

The School to Work Transition of Young People in Malta

Results of a study among young people looking for work

Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
Business Development Division
Employment and Training Corporation (Malta)

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Executive Summary

Background

The 1990s have seen the percentage of gainfully employed youths drop to a level of 49.6%. This drop must be seen in the context of the increasing number of young people pursuing post-secondary education complemented by the rise in the unemployment rate of young people. Youth unemployment in Malta has risen these past years. In view of this problem government advocates that educational attainment must be sustained and improved upon by addressing the skills shortages particularly in the I.T. and construction industry, certain professions as well as in the middle management sector. Youth unemployment is also a problem within the EU. It is the EU's policy to upgrade labour skills and support in order to offer low-skilled workers a route out of unemployment and to reach the Lisbon targets.

Objectives

The project commissioned by the ETC focuses on how youths experience the school to work transition. It aims to :

- review the opportunities available to youths in their transition from education to work;
- identify the main factors that influence job aspirations and choices;
- evaluate the adequacy of training available for the jobs on offer; and
- identify programmes which can make the school to work transition smoother.

Methods

The project methodology involves collection of data in different forms from different players. It consisted of: a literature review on the school to work transition; an analysis of the tracer studies done by the Education Division over a ten year period; interviews with key players in post-secondary education; focus group interviews with youths at different points and paths of their school to work transition; interviews with employers and a survey with 500 youths who have undergone the school to work transition. The study was carried out during the period 2001-2003.

The main findings

There were a number of significant findings with respect to the school to work transition in Malta. The main findings were the following:

- *The type of secondary school that a young person attends will determine to a great degree the type of path followed.* Both from the tracer studies and the questionnaire it was found that those students in Area Secondary school tend to stop at compulsory education, moving to factory or elementary types of jobs. Many of them end their education without any qualifications. Students in Junior Lyceum, Church and Independent schools had a greater chance to continue with post-secondary Education;
- *The provision of guidance in secondary schools tends to be biased towards the academic path.* The different sources of data collected show that often guidance teachers are concerned with the subjects that students choose and often assume that all the students intend to follow the general education path. Secondary students get very little information about the opportunities within the vocational post-secondary system and how the different apprenticeship schemes work. Preparation for the actual world of work is very little;
- *Schools are still detached from the world of work.* Young persons are not learning how to deal with situations that may arise when at work and how to face them and so they feel vulnerable when they start working, ending up either being too aggressive or else allowing their employers and/or colleagues to take advantage;
- *Preparation of young persons for the world of work:* Whereas academically it appears that young persons are of quite a good quality, there is much to be desired with respect to soft skills;

- *Work opportunities for 16-18 year olds are few.* The reasons for this situation include: too young and immature; lack work experience; and have little or no qualifications;
- *Young persons appear to make the transition from school to work smoothly.* About half of the young people in the survey just moved from school to the workplace and stayed there. The amount of job mobility of young persons during their transition is overall low;
- *Few young persons have endorsed the concept of lifelong learning.* Less than one third of the respondents in the survey stated that they wished to have further training;
- *Employers have a very limited role within the present education system.* The way through which employers are currently involved in the

school to work transition is often limited to sponsoring workplaces to apprentices and summer jobs;

- *There is a number of young persons who have the initiative and willingness to be self-employed.* In certain cases young persons complained that in their post-secondary course they were only being prepared to work as an employee and not to be self-employed.

Although it appears that the transition is smooth for most young people in that they do not appear that they have problems settling down at work, one must also ensure that they have been well informed when making their choices. It is not only a question of getting used to work but that young persons are working within the full potential of their capabilities. Based on these findings, a number of recommendations are made.

Chapter 1

The project aimed at studying the factors that influence youth's work aspirations, choices and opportunities that are available to them.

Introduction

The 1990's have seen the percentage of gainfully employed Maltese young persons (under 25s) drop to a level of 49.6%. This drop has to be seen in the context of the increasing number of young people who are pursuing post-secondary education complemented by the rise in the unemployment rate of young people (Ministry for Social Policy, 2001). Whereas in 1990, 56% of young people completing secondary school opted to further their studies, this figure has risen to 69% by 2002. This is especially pronounced in females where this percentage has grown from 48% to 74% during this period (Ministry for Social Policy, 2001).

Youth unemployment has also risen during the same period from 4.4% in 1994 to 6% in 2000. This rise is similar for both males and females. The Employment and Training Corporation, with its role of promoting education and training is concerned with how Maltese young persons experience the transition from school to work.

1.1 What were the objectives of this research?

The project aimed to study the opportunities available to youths and the main factors that influence their job aspirations and choices. It also looked into the adequacy of their training for the jobs on offer, and identified programmes that can make their transition smoother, and at the same time offering them more job opportunities.

The terms of reference of the project were to:

- review the openings at post-secondary level offered by the various educational institutions, and the types of guidance and counselling available;
- draw up a profile of the qualifications that students have obtained from educational institutions over the past ten years prior to commencing their employment;
- identify the main factors for which parents opt to

apply for exemption from school for their children before the age of 16;

- review local legislation as well as international obligations that deal with education and employment of young people;
- review local literature concerning the main factors affecting students' career choice;
- identify young people's perceptions and judgments on the various career paths available and what has helped or hindered them in making their choices;
- evaluate the role of guidance and counselling in determining career decisions;
- outline employers' perceptions and judgments about the adequacy and relevance of the qualifications and skills of young people entering the labour market today, and to estimate their willingness to employ young people without experience; and
- put forward recommendations which address the structure and provision of education, guidance and training services in Malta, with a view towards enhancing the employability of young people, and to identify further research that may be pertinent to the employment of youths.

1.2 What do we mean by the school to work transition?

Before we move on to discussing the main issues that emerge from this research it is important to first look at what we consider as the meaning of 'school to work transition' and to review literature on this issue that will be relevant to the findings of this study.

One of the roles of education is to prepare young persons for the world of work. The move from education to working life is not an easy or straightforward one, nor does it happen overnight. Marchetti *et al.* (2001) define the transition from school to work as

'a time process leading from the educational system to a relatively stable position in the employment system' (p.8).

