

Chapter 12: Malta

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Population (1988): 345,000

Population Growth Rate (1980-88): 0.5% per annum

Land Area: 316 square kilometres

Capital: Valletta

GNP per Capita (1990): US\$5,050

Year of Independence: 1964

Primary School Enrolment Rate (1990): 100%

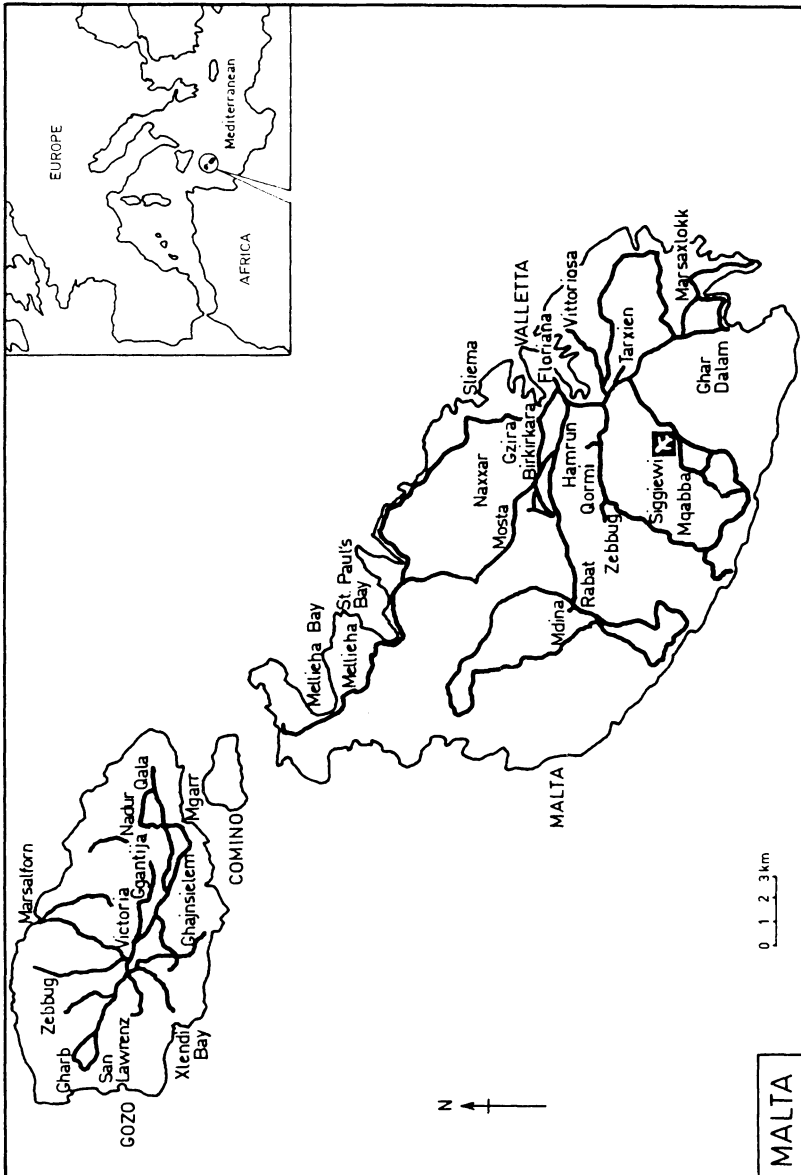
Human Development Index (1987): 0.898

Malta has a long tradition in education. Historical evidence records the existence of a school financed by the state in the 14th century, while the origins of the University of Malta date back to the 16th century. Yet in spite of the early start, universal primary education did not become fully effective until the end of World War II, and universal secondary education 25 years later. The islands now enjoy an extensive system of education which spans a wide spectrum of academic provision and caters for most educational needs.

1. Background

The Republic of Malta comprises three islands, namely Malta itself, Gozo and Comino. The country is located in the Mediterranean Sea, 90 kilometres south of Italy and 290 kilometres north of the African mainland. About 94 per cent of the population lives on the island of Malta.

