



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS
in
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Prof Maurice Grech
Principal & CEO
Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology

Background:

COPENHAGEN, 2002

The Copenhagen Declaration endorsed by the education Ministers of 31 European countries, laid out the basis for European co-operation in Vocational Education and Training (VET).

The Copenhagen Declaration was the starting point of the Copenhagen Process.

The Copenhagen Process

The Copenhagen Process was developed within the perspective of lifelong learning, and aims to encourage individuals to make use of the wide range of vocational learning opportunities available, for example at school, in further and higher education, at the workplace, or through private studies.

In simple terms, **the Copenhagen Process** is a strategy for improving the performance, quality and attractiveness of VET.

There has been a review of the 2002 Copenhagen process every two years:

The first took place in Maastricht in 2004.

The second in Helsinki in 2006.

The latest review resulted in the adoption of the Bordeaux Communiqué in 2008.

MCAST

It is no coincidence that the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) was set up in 2001 with an aim to rationalizing post-16 education and training in Malta.

Various post-16 schools, such as the Fellenberg Institute from the 70s, the Art and Design Centre from the 80s, and others, formed part of this assimilation exercise, the benefits of which soon became evident.

MCAST moved from strength to strength and gathered the necessary momentum to become what is today one of the main pillars of education in Malta.

MCAST ...a more positive and more dynamic image of VET

A significant evidence in this regard is the steady increase in the number of learners who join MCAST year after year. Full-time students have now exceeded 5500. Vocational courses have topped 400.

October 2009 saw a 16.5% increase in the number of new students joining full-time courses.

Those attending short courses are over 4000.

Staff development

MCAST is also able to provide practical training to support teachers to deliver effectively.

The Teacher Training Unit enables all MCAST teaching staff to gain an internationally recognized Vocational Teacher Training Qualification.

A large number of staff is participating in other Continuous Professional Development programmes.

MCAST ... where all students can learn

MCAST believes that high academic standards are based on the principle that all students can learn.

The MCAST framework permits entry at various levels depending on qualifications and optional exits at various points into the world of work.

MCAST ... where all students can learn

Unconditionally, the College offers a new start to those who opt to leave school too early having completed their secondary education with no formal qualifications.

Equally so however it offers a learning opportunity to those with higher qualifications namely, matric and advanced matric.

MCAST has managed to raise the attainment levels of post-16 learners.

MCAST ... an opportunity platform

For MCAST, the diversity in learners' environments, upbringing, experiences, interests, motivations and learning styles, becomes an opportunity platform.

MCAST manages to homogenize groups of learners progressing through its scales with new recruits who possess stronger academic qualifications.

The college continually strives to offer an alternative educational experience.

Lifelong learning

The lifelong learning tools should enable users to link and build on learning acquired at various times, and in both formal and non-formal contexts.

MCAST is fully aware that what matters in the knowledge society is what citizens know and what they can do with their knowledge.

Collaboration with industry

MCAST enjoys an excellent record of close collaboration with industry. Enterprises must be able to adapt their activities to surroundings which are becoming more complex and are rapidly changing.

MCAST invites enterprises to specify their needs for staff and particular qualifications, present and future. This shall ensure that the training programmes we offer are relevant and up to date.

One excellent example is the introduction of new exciting courses relating to Aircraft (Structures, Composite Materials, Maintenance).

Priority Areas

In line with the Bordeaux recommendations, MCAST continues to be on the lookout

- to identify labour market needs and
- to develop the tools to anticipate skill needs as well as labour shortages.

MCAST shall do its utmost to anticipate the rapid pace of qualifications becoming obsolete, by creating a bridge between the College and workplace training and by developing adult training.

A National Qualifications Framework

MCAST shall continue to improve the transparency of its qualifications which are based on a learning-outcomes approach and quality assurance mechanisms.

The establishment of the Malta Qualification Framework shall facilitate transparency and transferability of qualifications.

Mobility

MCAST strongly believes in the benefits of mobility for both students and staff.

During the academic year numerous students and staff regularly benefit from exchanges on the Leonardo, Erasmus and other programmes of the European Union.

The total number of beneficiaries increases with each scholastic year.