Transition is a dynamic process whereby a person moves from the education system to a relatively stable working status. The young worker gradually gains experience in the labour market and transforms knowledge acquired through educational training into working skills.

Marchetti *et al.* cite Garonna & Ryan (1989) as identifying three ways in which young people may be integrated into the economy:

Regulated inclusion: This refers to training acquired through alternance training (apprenticeship). During the apprenticeship period the young person gains both the general and specific skills necessary to practice the trade and gain experience of the workplace and its use. In this type of inclusion, certification allows admission to the corresponding occupational market. Pay is linked to the qualifications of the individual. Qualified young persons are integrated without being classified and forms of training offered match fairly closely the supply of jobs. The risk of youth unemployment among diploma holders is roughly the same as for adults.

Selective exclusion: Employees enter the labour

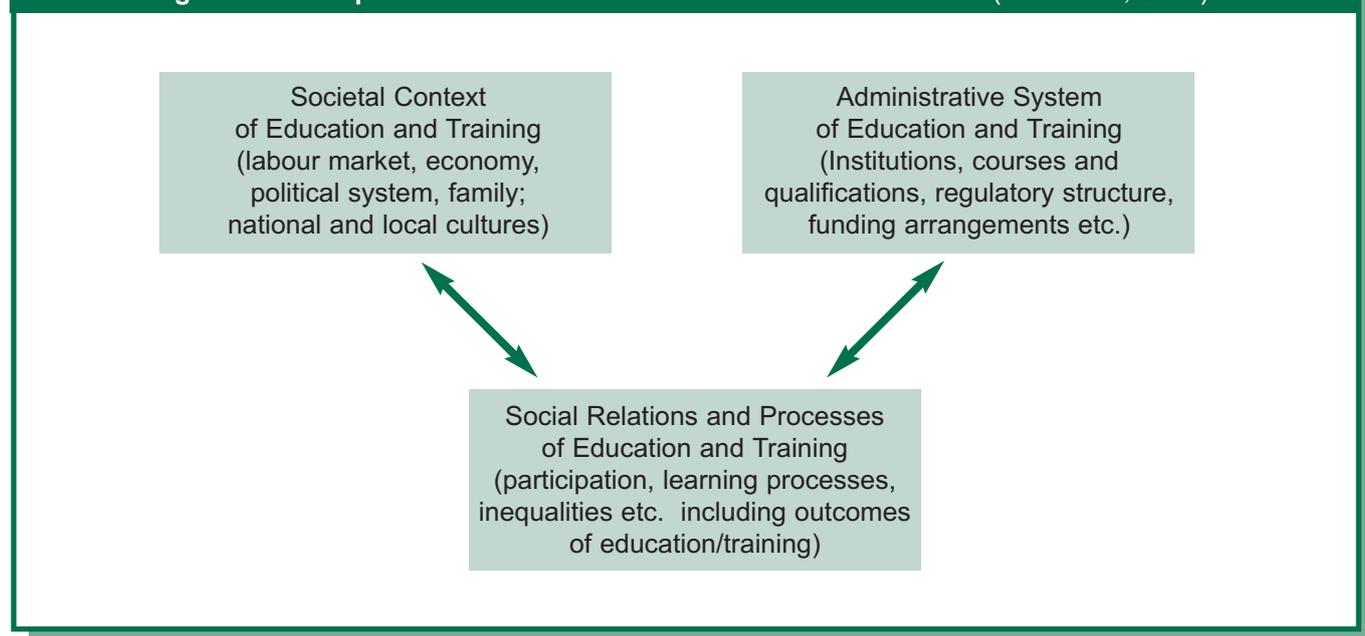
market at the bottom and progress gradually through length of service and internal promotion. Skills are not transferable and pay levels are associated with the positions occupied, not the characteristics of the individuals occupying these posts. Labour market entrants are at a disadvantage in gaining access to these internal markets. Those holding diplomas or titles as well as an accumulation of work experience already acquired elsewhere tend to be at the forefront of the queue to access these internal markets.

Competitive regulation: This happens when employers look for short-term profitability when there is high unemployment. In such circumstances they may choose to recruit young people on lower wages rather than adult wage-learners.

Raffe *et al.* (2001) put forward a conceptual framework within which the school-to-work transition takes place. They identify: the societal context of education and training which includes the labour market; the political system, family structure and other aspects; and education as the administrative system.

Raffe *et al.* (2001) argue that social relations and processes of education are shaped by the administrative system of education on the one hand, and by features of the societal context such as the labour market and family relations on the other hand. These two systems influence each other resulting in them being interdependent. Since school-to-work transitions are part of the social relations of education, they are shaped both by national institutional structures and by their social context.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the school to work transition (Raffe *et al.*, 2001).



In comparing transitions across Europe, Raffae *et al.* (2001) identify four dimensions of variation in education and training systems that are important in shaping transitions to employment:

- the standardisation of education provision and qualifications;
- the extent and nature of differentiation within the education system and relatively, the strength and occupational specificity of the vocational track;
- the strength of linkages between school and work; and
- the scale and organisation of work-based provision.

A structured differentiated education system facilitates the transition from school to work. A number of educators, however, argue that the differentiation in provision is a means of maintaining social organisation that limits the life chances of particular social groups (Sahvit & Muller, 2000). Whereas middle class and upper class children attend tracks that lead to the professions through higher education, lower class children are more likely to be placed in vocational tracks that reduce their chances to attend a University later on. Educational institutions are faced with the dilemma of equalising the life chances of their students on the one hand and of preparing young people for positions in a differentiated labour market. This leads to the differentiation of school curricula by type of skills required and which also leads to different social destinations.

Models of school to work transitions

The phrase 'School-to-work transition' tends to imply one direct path for all young people from the classroom to the workplace. This is not actually the case with a possible number of variations about how this transition takes place. Rogers *et al.* (1995), in a comparison exercise of school to work transition reform initiatives in the U.S. state that other variations than the standard completing school and then entering full-time employment exist. They list the various paths to include:

- young people completing High School (compulsory education) and seeking full-time employment;
- those who enter the workforce and go on to receive employer-provided training;
- those who work and continue their education simultaneously;
- those who complete relatively new programs and then enter the workforce or go on to post-secondary education;

- those who enter the labour force for a number of years and then return for additional post-secondary education or training; and
- Students who participate in a range of high school programs that link education to work regardless of whether the students are anticipating continued education or entry into the workplace.