The local common language is Maltese, but English, which is the second official language, is spoken by most people. Maltese and English are taught as subjects in primary and secondary schools, and both languages are used as media of instruction in secondary schools and at



the University.

The strategic location of the islands, combined with the excellent harbour facilities, has had a strong influence on the history, culture and economy. Virtually all the dominant nations in the region have occupied Malta. The earliest known inhabitants were Stone Age farmers who came from Sicily some time before 4000 BC and whose temples are considered the earliest free-standing stone monuments in the world.

Malta became a British colony in 1814. Constitutions which gave the islands limited self-government, but which reserved defence, foreign affairs and other matters to the representative of the British Government, were in force in 1921-36, 1947-59 and 1962-64. In the intervening periods the representative of the British government exercised executive authority. During the Second World War Malta suffered severe aerial bombardment, and was awarded the George Cross in 1942 by the United Kingdom's King George VI. Malta gained full political independence in 1964. Since 1974 the country has been a Republic. Its political system operates as a genuine parliamentary democracy, with a neutral and non-aligned foreign policy. The islands have close economic ties with the European Community.

For centuries Malta survived economically as a mid-Mediterranean fortress providing services to military powers. Consequently, until the islands' political independence no major economic initiatives emerged to supplement the services offered to the military occupiers and to earn non-military foreign exchange. Following Independence, successive governments embarked on extensive economic diversification programmes. These include the creation of an export-oriented industrial sector particularly in textiles, engineering, and electronics. The economy has also developed specialisms in shipbuilding and repair, and in off-shore banking. Since Independence, tourism has emerged as the leading foreign currency earner, with some 800,000 tourists visiting the islands annually.

General economic expansion, coupled with redeployment of the islands' limited natural resources, has led to improved standards of living and high social expectations. The Maltese demand a good education system and a wide choice of education services at all levels. Education currently consumes about 9 per cent of the national budget.

2. The Education System

Until the mid-16th century, regular schooling was provided mainly by the Catholic church. In the late 19th century the Maltese authorities made a serious attempt to increase the literacy level and to lay the

foundations for universal education. Legislation for compulsory school attendance was enacted in 1924. It was improved by the 1946 Education Act, which made schooling compulsory for all children aged 6 to 14. Secondary School for All was introduced in 1971. In 1974 education was made compulsory to the age of 16, and in 1988 compulsion was extended downwards to the age of five. The 1988 Education Act also recognised teaching as a profession, made provision for a national curriculum, laid the ground for a less centralised administrative system, and gave parents a stronger say about their children's education.

Malta enjoys healthy competition between state and private education, especially at the secondary level. About 28 per cent of the school population attend private schools, the majority of which are run by the Catholic church. Tuition in all state schools is free, and the government provides substantial financial aid to private schools. Students in state schools also enjoy loaned textbooks and free medicine, milk and dental care.

All post-secondary and university education is also free of charge to Maltese citizens. The State offers substantial incentives in the form of monthly stipends and vacation employment in government, parastatal enterprises and voluntary organisations. This provision aims to remove the financial burdens from those who might otherwise find it difficult to benefit from tertiary education.

After spending six years at primary school, children sit for the secondary schools admission examinations. Depending on their results, they then go either to the grammar-type Junior Lyceums or to less academically demanding Area Schools. After two years of secondary education, students may follow a craft-level course in a trade school or continue with academic courses. At the end of the fifth year of secondary education, students sit for the Ordinary Level of the Matriculation examination set by the University of Malta and/or the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations set by British examination boards. Those in the technical sector sit for the City & Guilds of London Institute examinations.

The attainment of six Ordinary level subjects allows students to spend the next two years in post-secondary education. At the end of this, students sit for the Advanced Level of the Malta Matriculation or GCE (United Kingdom). Those who follow a post-secondary course in a Technical Institute sit for Higher Craft, Technician or Diploma Level Examinations set by the London-based City & Guilds.

