some subjects are more important at school?
Yes / No / Don't know

8. If you answered 'Yes' in question no.7, which subjects do you think are the most important at school?
Art / Drama / English / ICT / Maltese / Maths / Music / PE / PSCD / Religion / Social Studies / Science

9. If you answered 'Yes' in question no.7, which subjects do you think are the least important at school?
Art / Drama / English / ICT / Maltese / Maths / Music / PE / PSCD / Religion / Social Studies / Science

Section 2

10. Do you think some subjects may help you express who you are, help you understand who you are as a person, what you like, what you can do?
Yes / No / Don't know

11. Which subject/s may help you express who you are? Please choose as many as you feel are applicable to your answer.
Art / Drama / English / ICT / Maltese / Maths / Music / PE / PSCD / Religion / Social Studies / Science

12. Why do you think the subject/s you just chose may help you express who you are? Please choose as many as you feel are applicable to your answer.

- o **I can try my best and still make mistakes and it does not matter**
- o **I choose what to do and how to do it**
- o **I can do it my way without the need to ask for help**
- o **I work in a group and groupwork helps me express myself more**
- o **The teacher helps me be myself**
- o **Other (Please write a short sentence)**

_____

_____

Section 3

13. In this subject, some children often leave the class with their LSE or complimentary teacher. Please choose as many as you feel are applicable to your answer.
Art / Drama / English / ICT / Maltese / Maths / Music / PE / PSCD / Religion / Social Studies / Science

14. Every student stays in class for the lesson and can enjoy this subject. Please choose as many as you feel are applicable to your answer.
Art / Drama / English / ICT / Maltese / Maths / Music / PE / PSCD / Religion / Social Studies / Science

Section 4

15. Do you think Drama, Music and Art are important for your education?
Yes / No / Don't know

20. Why do you think so? Please write 1 or 2 short sentences about your previous answer.

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. Are you a boy or a girl?
Girl / Boy

Thankyou for taking the time to participate!

Appendix 27: List of Parents' Focus Group Questions

Parents' Perceptions on Maltese Primary Education

1. Are arts subjects (art, drama, music) being taught at your child's school?

2. Which of these arts subjects are being taught at your child's school?

3. How much status (significance) is given to the arts subjects at your child's school?

4. Do you think some subjects are more important at your child's school?

5. Which subjects do you think are the most important at your child's school?

6. Which subjects do you think are the least important at your child's school?

7. How much status (significance/importance) is given to the academic subjects at your child's school?

8. Do you think the amount of time spent on academic subjects is adequate or excessive?

9. Do you think the amount of time spent on arts subjects is adequate or excessive?

10. Does your school provide a holistic curriculum?

11. Do you think students benefit from a holistic curriculum (relating to the child's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual development)?

12. Do you think arts subjects are promoted at your child's school?

13. Do you think arts subjects are important for the students' education?

14. Why do you think so?

Appendix 28: List of Educators' Focus Group Questions

Teachers' Perceptions on Maltese Primary Education

1. Are any arts subjects (Drama, Music, Art, other) being taught at your school?

2. Which of these arts subjects are being taught at your school?

3. How much status (significance) is given to the arts subjects at your school?

4. Do you think arts subjects are promoted at school?

5. Does your school provide a holistic curriculum?

6. Do you think students benefit from a holistic curriculum (relating to the child's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, creative and spiritual development)?

7. Do you think some subjects are more important at school?

8. Which subjects do you think are the most important at school?

9. Which subjects do you think are the least important at school?

10. How much status (significance/importance) is given to the academic subjects at school?

11. Do you think the amount of time spent on academic subjects is adequate or excessive?

12. Do you think the amount of time spent on arts subjects is adequate or excessive?

13. Are arts subjects being taught by specialized full-time resident teachers in your school?

14. Having a specialized teacher teaching an arts subject, does it make it easier for the class teacher to make sure that arts subjects are being taught at school, or not?

15. Why do you think so?

16. Are arts subjects being taught by part-time peripatetic teachers in your school?

17. Having a peripatetic teacher teaching an arts subject, does it make it easier for the class teacher to make sure that arts subjects are being taught at school, or not?

18. Why do you think so?

19. If there aren't any specialized or peripatetic teachers, do you as the class teacher teach the arts subjects lesson instead, or would the arts subjects lessons be cancelled?

20. What would be your ideal scenario?

21. Do you think arts subjects are important for the students' education?

22. Why do you think so?

Appendix 29: List of Students' Focus Group Questions

Students' Perceptions on Maltese Primary School Subjects

1. What is your favourite subject at school?

2. Art, Drama and Music are referred to as 'Arts Subjects'. Do you have any of the following subjects at school?

3. Are any of the Arts subjects missing at school?

4. Do you have Art, Drama and Music when you have exams?

5. Do you like the arts subjects? Why?

6. Are there some subjects where you think your class teacher wants you to do better in school?

7. Do you think some subjects are more important at school?

8. Which subjects do you think are the most important at school?

9. Which subjects do you think are the least important at school?

10. Do you think some subjects may help you express who you are, help you understand who you are as a person, what you like, what you can do?