One should also include those who drop out of school before compulsory education, many of whom will be caught up in an inescapable world of poverty due to very limited job and career prospects. Roberts *et al.* (1995) indicate that such young persons tend to move from job to job, usually in the service sector of the economy where they find jobs that are low skilled, poorly paid, and offer few opportunities for further training and advancement.

Transition trends

A report conducted by the OECD (2000) on the school to work transition provides a framework of basic goals that all transition policies should aim for. These were listed to include:

- high proportions of young people completing a full upper secondary education with a recognised qualification for either work, tertiary study or both;
- high levels of knowledge and skill among young people at the end of the transition phase;
- a low proportion of teenagers being at the one time not in education and unemployed;
- a high proportion of those young adults who have left education having a job;
- few young people remaining unemployed for lengthy period after leaving education;
- stable and positive employment and educational histories in the years after leaving upper-secondary education; and
- an equitable distribution of outcomes by gender, social background and region. (OECD, 2000)

The report also notes that participation in initial education has risen, although in some countries rates of under-qualification remain high among young adults. The study reports that the number of unemployed teenagers is quite small in many OECD countries. There has also been a significant reduction in youth to adult unemployment. There was also an improvement in the proportion of young people who are neither in education nor in work. Young workers have also experienced declines in earning relative to older workers. The transition has also tended to be longer, this being

by two years between the 1980's and the late 1990's. The longer transition is due to increasing proportions of young people completing a full upper secondary education rather than dropping out after compulsory education.

There has also been a rise in the time it takes for young people to settle into work after leaving initial education. This can be related to difficult labour markets and/or young people's attitudes and values, desire to travel etc. Young persons, nowadays tend more to combine their studies with work, partly due to more apprenticeship schemes, but also to having part-time and summer jobs. The transition has become less sharp and sudden than it once was.

Key features of effective transition systems

The Thematic review (OECD, 2000) highlights a set of key ingredients of successful transition systems. These are:

- A healthy economy: Sound transition outcomes are easier to achieve when wealth is high and rising and when overall unemployment is low. Economies in which national wealth is high or increasing can afford to invest more in the education of young persons;
- Well organised pathways that connect initial education with work and further study: It is important for pathways to be as flexible as possible;
- Widespread opportunities to combine work place experience with education. The more opportunities there are for young people to train within enterprises under wage arrangements the better is the transition;
- Tightly knit safety nets for those at risk: It is important to have institutional arrangements to support particular groups that may be at risk such as early school leavers;
- Good information and guidance: The more flexible the possible pathways become, the more guidance young people need. There will be more need for career planning and personal and career development; and
- Effective transitions and processes: There is no one transition model. One thing in common is that societies assume responsibility for young people's transition from education to work and consequently make concentrated efforts.

1.3 What was the methodology adopted?

It was decided to gather a combination of data from different sources and in different ways, both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative aspect mainly looked at overall trends of transition paths taken and related issues. The qualitative part provided in-depth knowledge of the process. The following method of data collection was adopted:

- Analysis of legislation, both local and international;
- Review of opportunities of training at post-secondary level;
- Analysis of the tracer studies carried out by the Education Division over the period 1990-2001;
- Interviews with key persons involved in the preparation of students undergoing or about to undergo the school to work transition;
- Group interviews with specific groups of young people at different stages of the school to work transition;
- Interviews with employers about the employment of young people;
- Survey carried out with young people who have undergone the school to work transition.

Analysis of legislation

This part of the research consisted of two main parts. The first part involved a review of local legislation and official documents. Documents reviewed included the Constitution of Malta (1964), the Education Act (1988) and the National Minimum Curriculum (1999). The second part focused on the employment policies of the EU member states. All documents were reviewed and references to initiatives aimed at helping young people enter the job market were identified. A comparative analysis of these initiatives across the countries was then carried out.

Review of opportunities

This part focused specifically on the local situation. It consisted of a review of the opportunities of further education and training open to young people on completion of compulsory education. Focus was placed on both the identification of educational institutions offering general post-secondary education as well as post-secondary vocational education. The provision of further education as evening courses was also included. This data was gathered mainly through the various

web sites of post-secondary institutions together with information supplied by the Education Division.

Analysis of the tracer studies

The Education Division carries out a research exercise annually where it collects data from all school leavers. The exercise enables the Education Division to know what young people decide to do on completion of compulsory education. The scope of this exercise in this research project was to identify changes in trends over a ten year period in terms of :

- How many of the school leavers decide to further their studies at post-secondary level;
- The different types of post-secondary education chosen, that is how many opt for general education as against vocational education;
- The paths chosen by students who have attended the different types of secondary schools (Junior Lyceum or Area Secondary, Church or Independent)

The Guidance Unit within the Education Division kindly supplied data for the years 1990-2001 and trends over this period were worked out through a statistical analysis exercise.

Interviews with key persons

Interviews with key persons involved in the school to work transition process were carried out. Data was collected about how local education institutions view the transition process and how they prepare young people for this transition.

The interviews were semi-structured and informal. The main issues tackled involved discussing:

- the way in which the institution/organisation views the school to work transition;
- what initiatives the institution/organisation takes in order to help young persons to undergo a smooth transition;
- what types of links exist between the institutions/organisations and prospective employers of young people;
- the level and type of participation of employers in the preparation of young persons for the transition to work;
- the type of career guidance provided and at what stage of the training/education;
- whether there exist any form of support to young people in the first years of their work experience.

The key persons interviewed included: the Director of Post-secondary Education at the Education Division;

the Assistant Director in charge of guidance and Counselling at the Education Division; the Principal at MCAST; the Head of Guidance at the Guidance Unit, MCAST; the Principal at the School of hairdressing; the head of Guidance at the Junior College; the Chief executive or his designate at the Employment and Training Corporation; the Acting Senior Manager of the Employment Services Division at ETC and the Senior Manager of the Training Services Division at ETC.

The questions were adapted according to whether the person interviewed came from the educational or employment sector.