The origins of the University of Malta go back to 1592 when, a few years after the erection of the city of Valletta, the Grand Master of the time requested the Jesuits to open a Collegium Melitensis. A new campus was opened in 1964. However, the old site in Valletta still

provides academic services through the Foundation for International Studies, a branch of the University. At present the University has 10 Faculties, namely Theology, Medicine, Law, Dentistry, Architecture, Engineering, Education, Arts, Science, and Management Studies. The University also has several Institutes which concentrate on specific areas of study. It offers undergraduate, post-graduate and doctoral programmes to 2,500 full-time and 400 part-time students.

3. The Ministry of Education

The Malta constitution empowers the President of the Republic, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, to assign to the latter and other ministers the responsibility for government departments. Ministers direct and control the department or departments attached to their ministries. The day-to-day administration of a ministry is supervised by a permanent secretary, who acts under the direction of the minister but who generally operates with some discretion and independence. Individual departments have their own heads, though the head of the Department of Education is called a Director. The permanent secretaries and department heads are appointed from among senior public officers by the Prime Minister following consultations with the Public Service Commission. They are non-political posts within the Maltese Civil Service.

In 1990 the Education portfolio was combined with that of the Interior to form a Ministry of Education & the Interior. However, this section of the chapter refers to the Ministry of Education as it existed before the change.

(a) Structure

Table 12.1 shows the main component parts of the Ministry before the 1990 change. It will be seen that it had four Departments covering Education, Culture & Environment, Museums, and Libraries. It also had separate Administration Divisions responsible for examinations, transport, maintenance & repair, and minor staff. Also affiliated to the Ministry were the University of Malta, the Foundation for International Studies, Broadcasting, the National Theatre, and the National Orchestra.

The fact that the Examinations, Transport, Maintenance & Repair, and Minor Staff sections are separate Administrative Divisions rather than part of the Departments deserves some comment. In a small state where practically everyone knows everyone else or their friends, the

Table 12.1: Component Parts of the Ministry of Education, Malta

Minister

Private Secretariat to the Minister

Permanent Secretary

Administration Divisions

Examinations

Transport

Maintenance & Repair

Minor Staff

Department of Education

Kindergartens

Primary Education

Special Education

Secondary Education

Technical & Trade Education

Post-Secondary Education

Adult Education

Department of Culture & Environment

Culture

Sport

Environment

Youth

Department of Museums

Museums

Antiquities

Restoration

Libraries Department

National Library

Public Records Office

Lending Library

University of Malta

Foundation for International Studies

Broadcasting

National Theatre

National Orchestra

government wanted to ensure that all examinations for recruitment set by the government and parastatal organisations were absolutely fair and free from abuse. It seemed easiest to do this when examinations were administered by a separate unit. Strict regulations are in force to ensure that examiners are free from undue pressure in the preparation and marking of papers, and that results reflect only the level of attainment reached by the candidates. The Examinations Branch caters also for post secondary examinations run by external boards. On the other hand, a Test Construction Unit within the Department of Education runs examinations for schools on a national level (e.g. annual examinations in primary and secondary schools). This ensures that papers are professionally prepared, and that national standards are set and kept.

The Transport Section within the ministry caters for transport required by employees in all departments. Transport of students to school, especially at secondary and special school level, is administered by a separate section, also within the ministry. Agreement for bus transport is negotiated by the ministry with the union and association concerned.

Maintenance & repair and minor staff are also administered through central units for all departments. This seems to make sense in a small ministry, but there are common complaints that personnel are administered according to the priorities of the ministry rather than the institutions. There is some pressure to allocate funds to institutions to allow them to deal themselves with maintenance and minor repair.

The relative weight of the component parts of the ministry is partly reflected in the budget. Figures for 1990 are shown in Table 12.2. It will be seen that the Department of Education was allocated by far the largest part, representing 72.6 per cent of the total. The component which served all departments, i.e. the Minister's and Permanent Secretary's Offices and the Administration Division, was allocated 14.5 per cent.