11. Which subject/s may help you express who you are?

12. Why do you some subjects may help you express who you are?

13. Are there any subjects at school where student with educational difficulties leave the class with their LSE or complimentary teacher?

14. During which subject lessons do some children often leave the class with their LSE or complimentary teacher?

15. How does this make you feel?

16. Do you have subject lessons where all students are present in class for the lesson?

17. If yes, during which subject lessons do all students stay in class for the lesson and can enjoy this subject?

18. How does this make you feel?

19. Do you have a yearly school production where you sing, act and/or dance?

20. Do you think these productions help you feel you belong in school?

21. Do you think Drama, Music and Art are important for your education?

22. Why do you think so?

23. Do you think exams affect arts subjects at school? How?

Appendix 30: Table of Codes

Codes School A

Parents	Students	Educators
Importance of Arts	Importance of Arts	Importance of Arts
Culture + General Knowledge		
Time + Opportunities	Time on Arts	Not Enough Time on Arts
Hierarchy of Subjects		Hierarchy Less Priority
Exams		
Broad and Balanced Curriculum		
Exams	Exams	Exams
No Exams – No Motivation		
Exams infer Importance of Subject		
O'Level University Requirements		
Learning Difficulties	Can do Mistakes	
Holistic		Holistic B&B
No Art teacher implies subject not important		Specialised Arts teachers
		Non-Specialised for Arts and Craft
Creativity		
Extracurricular need money		
Higher Power		
Voice of Child		
Belonging	Belonging	
Change of Curriculum		Change-Lessen the Curriculum
Repetition of Subjects in higher grades		Too Vast a Subject
Killing Creativity		
	Concert- Pride/Satisfaction	Concert
		Pride/Satisfaction

	Freedom of Expression	
	Inclusion	
Narrowing of Curriculum	Narrowing of the Curriculum	
	Teaching-to-the-test	
	Pressure/Mental Health	

Codes School B

Parents	Students	Educators
Hierarchy of Subjects		
Core given more importance		
Narrowing of the Curriculum		
Importance of Subjects		Hierarchy of Curriculum
Assessment and Exams/Pressure		
Holistic Curriculum		Holistic Curriculum
Time on Arts	Time on Arts	Time on Arts
	Time on Core	Time on Subjects
Creativity	Creativity	Creativity
Belonging	Belonging	
		Inclusion
Believing in Arts Subjects	Importance of Arts	Importance of Arts
Change system/change teachers		
Too vast a subject		
		Repetition of Syllabus is Advance Grades/Senior
	Freedom of Expression	Freedom of Expression
	Making Mistakes is OK	
		Voice of the Child
	No Writing	
	Confidence/Helping Out Each Other	
	Exams	
	Pull-outs	
	During Art	
	Pride/Satisfaction	
	Concert	
		Higher Power
		Parents' Decisions Stakeholders

	Compartmentalisation of Subjects
	Narrowing of the Curriculum – Time Away
	Opportunity to Change-Less Work on Workbooks
	Specialised Teacher
	Open Day/Afterschool

Codes School C

Parents	Students	Educators
Importance of Arts	Importance of Arts	Importance of Arts
Arts not important at school		Arts not important at school
Arts give confidence		
	Feelings through the Arts	
	Expressing of Oneself	
New Opportunities with Arts		
Mental Health		
Assessments/Academics		
Higher Power		
Vast Curriculum		
	Hierarchy	Hierarchy of the Curriculum
Assessment		Assessment
		Academic Oriented
Family Situation – Norm of the Family		
Time	Time	
Time on Core Subjects		
		Time on Arts
		More time on Arts
Homework		
Interest in Learning		
Holistic		Holistic
Teaching for a Future Job		
Exams	Exams	Exams make subjects important
Belonging		Belonging
		Inclusion
	Concert	Concerts
	Learning Difficulties	Different Capabilities – Opportunities for Students to shine
	Open Day	
	Finding What You Are Good At	

	Absence of Specialised Teachers
	Narrowing of Curriculum
	Perception by students that the Arts are studies by students who are not good academically
	Pullouts
	Punishing Children by not taking them to Specialised Subjects
	Space and Resources

Codes School D

Parents	Students	Educators
Holistic curriculum		Holistic curriculum
Broad and balanced curriculum		Broad and balanced curriculum
		Higher Power/System
		Narrowing of the curriculum
Pressure		
		No Competition/Exams on Arts
Mental health		
No Music lessons	No specialised teachers	
		Specialised Teacher teaching Subject
Creativity		
Inclusion		Inclusion
	Belonging	Belonging
Different abilities		
More time should be spent on Arts	Add more Arts	
	No enough time spent on Arts	
		Importance of Arts
		Students enjoy the Arts
		Importance of arts for artistic students
Concert		
After-school idea	Day of Activities	
Creativity		
Time – Imbalance on Arts subjects		Time
Balance and Time		
Core subjects	Core Subjects important as influenced by home	Core subjects
	Time and Enjoyment	
	Freedom of expression	

	Concert	Concert – Loosing time from Exam Subjects
	Pull-outs	
		Assessments
		Pride & Satisfaction