Vocational Degrees

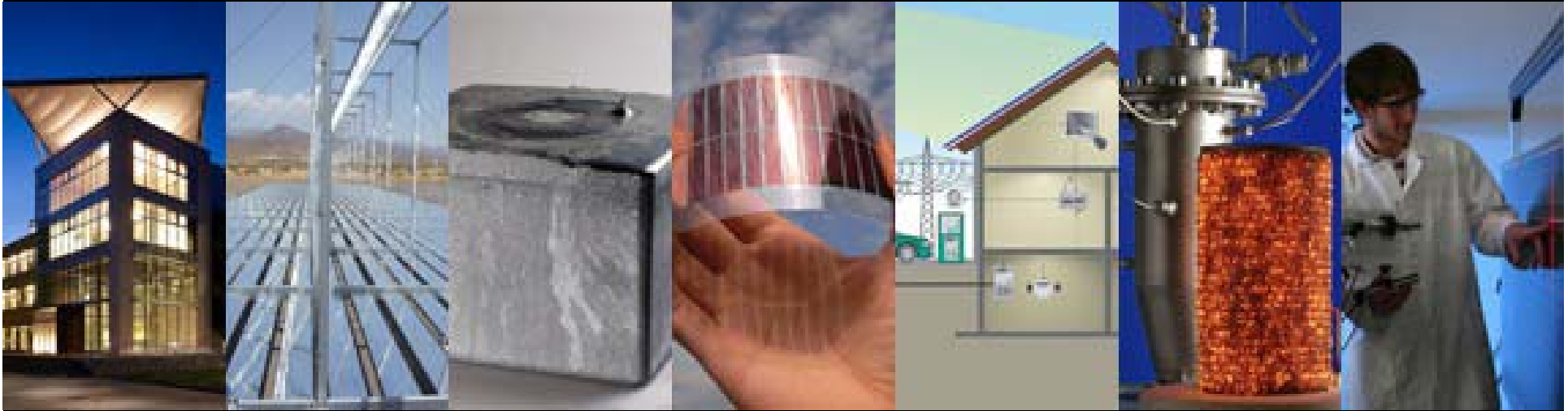
In September 2009, MCAST launched its first set of degree programmes (seven between BA Hons and BSc Hons) in four institutes.

These vocational degrees are specifically designed for students who successfully completed their Higher National Diploma, a BTEC Edexcel Level 5 qualification.

MCAST has secured professional help from Fraunhofer Gesellschaft, for the design, preparation of teaching material and delivery of these degree programmes.

Fraunhofer Gesellschaft

training with a practical focus



This renowned German institution specialises in research for industry with a practical application and works closely with universities across Germany.

MCAST Vocational Degrees

We were determined to maintain the highest standards and an appropriately high vocational content.

Entrepreneurship and research methodology are two study modules common to all degree programmes.



Fraunhofer Gesellschaft

Knowledge that connects
German Universities and Global Research

The college will continue to benefit from EU funding over the next three years, during which time Fraunhofer shall continue to provide teams of experts and professors for both the undergraduate programmes for students and the masters programmes for lecturing staff.



Masters for Staff...

Research at Fraunhofer Institutes

Over the next 2 years, five Master degree programmes will be offered to MCAST staff.

Over 30 staff members will be trained in specialist areas of application, such as Manufacturing Engineering, Plant Maintenance and Repair, Building Services, Health Care and Care Management.

All staff will receive tuition in research methodology and shall spend 3 months in Germany within Fraunhofer institutes and partner universities.

Research Capacity

MCAST is rapidly building its research capacity – facilities and human resource pool.

MCAST plans to be able to offer research and development support to the local industry and to participate more fully in research programmes.

Students are also encouraged to follow MCAST's philosophy in trying to be creative and to come up with innovative ideas which lend themselves well to practical applications.

Euroskills

With this aim in mind, MCAST Institutes often participate in competitions where they are able to present their work in public. MCAST students have been successful in both local and foreign competitions.

This year 3 out of the 5 MCAST's Euroskills participants placed 2nd in ICT and Electrical and Electronics.

International Contest for Young Scientist

Only a few weeks back, an MCAST student following the Diploma in Industrial Electronics won first prize in the International Contest for Young Scientists 2009 which was held in Paris.

Our student designed and built a “Cappuccino Logo Printer” which prints pre-defined images on the froth of a cappuccino.

Research Potential

MCAST is already participating in a number of research projects.

Participation in local and international research projects is however expected to increase rapidly as the undergraduate students population and number of staff with postgraduate qualifications and experience in research increase.

end of presentation

Thank you