Table 12.2: Budget Estimates for Ministry of Education, Malta, 1990 (%)

Section/Department	Recurrent	Capital	Total
Minister's & Permanent Secretary's Offices, & Administration Divisions	17.2	-	14.5
Education	76.5	51.2	72.6
Culture, Environment, Sports, Youth & Broadcasting	3.3	47.0	10.1
Museums	1.9	1.7	1.9
Libraries & Archives	1.0	-	0.8

(b) Functioning

The policy of the Ministry of Education is implemented through a fine balance of power operated by three main groups. These are the Minister's liaison officers, the officials in the general civil service, and the professional educators. In various ways the three groups work in close cooperation. In other ways they operate independently and occasionally in competition.

The liaison officers in the office of the Minister mainly have a political role. They do not have permanent appointments, and are chosen on a personal basis by the Minister to liaise both with the various sectors of the Ministry and with other Ministries. Their main function is to advise the Minister. They monitor the implementation of policy decisions in the various sectors and at different levels. They are expected to keep in touch with the general public, providing information and gathering feedback about the effectiveness of government policy.

The Permanent Secretary and his staff are generalists. The role of the Permanent Secretary is to supervise the general administration and to ensure that the Ministry's policies are carried out. He ensures that the various departments within the Ministry liaise with each other, and that cooperation with other Ministries is maintained. According to established practice, the generalist civil servants avoid interfering with the actual day-to-day running and work of the departments as long as these operate within the parameters established by Ministerial policy.

The senior generalist civil servants wield considerable power because they work closely with the Minister. Since they move from one department to another, and from one ministry to another, they are also very knowledgeable about civil service procedures. In the small, closely-knit service, they develop extensive personal contacts which provide them with strong, if unobtrusive, power and influence.

The professional civil servants form the largest group. They perform specialised work according to the nature of their particular departments. Examples include the teachers in the Department of Education, curators in the Museums Department, and librarians in the Public Libraries. Unlike their counterparts in the general civil service, the professional civil servants work in closed departments and rarely transfer to others.

Generally, the three groups work in harmony and mutual support. Occasionally there is friction, especially when one group feels that there is undue interference, pressure or restriction from another. Here, the 'small scale factor' of a micro-state plays an important part. Personal contacts or the quick intervention of a more senior official -- sometimes the Minister himself -- may lead to a speedy solution or at least to

shelving of the problem. Effective communication is also facilitated by the fact that the small group of senior personnel work in close proximity and are therefore able to arrange quick *ad hoc* meetings. However, experience has shown that physical proximity does not always guarantee effective communication. Conscious human effort is also required.

The present Minister of Education meets with the Permanent Secretary and the Heads of Department on a regular, formal basis. Meetings sometimes take the form of working seminars. Section heads also hold frequent informal meetings, which provide useful occasions for individuals to exchange views, seek support, coordinate work, review action and develop policy. Other meetings are regularly scheduled to seek solutions to such issues as the need to pool and share the limited personnel and facilities of the different departments in the ministry. This communication style becomes very useful in the small administrative set-up of the Maltese civil service, and reinforces the close communication links that are maintained both vertically and horizontally.

The building housing the Ministry of Education accommodates the Ministry, the Department of Education, the Department of Culture & the Environment and the central stores and workshops. The physical features, in contrast to other buildings housing ministries and departments, are modern and fairly pleasant to work in, and encourage easy communication. The atmosphere is enhanced by the informality usually prevalent within the various departments and, to a certain extent, within the Ministry itself. This closeness tends to encourage friendliness and a sense of comradeship, especially in shared difficult projects. Occasionally, however, the close working and personal relationships can breed familiarity and complacency. Also, personal rivalry can extend from individuals to sectors within the departments, so that many officials in Malta envy the impersonality and formality that exist in larger systems where it is easier for officialdom to be faceless.

(c) Territorial Decentralisation

Gozo is an integral part of the national education system, and is catered for in the national budget for education. All rules, regulations and procedures apply to both islands. However, there is a separate Ministry for Gozo Affairs which monitors, facilitates and initiates projects of all types. Gozo also has a resident Education Officer, who is the leading representative of the Department of Education on the island. One must bear in mind that the population of Gozo is about 25,000, equivalent to the population of the largest town in Malta. Since there are several schools for the different small villages on the island, class sizes are

generally smaller in Gozo than in Malta. The Gozitans insist that they should have all the facilities existing in the larger island.

