



ESPN – Flash report

2015/18

**Linking formal education with vocational
experience: the “education +” initiative**

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Theme(s):	<i>Family policy, Children and Youth, Education</i>
Title:	Linking formal education with vocational experience: the "education +" initiative
Category:	<i>Policy formulation, Structural development in education</i>
Abstract:	<p>"education+" is a new initiative of the Ministry of Education, launched as part of the Government's Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2020, that is intended to develop and cultivate useful skills, attitudes and values among Malta's youth. It seeks to empower young people to become active citizens and be employable in a dynamic society. It marks a clear departure from traditional learning systems which were mainly classroom/ laboratory based.</p>
Description:	<p>"education+" seeks to bridge formal education with the world of work to provide learners with the opportunity to become familiar with the practical skills needed. It is aimed to give students in formal education an opportunity to gain work experience before the transition from their education to the labour market. The target of this initiative is "all learners", whatever the level of education they are following. It includes both compulsory education in all sectors as well as life-long-learning programmes.</p> <p>As such, the Ministry of Education is seeking to structure the opportunities learners have to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in society. This project, launched in January 2015, aims to improve students' learning experiences by encouraging creativity, critical literacy, entrepreneurship and innovation at all levels.</p> <p>This is done through tailor-made partnerships with industry and the service sectors, through which students are given the opportunity to involve themselves in a structured way in the world of work. In this way, students' engagement and motivation to explore what career they would be most interested in can be actively cultivated; learning is not undertaken in a vacuum in schools and training centres, but is related to real situations and cater for specific needs.</p> <p>The programme also helps teachers to gain exposure to the constantly changing needs of business and work contexts. Experiences are credited for academic purposes.</p> <p>Participating entities are encouraged to contribute to this initiative as an aspect of their corporate social responsibility. Two-year contracts are envisaged for each such participation. The contracts will be managed by the Ministry which will act as a clearing house for all available "placements".</p>

Outlook & Commentary:	<p>This initiative essentially gives a structural form to a number of independent initiatives that had linked education and the world of work in various sectors in Malta and develops them further. Placements in technical subjects and in areas like social work, medicine and others at tertiary level have long been in existence. This initiative is different in that it encourages corporations, business enterprises and NGOs to make space for students to be exposed to their working environment on a much wider area and through a definitive contractual commitment.</p> <p>Already this new initiative has been bearing some fruit: students are being given the opportunity to be placed within the public broadcasting system, in the armed forces, in a number of companies and public corporations and Authorities such as the Malta Communications Authority. Some of these opportunities resulted from this specific initiative. Microsoft's agreement to provide software for learners in Malta at discounted prices has been incorporated under the umbrella of this initiative. A set of eleven agreements are almost finalised. This is only the beginning of the implementation and it is expected that this will grow substantially in the months and years ahead.</p> <p>No specific method of evaluation has yet been devised. But officials responsible for the implementation of education+ say that these will be developed, and would need to be tailor-made for each type of agreement.</p> <p>The business and commercial community has welcomed the initiative through the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Industry.</p> <p>Formal evaluation is too early, but the new centralised structure should ensure that opportunities for work experience are evenly distributed through the educational system. It should benefit both learners and educators by giving them the opportunity to be closer to what market demands are.</p>
Further reading:	<p>Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024: http://education.gov.mt/en/Pages/Plus.aspx</p> <p>Collaborative Partnerships: http://education.gov.mt/plus/Pages/Collaborative-Partnerships.aspx</p>
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