Focus group discussions

Group interviews were conducted with a number of young persons at different stages and within different paths of the school to work transition. The various focus groups identified included the following:

- students attending general post-secondary education at the Junior College;
- students attending vocational post-secondary education (ITS and MCAST);
- young persons who started working on completion of compulsory education;
- school leavers who do not wish to pursue further studies and are registering for work; and
- students following tertiary education.

The interviews were semi-structured. Groups of 5-7 young people were interviewed together in each group. Wherever possible, the groups were either only boys or only girls. It was not, however, always possible to organise this and some groups were mixed. In total 13 interviews were carried out. In many cases, the school's Head was contacted and permission was sought to conduct the interviews. The choice of students was left at the discretion of the school. Each interview took between 30 and 45 minutes to complete.

Questions used to raise points for discussion during these interviews included aspects of the school to work transition, aspirations with respect to work and difficulties and concerns which they face. In the first part of the interview the group members were asked to give some background information about themselves, mainly the type of secondary school attended, their village of residence and their parents' occupation. The discussion then focused on the provision of career guidance at secondary level. Specific questions asked included:

- do guidance teachers give you a good overview of the options of work available?
- did the guidance teachers provide enough

- support and advice on a personal level?
- were you prepared well for the challenges of going out to work?
- were you taught competencies such as writing a C.V., filling in application forms etc. that are required in order to find work?

The discussion then focused on the work aspect of the transition. The questions were adapted according to the stage and type of group of young persons being interviewed. The main questions included:

- have you had any experience of work so far?
- at what age did you have your first work experience?
- what were the difficulties that you encountered?
- do you feel that you were prepared to face the demands made at work?
- would you like any form of support during your first years of work experience?
- do you feel prepared to deal with problems at work such as abuse, not being paid for over time etc.?
- do you feel that guidance teachers help you in learning how to find a job and how to deal with problems on the job?
- is there any particular training that you would like to have and which you think would prepare you better to face the challenges at work?

Interviews with employers

Employers are eventually those who provide work to young persons. It is not easy to be offered a job if one is without experience. It is therefore of interest to this study to get the employers' perspective when dealing with employing young persons, often their first time job.

In order to obtain as wide a spectrum as possible, it was decided to carry out a total of 33 interviews overall. 11 different types of economic sectors were identified and for each sector, a small, medium and large enterprise was identified. The public service was not included with the list of employers. The different sectors identified include: HealthCare; Construction; Retail; Manufacturing (large); Manufacturing (Medium); Manufacturing (small); Tourism; Financial Services; Professional services; I.T.; and Public Utilities such as Water Service Corporation, EneMalta, and Maltacom.

The individual employers were selected from a random sample of employers for each economic sector. Care was taken to choose small, medium and large size employers for each category where this was possible. The interviews were semi-structured and involved dis-

cussing various aspects related to employing young persons. The first part of the interview involved getting some background data of the enterprise represented in the study. Questions then targeted young persons directly, such as: their strengths and weaknesses; the most common/most recent positions to which they are usually recruited; the criteria used during recruitment and the degree of importance given to different attributes; issues related to managing the younger members of the workforce; turnover in the workforce aged between 16 and 25; the type of continuous vocational training offered to young persons; their opinion of apprenticeship schemes; and the role that government/employers should have in the school to work transition.

Survey with young persons

The survey was designed such that it would provide data on the types of different transition paths and the factors relating to how young people face this aspect of adulthood.

The questionnaire was subdivided into four sections. The first section dealt with personal details such as gender, age and state. It also requested information about parents' employment, place of residence, participation in clubs and voluntary work and whether they have or intend to take a loan for a specific purpose.

The second section targeted the respondents' education background and asked about the highest level of education, specific qualifications obtained and training courses attended. It also had items asking specifically on apprenticeship schemes and on whether the respondent intends to further his or her personal development through training courses.

The third section focused on the role of guidance and counselling in career choice and asked directly about the level of preparation and support provided by guidance teachers at secondary level with respect to job prospects and to the range of opportunities open to students on finishing compulsory education. Finally respondents were asked to list the most influential people in their choice of studies.

The last and fourth section focused on work experience and made up a big section of the questionnaire. It requested information about current employment, and how they got to know about the job opportunity, to list other previous work experience and to provide specific details about each one. Some of the items asked whether the young persons had ever been unemployed and for how long. The last few items of the questionnaire targeted the respondents' aspirations.

The questionnaire was designed such that it could be self-administered by young people with post-secondary level of education and administered with the help of an interviewee in the case of young people with a lower level of education.

The questionnaire was shown to an expert in vocational education in order to provide content validity. It was then piloted in order to test for its face validity and the respondents' ability to complete the items included. The questionnaire was piloted with 18 persons. 6 persons were asked to fill the questionnaire by themselves, another 6 were interviewed face to face (these had only up to compulsory education), and another 6 were interviewed over the phone. The last group ranged throughout all the different levels of educational background.

The results of the piloting showed that respondents did not find any particular difficulty in completing the questionnaire when self-administered, face-to-face, or over the phone. An analysis of the replies when self-administered showed consistency in the replies given, adding to its validity. The interviews did not raise any problems.

The sample was worked out based on recent statistics (1999-2001) from the tracer studies such that it would be representative of young persons in the different transition paths in Malta. In addition, ETC expressed a concern with those young people who were either registering for work or listed under the category others. In view of this the number of respondents within this category was increased. Young persons opting to follow tertiary education were left out of the sample as they are not of current concern to ETC.

The survey was administered to 497 young persons who had undergone the school to work transition. They thus needed to have a minimum of one year experience of stable work (full or part time) and to fit into the categories listed in table 1.

The various types of data collected in the different ways are aimed to provide a holistic picture of how young people in Malta experience the transition from school to work, the main factors which determine the path chosen, the support structures in place and how these young people can be helped to undergo this transition in the best way possible.

Table 1: Survey sample – representative of young persons in different STW paths

Transition Path followed	Number of Respondents
Youth who attended post-secondary school	143
Youth who attended trade school	36
Youth who attended Technical Institute	29
Youth who attended I.T.S.	12
Youth who attended School of Hairdressing	7
Youth who attended Secretarial School	7
Youth who took a course in healthcare	19
Those who started working following compulsory education	143
Young people registering for work	50
Others: these include those who were neither registering for work nor working	51
TOTAL	497

Chapter 2

The transition from school to work of Maltese youth differs by the education level obtained and the type of school attended among other factors.