Table 12.3: Personnel of the Ministry of Education (excluding Departments), Malta, 1990

Title	Number
Secretary	1
Head II	1
Head I	1
Professional Officer III	1
Assistant Head	1
Professional Officer II	1
Assistant Head - Registrar of Examinations	1
Professional Officer I	1
Administrative Officer	7
Systems Analyst	1
Public Relations Officer	1
Technical Officer III	1
Administrative Assistant	9
Executive Officer	8
Library Officer I	1
Works Technical Officer	1
Officer-in-Charge Minor Staff	1
Assistant Works Technical Officer	7
Data Entry Officer	1
Messenger III	1
Clerk	26
Group D (Skilled Workers)	74
Messenger II	3
Group C (Skilled Workers)	42
Group B (Semi-skilled Workers)	13
Messenger I	2
Group A	32
TOTAL	238

Note: The personnel have been ranked according to salary scale.

(d) Personnel Numbers

Table 12.3 shows the numbers of personnel in the Ministry of Education. At 238, the total number may seem large for a small state. However, it must be recalled that the ministry must cater for all the different branches associated with larger ministries in larger countries. Liaison officers are not included on the list, but their number is small.

Personnel in Groups A, B, C and D include skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, most of whom form part of the Maintenance & Repair section of the Ministry and carry out work at system and institution levels. One may argue that their number is not large enough to satisfy all requirements.

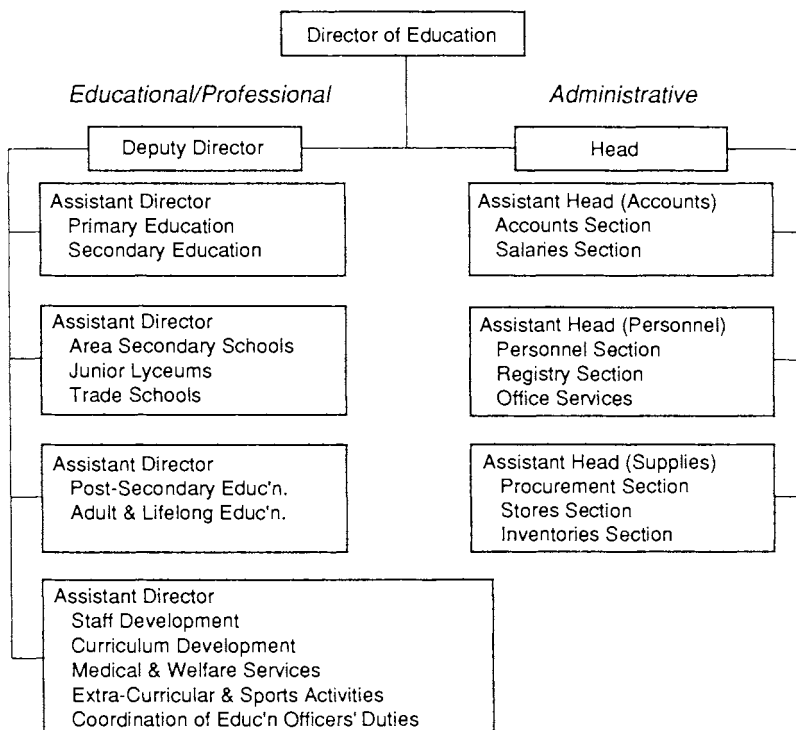
4. The Department of Education*(a) Functions and Structure*

The Department of Education employs nearly 80 per cent of the Ministry's total workforce. Despite recent attempts at decentralisation, the education system is still highly centralised. The Department of Education employs all teaching and related personnel in the state education system. Head Office posts staff to the various educational institutions, and school heads have little or no say in the choice. The Department sets national curricula, and provides teaching materials, equipment and buildings for all formal and non-formal public education. According to law, the Department of Education also has jurisdiction over private schools. However, in reality the private schools regulate their own academic and organisational affairs.

The structure of the Department is shown in Figure 12.1. At the apex is the Director, below whom are separate branches for educational/professional affairs and for administrative matters.

A recent reorganisation agreement gave the Director one of the highest ranks in the civil service. He is responsible to the Minister for the overall academic and administrative management of his department. On the educational/professional side he is helped by a Deputy Director and four Assistant Directors; and on the administrative side he is helped by a Head and three Assistant Heads.

Figure 12.1: Structure of the Department of Education, Malta

*(b) The Educational/Professional Branch**(i) Responsibilities*

The educational/professional branch of the Department provides the teaching service and the educational administration of schools at the various levels and in its specialised units. The Department generally regulates curriculum development through its Education Officers, who are also responsible for supervising the teaching of specified subject areas or of general instruction in the sectors allocated to them.

Curriculum committees made up of Education Officers, school heads, classroom teachers and occasionally lecturers from the Faculty of Education select or commission textbooks, order instructional materials, and advise on pedagogical approaches. At the same time,

teachers in schools are encouraged to develop their own instructional strategies as long as these conform with the general guidelines of the minimum national curriculum requirements. Specialised curriculum research and development is often undertaken by lecturers from the Faculty of Education working in close collaboration with Education Officers and teaching personnel.

The educational/professional branch is also responsible for academic standards. Apart from the monitoring by Education Officers, this is carried out through a system of nationally-based examinations that guide students from the primary to the secondary level of education.

(ii) Personnel

Table 12.4 indicates the numbers of personnel in the Professional/Education Branch of the Department of Education. As might be expected, teachers comprise by far the largest group. Most of them are fully qualified, having followed professional courses at college or university level. Instructors form the second largest group. They are generally qualified to teach in Trade Schools, but some, including part-time and casual instructors, teach in other schools when the required teachers are not available. Instructor and kindergarten assistant grades are generally classified I, II and III according to agreements between the government and trade unions, mostly on the basis of qualifications and years of service.

Table 12.4 does not include Heads of Departments (of subjects) in schools. Previously, Heads of Departments had the rank of Assistant Head (Administration) and Assistant Head (Counsellor). Now they are ranked as teachers, but have reduced teaching loads.

Principal Education Officers are based in Head Office and assist the Deputy Director and the Assistant Directors. The Education Officers, who work under the direction of the Assistant Directors of Education responsible for their sectors, constitute the main source of communication and liaison with the schools.

The role of Education Officers has evolved considerably during the last 15 years. The 1974 education reforms brought about a significant change in the role of these officials who until then were known as Inspectors of School. They inspected, evaluated and reported on school management, administration and class teaching. They had both authority and power, but their relationship with teaching personnel was often ambiguous. Some were highly respected, but others were feared.

Table 12.4: Personnel of the Professional/Education Branch, Department of Education, Malta, 1990

Title	Number
Director of Education	1
Deputy Director of Education	1
Assistant Director	4
Principal Education Officer	8
Education Officer	33
Head of School	129
Education Assistant (to Education Officer)	50
Assistant Head of School	170
Head of Trade School	17
Teacher	2,720
Assistant Head of Trade School	19
Instructor III	178
Kindergarten Assistant III	14
Instructor II	178
Instructor I	89
Kindergarten Assistant II	60
Kindergarten Assistant I	223
Part-time/Casual Instructor	423

Note: The personnel have been ranked according to salary scale.

The role of Education Officers today is essentially that of counsellors, facilitators and animators. Normally, they are specialists in such subjects as English or History or in an area of education such as primary or special education. Although they are expected to 'inspect' both schools and classes and to report on both the schools' managerial style and the teachers' abilities, their relationship with teachers and schools is now more advisory, professional and relaxed. Some Education Officers complain that, lacking the previous power, their role has become less effective.