The Transition Process: overall trends

This chapter focuses on the choices that young Maltese persons are making at the end of compulsory education and consequently in the types of jobs they eventually end up in. This information was mainly collated from the tracer studies carried out by the Education Division and the responses obtained in the tracer studies.

2.1 How many young persons decide to attend post-secondary education?

The percentage of school leavers continuing their studies on completion of compulsory education has increased steadily. The last ten years have seen the percentage grow from 56% in 1990 to 69% in 2002. The number of students opting for work straightway has decreased during the last years, especially from 1997 onwards where the percentage fell to 16% when previously it had fluctuated between 28-30%. The number of school-leavers opting to continue with their education has consequently increased. The category of students under 'other' has also increased but levels

off at around 16%. This category refers to school leavers who have either decided to stay at home or are looking for work. The fact that more young persons are opting for post-secondary education shows that the school to work transition in Malta is becoming longer. This is in line with the trends identified in the OECD report (2000) that also notes a longer transition for the countries reviewed.

Gender differences

The percentage of boys who opt to continue studying beyond compulsory age has grown gradually since 1990 but has levelled off at around 65%. The percentage of girls has shown a greater growth since the 1990's where the percentage has grown from 55% to 74% in 2002. Students from mixed schools who continue their education at post secondary level went up very quickly. It appears that parents who are willing to pay hefty fees for their children to attend these schools, also encourage their children to keep on studying beyond the age of 16. The percentage has grown to over 80% since 1997, this percentage being about 20% higher than the other school types.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of students opting for education, work and 'other' after compulsory education.

Year	Education		Work		Others	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1990	1961	56	1102	31	353	10
1991	2554	63	1081	27	479	10
1992	2653	60	1237	27	599	13
1993	2652	60	1085	25	627	14
1994	2790	61	1292	28	538	12
1995	2734	58	1318	28	643	14
1997	2387	65	861	20	616	15
1998	3189	67	903	19	698	15
1999	3496	66	961	18	845	16
2000	3369	65	957	19	852	17
2001	3392	67	830	17	818	16
2002	3491	69	782	16	774	15

Table 3: Number and percentage of students from girls', boys' and mixed schools opting to further their education after compulsory schooling.

Year	Male		Female		Mixed		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1990	1027	52	934	48	-	-	1961	50
1991	1435	57	1108	43	-	-	2543	50
1992	1417	65	1205	55	31	22	2653	59
1993	1461	67	1165	56	26	30	2652	61
1994	1498	67	1256	56	36	25	2790	61
1995	1485	63	1206	52	47	39	2734	58
1997	1168	60	1560	69	59	69	2787	65
1998	1497	65	1671	68	78	94	3246	67
1999	1706	65	1708	66	82	80	3496	60
2000	1616	62	1634	67	119	83	3369	65
2001	1580	65	1674	67	138	91	3392	67
2002	1658	64	1678	74	155	88	3491	69

School differences

There are differences in the percentage of young persons opting for continuing with their education according to the type of secondary school attended. The percentage is highest for students from Church Schools, followed by Junior Lyceums. It is also high for independent schools. A significantly smaller percentage of students from Area Secondary Schools decide to stay on at school.

In the case of Junior Lyceum the percentage has not fluctuated much during the last ten years even though a slight increase, from 76% in 1990 to 80.8% in 2000 can be noted. A different pattern is obtained for students attending Area Secondary Schools with the per-

centage decreasing and falling drastically to 25.1% in 2000. This downward trend is difficult to explain. One possible explanation may be the consequence of the Junior Lyceum examination becoming less rigorous with time and so more academically oriented students are admitted in Junior Lyceums, leaving only the really weak students attending Area Secondary Schools. The majority of students attending Church and Independent schools continue with their studies beyond compulsory secondary education. The percentage has been high throughout the last ten years but it has also grown slightly. These statistics show clearly that the type of secondary school attended predetermines to a great extent the probability of whether students stay on at school or not on completion of compulsory education.

Table 4 : Number and percentage of students in education from different school types

Year	Junior Lyceum		Church & Independent		Area Secondary		Trade	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1990	803	76	730	72	175	36	230	18
1991	1007	76	903	77	164	35	450	35
1992	1235	76	872	83	156	25	358	39
1993	1160	76	895	86	140	24	430	45
1994	1132	71	1044	84	152	22	426	47
1995	1143	75	1026	78	188	21	330	45
1997	1310	84	933	88	265	32	271	42
1998	1374	87.3	1300	93	375	31.4	193	34.9
1999	1413	82.6	1398	80.4	314	28.4	291	42.8
2000	1435	80.8	1420	91.6	289	25.1	219	40.9

2.2 What are the options available on completion of compulsory education?

Age 16 is a crucial stage for young persons as it marks the end of compulsory schooling. At this point they need to decide whether they would like to start looking for work straight away or to continue their education. In the latter case, the issue would be whether to follow a general or vocational path, and in either case, which option within this path.

The possible paths open to young people following the end of compulsory education include:

- going out to work straight away;
- going out to work but continuing studies privately or by attending evening courses;
- choosing a post-secondary vocational course at MCAST, I.T.S. or in healthcare;
- choosing a post-secondary general education course leading to entry into university: Junior College, Higher secondary or Church/private sixth Forms;
- registering for work;
- idle, that is not working, not registering for work or attending a post-secondary educational institution.

Obviously one will also find those young persons who start in one path and for various reasons switch from one option to another. In this chapter, however, only the main paths will be considered. The different paths are represented in figure 2.