Education Officers in the Maltese education system are expected to act as leading professionals, specialists and administrators. They insist that this is an impossible multi-functional role, especially as they tend to be overloaded with a multitude of tasks, many of which can be performed by junior functionaries. Their realm includes curriculum development, teaching methods, selection of textbooks, extra-curricular activities, the use of apparatus, the utilisation of facilities, and general

trouble-shooting and problem-solving.

The new posts of Principal Education Officer appointed from among the most senior Education Officers and Heads of Schools are meant to support the Deputy Director and Assistant Directors of Education by shouldering some of their responsibilities. The posts of Education Assistant are also new. The 50 specialist personnel selected from among teachers should ease the multi-functional burdens of Education Officers, allowing them to make a greater contribution towards the formulation and implementation of policy, and freeing them from daily routines that can easily be carried out by subordinates. At the same time, the subordinates are in training for the higher posts.

Education Officers are regarded as essential links between the schools and Head Office, disseminating official policy and carrying feedback to the central administration. They have regular meetings with the Assistant Directors of Education, the Director of Education and the Minister. Besides formal meetings, informal encounters are regular and frequent in the small education system since the offices of the personnel concerned are always within easy reach.

(b) The Administrative Branch

(i) Structure and Functions

The Administrative Branch operates through three main sections. They are the Personnel Section, the Accounts Section and the Supplies Section.

The Personnel Section has responsibility for the machinery of recruitment and promotions, and the keeping of personnel records, leave entitlements, etc.. When recruitment and promotion are concerned, the Department (in common with all government Departments) has no say in the recruitment of the 'general service' staff who man the administrative sectors. Such functions are provided centrally by the Establishment Division of the Office of the Prime Minister. Promotions depend on available vacancies and on agreements with the relevant union. Promotions to vacant posts take place either after a call for applications from eligible grades or, less frequently, by means of a direct recommendation based on efficiency and seniority. The Public Service Commission and the Office of the Prime Minister have to be satisfied that the adopted procedures are correct and the awards are justified. The Personnel Section also has responsibility for scholarships and bursaries. Awards are coordinated either by the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, depending on their type.

There are strict procedures regarding the discipline of personnel. Any charge that warrants disciplinary action has to be made in writing, and, depending on the gravity of the case, the accused official must be given enough time and facilities to exculpate himself. The Secretary General at the Office of the Prime Minister decides whether the Director of Education or the Public Service Commission should deal with the matter, again depending on the nature and gravity of the case.

In a small state in which people all know each other or are friends of friends, claims of discrimination and favouritism are made from time to time. Hence, strict disciplinary and promotion procedures are laid down which are intended to make the system more acceptable and fair. In fact, superiors at all levels and institutions sometimes claim that it is difficult for them to impose the desired discipline at their place of work because of the disciplinary procedures involved.

On the other hand, subordinates sometimes believe that they have been transferred for disciplinary reasons rather than because of the "exigencies of the service" as they are officially informed. On the whole, though, discipline is relaxed -- too relaxed, some may argue, because nobody wants to hurt anybody else.

All records of employees are kept by the Records Division of the Personnel Section. These cover personal details of the career paths of all personnel in the Department, including promotions, resignations and any disciplinary action. The Division is responsible for keeping up to date the staff list at system level and for providing the relevant information on which the seniority level of employees is determined.

The Leaves Division keeps records of sick, vacation, unpaid, emigration, vocational, maternity, bereavement, marriage, duty and birth-of-a-child leave. This Division caters also for the procedures required to appoint medical and injury boards where required by regulations.

One or more senior officials, known as Treasury Accounting Officers, are attached to the Department of Education while at the same time being directly responsible to the Ministry of Finance. These officers regulate spending and ensure that the financial aspects of the administration of education follow the Constitution and the relevant regulations on public funds. This section is responsible for preparing yearly budgets on the basis of information provided by the Department of Education. The Accounts Section has to make projections and keep records of accounts of all the Department's expenditure and revenue.

The final section to be mentioned is responsible for supplies. Wherever possible, the three main functions of this section, i.e. procurement, stock control and inventory-keeping, are kept separate. This enhances control and check against abuses.