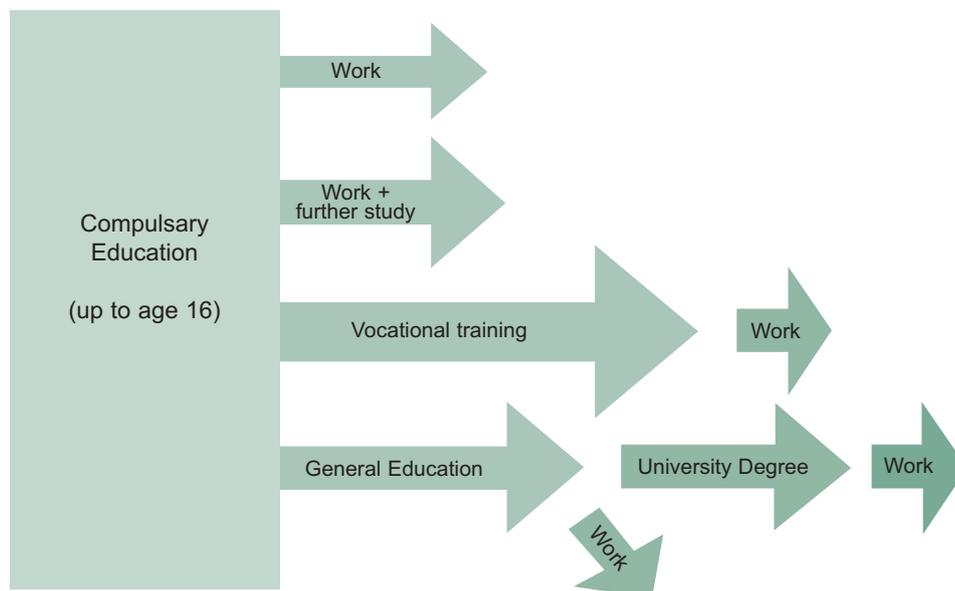
Options to young persons choosing to further their studies

Over 60% of 16 year old persons decide to continue studying beyond compulsory schooling. As already highlighted, post-secondary education can be divided into two main strands: the general strand and the vocational strand. The general strand provides courses leading to entry into University and runs between ages 16-18 years. Vocational training is more job-oriented and often includes a high component of work-related training that eventually leads to employment. Courses range in the number of years and often extend beyond the age of 18.

The post-secondary general strand consists of two years of study at sixth form level where students study for the MATSEC Certificate Course in accordance with University's General Entry requirements. Successful completion of the course provides certification for entry into University. The University Junior College, and Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary provide sixth form education. Some Church and Private Sixth Form Colleges also provide this type of education. The Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School is slightly different in that it also offers revision courses in the Secondary level Certificate (SEC) and a number of advanced level subjects to students who have not obtained entry requirements for sixth form but have the intention to do so once they obtain the necessary qualifications.

Vocational Upper-Secondary education is currently being restructured such that it is contained under one

Figure 2: Paths available to young persons on completion of post-secondary education



umbrella. This is being done through the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), re-established in October 2001 for this purpose. MCAST currently has nine institutes.

The OECD (2000) report shows that broad vocational pathways prepare young people better for changing labour markets. The establishment of MCAST has brought the various post-secondary vocational institutions in Malta together under one umbrella. One has now to see how courses change as MCAST evolves and grows in size and in importance.

2.3 What types of post-secondary education do young persons opt for?

A further analysis involves tracing the type of post-secondary education that students from the different types of secondary schools attend. This exercise serves to trace whether specific school types act as feeders to particular post-secondary institutions. Post-secondary education can be divided into three main strands:

- **General:** Junior College, Paolino Vassallo, Private Sixth forms and Higher Secondary;
- **Technical:** Fellenberg, Technical Institute, Agricultural College, Art and Design, Nautical School and Trade Schools; and
- **Vocational:** Maria Theresa (Pre-vocational) School, School of Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy, Secretarial School, Institute of Tourism Studies, Institute of Health Care and Centre of

Preschool Education.

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) has not been included as it was not as yet set up in the years for which data is available. The institutions have been grouped in the same way as they were presented in the tracer studies.

Not only are there differences across school types in the percentage of students opting to stay on at school at post-compulsory level, but also in the type of post-secondary strand chosen. The majority of Junior Lyceum students opt for the general education path that eventually leads to tertiary education. The percentage has consistently remained above 75% for all years. Unlike Junior Lyceum Schools, a smaller percentage of students in Area Secondary Schools follow the general education strand. When one considers that a small percentage of students in Area Secondary Schools attend post-secondary education and that only half of these few students pursue the academic strand, it appears that the school type in this case will have a degree of influence on the career decisions taken. The large majority of students from private schools follow the academic route, the percentage averaging around 90% and being more or less consistent over the years. When one considers that the majority of students from private schools stay on at school after compulsory age, and then the majority of these follow the general education strand, then it can be concluded that the majority of students from private schools follow nearly exclusively this route. Practically nearly none of the students from trade schools manage to cross over to the general education track.

Table 5: Percentage of students continuing post-secondary education opting for general education track.

Year	Junior Lyceum		Church & Independent		Area Secondary		Trade	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1992	945	79.0	748	89.0	67	43.8	1	0.02
1993	978	85.4	863	88.5	38	60.3	0	0.00
1994	863	76.2	1031	92.1	44	36.4	0	0.00
1995	941	82.3	929	92.1	62	38.0	0	0.00
1997	1067	83.8	824	91.9	111	53.4	1	0.40
1998	1103	80.3	1143	87.9	205	53.2	0	0.00
1999	1199	80.3	1260	90.5	220	60.1	3	1.00
2000	1168	81.4	1278	91.2	172	53.6	3	1.40

Table 6: Students from different school types opting for technical and vocational track.

Year	Junior Lyceum		Church & Independent		Area Secondary		Trade	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1992	252	27.2	92	11	86	56.2	355	99.0
1993	168	14.6	112	12.1	117	75.5	429	100.0
1994	270	23.8	88	7.9	77	63.6	423	99.8
1995	202	17.6	80	7.9	101	61.9	334	99.8
1997	204	16.2	73	8.1	97	46.7	255	99.6
1998	271	19.7	157	12.1	180	46.8	192	100.0
1999	294	19.7	132	9.3	146	39.9	288	99.0
2000	267	18.6	124	8.8	149	46.4	216	97.3

If one looks at the percentage of students proceeding to vocational and technical post-secondary education, it can be observed that half of the students from Area Secondary Schools who stay on at school attend this strand. The percentage is much smaller, just at 18.6%, for Junior Lyceum students. The percentage is even much smaller in the case of Church and Independent schools with only 8.8%. On the other hand, the percentage is very high in the case of trade schools where practically students from secondary level trade schools move on to post-secondary trade schools. Secondary level trade schools, however, have since been phased out.