Table 12.5: Personnel of the Administrative Branch, Department of Education, Malta, 1990

Title	Number
Works Manager II	2
Professional Officer I	6
Professional Medical Officer I	1
Assistant Principal Welfare Officer	1
Technical Officer III	2
Administrative Officer	17
Officer-in-Charge Sheltered Workshops	1
Welfare Officer III	1
Technical Officer II	1
Administrative Assistant	24
Technical Officer I	4
Pharmacist/Analyst	1
Welfare Officer II	3
Executive Officer	49
Library Officer I	7
Works Technical Officer	10
Technician II	17
Agricultural Officer I	2
Assistant Works Technical Officer	10
Chargehand	16
Leading Gardener	4
Messenger III	5
Clerk	148
Youth Service Assistant	3
Group D Tradesmen	204
Technician I	65
Messenger II	27
Group C Tradesmen	106
Group B Tradesmen	75
Messenger 1	31
Group A (Labourers)	587

Note: The personnel have been ranked according to salary scale.

Work in the administrative branch is not easy. Officials not only have to be multi-functional with all the difficulties and complications that this entails, but have to cater also for varying and sometimes

conflicting requirements. The schools may demand quick action, but the regulations of the civil service place greater emphasis on procedure. These demands and conflicting loyalties result in a significant level of misunderstanding and mistrust between the 'educational' sector and the 'administrative' branch. The difficulties are compounded when the 'educationalists' are unfamiliar with civil service procedures, and the 'administrators' do not fully understand the pressing problems in the schools. Some officials, including senior ones from both branches, have developed close working relationships with positive results. It would greatly benefit the Maltese education system if this trend were to spread further and faster.

(ii) Personnel Numbers

Table 12.5 shows numbers of personnel in the Administrative Branch of the Department of Education. It includes personnel working at the Head Office of the Department of Education and in all the education institutions in Malta and Gozo. The large number of labourers includes caretakers of schools.

5. General Observations

In spite of its limited material and human resources, the Maltese education system offers an education service that in range and quality compares well with that of bigger and richer countries. The quality of the service is a credit to the people who work in it, both as professional educators and as administrative and support staff.

Officials in the two branches of the service and the community at large will readily admit, however, that there is ample space for improvement, particularly in the liaison between the professional/education branch and the administrative branch, as well as between Head Office and schools. There is enough evidence to show that necessary action, sometimes urgent action, is not taken owing to either unnecessary red-tape, or misunderstandings or lack of appreciation about the urgency of the matter, or occasionally owing to personal pique.

One readily acknowledges that the limitations of a small developing state place heavy strains on its whole administrative organisation, especially when its expanding economy and social services demand ever-increasing attention to multiple and complex issues. For example, officials are expected to be multi-functional, to shoulder various tasks that in larger states are carried out by several officials with the

necessary support staff. Moreover Malta and Gozo are so small in area and population, and people and institutions are so near to each other, that local and national matters easily overlap. Yet within the next few years, local councils will be set up and, very probably, certain facilities and needs of education institutions will be administered by local councils.

Administrative demands are not lessened by longstanding attitudes and practices that are more attuned to a past, colonial administration rather than a young developing country. The prevailing civil service tendency to go strictly by the book and to play safe can be most frustrating, especially when the success of new ventures and development projects depends on new thinking, innovative approaches and an entrepreneurial mentality.

When communications are clear, personal relations healthy, and the importance of action appreciated, officials at all levels rise to the occasion and cooperate to find a quick and lasting solution. The personal and social dimensions of a small civil service in a small country play a most prominent role in the way individuals perform, some most conscientiously and efficiently. The phenomenon is very present in the educational service where, in spite of the limitations, the achievements are many and to the credit of a number of extraordinary individuals who have dedicated their lives to the service.

One must neither ignore nor minimise the difficulties under which the Maltese civil service operates. The Maltese educational system, like the larger body to which it belongs, is influenced by factors that condition its work and approach to most issues. Among these factors, which exert both positive and negative influences, one finds the colonial inheritance, the limitations of resources, the close personal relationships of the inhabitants of a micro-state, and increased social expectations.