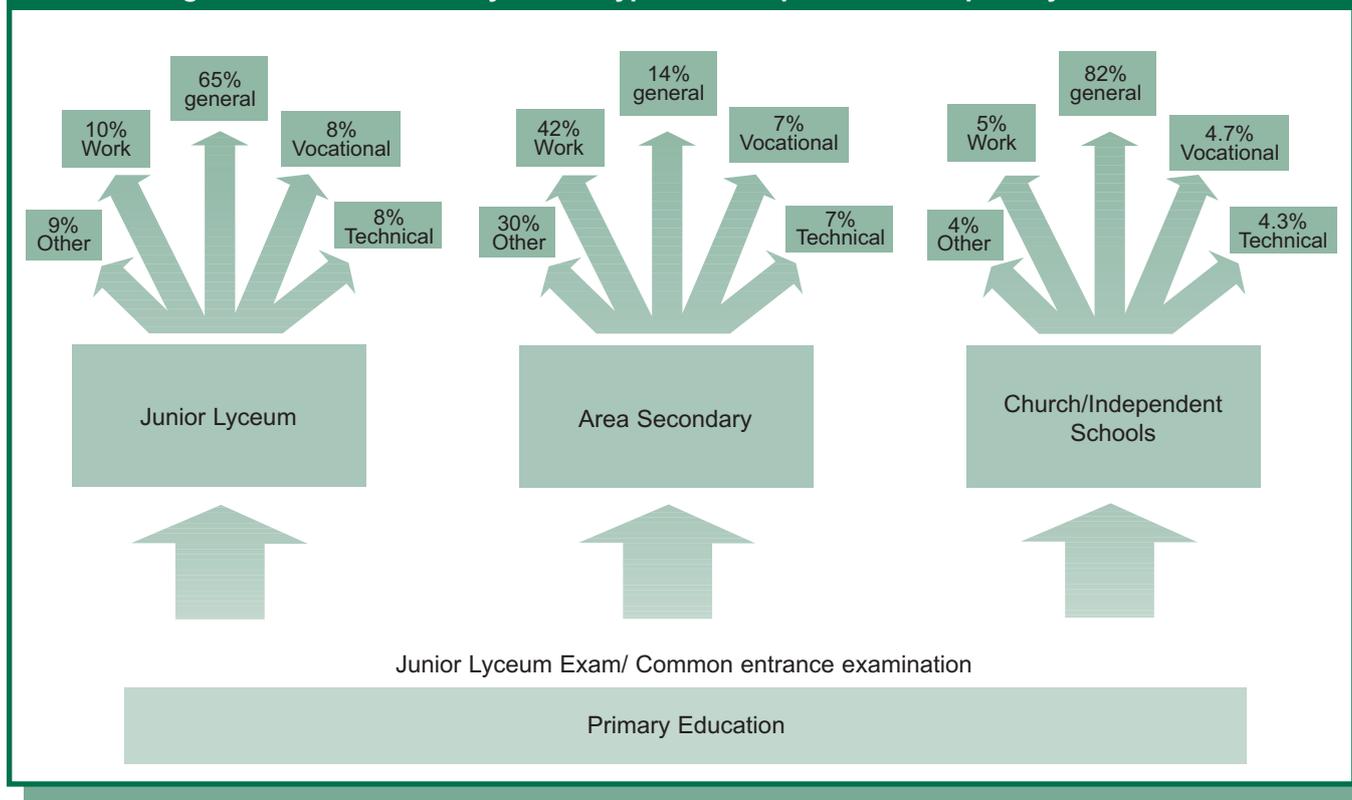
Differences in the paths taken have also been identi-

fied in the case of the type of post-secondary institution attended. This was noted particularly in the case of private general post-secondary education (private sixth forms). As the table below shows, these institutions practically cater for students coming from private secondary schools. The reasons may be various. One needs to point out that entry to private general post-secondary schools is on merit. This would imply that the best achievers come from private schools. On the other hand, one can also argue that these private post-secondary schools are expensive and parents who opted for free state secondary education would also opt for free post-secondary education. It, however, highlights how economic background tends to offer exclusive transition paths.

Table 7: Number of students admitted to private sixth forms from the various secondary school types.

Year	Junior Lyceum	Area Secondary	Church & Independent Schools
1990	1	1	127
1991	12	0	159
1992	8	-	267
1993	8	-	291
1994	9	-	330
1995	8	1	300
1997	16	1	193
1998	13	1	289
1999	17	-	357
2000	26	-	367

Figure 3: Path followed by school types on completion of compulsory education.



Another aspect noted on looking at the feeders for the different post-secondary institutions was that the number of school leavers ending up in the vocational and technical were significantly less than the total number of students in these institutions. This implies that probably, young persons do not go to these institutions directly on completion of secondary education. The possibilities are either students who have completed a year at Higher Secondary and obtained more qualifications in order to proceed with their studies, or else they may be drop outs from the academic strand, that is Junior College or other sixth forms. The data available in this study, however, does not provide insight into this issue.

The diagram above summarises the paths taken at completion of compulsory education. It shows how different paths can be identified with different school types. As argued, Church and Independent school, and a little less so Junior Lyceum cater mainly for the general education strand. Area secondary schools are totally different in that most of the students either move on to work straight away or end up in the category 'other' which may mean unemployment or staying at home.

Choice of post-secondary institution

There are various reasons for which young persons

decide to follow one path, one post-secondary course and not another. An insight into this process was obtained in the focus groups interviews. One needs to look at: the point at which young persons decide which post-secondary track to follow; who influences their choice of institution; and the main reasons behind their choice.

Young people are different and consequently and understandably, they make decisions about their future at different points. Three main crucial points can be identified. One group of young people decide early the path that they would like to follow, at some point of their compulsory education. Others leave their decision till after completing their compulsory education and after receiving their examination results. The third group opt to go out to work first but then decide to go back to school at a later age. One common feature among all is that they realise the need to train in an area of their interest.

A number of young persons said that they had long had an interest in a particular type of work and so consequently knew early in their secondary education which post-secondary school they wished to attend. This was stated by both those young people who wanted to follow the academic track and the vocational track.

'At Junior Lyceum I was determined to go to Junior College'
(Junior College student)

'I had started following a course, I was already attracted to the work when I finished from Junior Lyceum'
(School of Hairdressing)

'I always wanted to work with tourists in order to practice languages'
(I.T.S student)

'I always liked the work'
(School of Hairdressing)

'I was given a book about post-secondary schools in my fifth form and read about it'
(I.T.S. student)

Another group said that they decided where to go on completion of their fifth form and on receiving their examination results. This period also coincided with receiving the post-secondary prospectus published by the Education Division. Being aware of their position with respect to qualifications, young persons could see what was available and what courses they could attend on the basis of their qualifications.

'At the end of form 5'
(School of Hairdressing)

'I did not find what I wanted and was not going anywhere. I was going to get more O Levels and become a soldier. Then I received the prospectus and in going through it saw the course on I.T.'
(MCAST student)

'At the end of form 5, when we finished our O Levels, I received the prospectus'
(I.T.S. student)

A few other students stated that they did not decide straight away and that they spent some time working before they decided to further their education and attend a post-secondary institution. This group of students needed to do some soul searching before they could decide what to do with themselves with respect to their future.

'I worked at a lot of places, even with my father, at the cinema, at a language school, and decided that I could do something with my life. I received the MCAST prospectus, and saw it in the newspapers, came here and

made an enquiry, and was informed about the courses on offer... I am good at computers, I like it and am going to follow all the courses, and then I'll see what's next'
(MCAST student)

The second issue concerns the persons who influence young people's decision as to which post-secondary institution to attend. Various types of influences were mentioned. These varied from parents, siblings, friends to guidance teachers.

'my father, my mother'
(I.T.S student)

'after form 5, but I did not come here straight away because my parents were not enthusiastic, they did not know much about the school'
(School of Hairdressing student)

'I expressed my wish to come to this school, my parents agreed and came with me when applying'
(School of Hairdressing student)

*'Through friends, li kienu hawn qabel'
'Through friends who were at this school before'*
(I.T.S student)

'my sister told me about it'
(I.T.S student)

'From the guidance teachers who brought us here I was interested'
(I.T.S student)

It is important to be aware of what influences students in such a major decision. For example, it shows that parents have a great role and therefore also need to be informed of the opportunities available. Guidance may be also needed by the parents as well as the young persons themselves.

The young persons interviewed put forward different reasons for the choice they made. As the quotes in the first part of this section indicate, a number of young persons express an interest in a particular path early in their secondary school years. However, from those who decided at a later stage, often on completion of compulsory school, other factors besides personal interest also emerge. There is also a reference to young persons' choice of the type of apprenticeship scheme preferred.

Lack of qualifications was one of the parameters that determined which institution and which course to

attend. Two particular post-secondary students stated this. One opted for a related course to the one he was initially interested in, especially since the course on offer was more job oriented. Another realised that he had too few qualifications in order to be able to find a good job and so felt the need to keep on studying. Obviously, both still chose an area of study which was to their interest.

'Most of the courses required an O level standard and how to use word processing and if you do not have qualifications you could not follow technical courses related to computing'
(MCAST student)

'I had to choose between work and study. Since I did not have any qualifications, I wasn't going to find good work and so I decided to come here in order to improve my job prospects'
(MCAST student)

One particular interviewee stated that she preferred apprenticeship because she preferred work practice more than school. However, the decision as to which apprenticeship scheme to go for was not her decision. Since there is great competition for entrance to the school, she applied for both types of schemes and was accepted in only one of them. The administration, then, was responsible for the decision.

'Apprenticeship is not school – I applied for both schemes and I was sent here. I was more interested in work, it is better to gain experience so that you'll be more confident at work'
(School of Hairdressing)

A point that was mentioned by a few of the post-secondary students was the prospectus. While acknowledging that it served its purpose in that it was informative when they came to make their choice of post-secondary studies, they felt that if they had the prospectus earlier, for example in their fourth form, they would have been in a better position as they would have known beforehand the importance of some qualifications for specific courses. They could have planned their educational path better.

'We were not given enough time to make a decision, if we are to start in October, we need to decide beforehand'
(I.T.S student)

'Had they sent it before, we would have had more time to consider the options'
(I.T.S student)

2.4 What qualifications do young persons end up with?

The survey gives a snapshot of the qualifications that young people who do not follow tertiary education end up with. The table below gives the highest level of education attended by the survey's cohort.

Table 8: Highest level of education attended.

Highest level of Education	Percentage
Finished post-secondary education	34.9
Finished primary education	0.6
Finished secondary education	31.6
Finished trade school	6.3
Started post-secondary education	13.1
Started University	8.7
Started secondary education	2.1
Started trade school	2.4

As determined by the original sample worked out, the two major groups are either those who stop at the end of compulsory education or complete general post-secondary education. What is of interest to note is that small percentage of young people who declare that they did not complete compulsory education.

The young persons included in the survey possessed a range of qualifications. One quarter have no qualifications. Another quarter possess SEC level standard. Only 16% probably possess vocational qualifications if one includes both trade and other non-University qualifications. This is low when compared to other groups, particularly when compared to those young people who follow the general education path. This difference is greater when one considers that graduates have not been included in the survey.

Table 9: Qualifications held by respondents.

Qualifications	Percentage
No qualifications	24.8
SEC level standard	28.1
Trade Certificate	4.2
University Certificate/Diploma	6.0
A levels	25.1
Non-University Certificate/Diploma	9.9
No response	1.9

Table 10: Percentage of respondents having SEC qualifications per subject.

Subject	%	Subject	%
English	60.1	English Literature	6.6
Maths	58.5	Chemistry	6.3
Maltese	57.3	History	6.0
Physics	41.2	Technical Design	5.7
Italian	41.8	Environmental Studies	4.5
French	40.0	Art	2.1
Social Studies	27.5	Commerce	1.8
Accounts	23.6	Typing	1.8
Computer	14.9	Geography	0.9
Economics	10.4	Spanish	0.6
Biology	9.25	German	0.6
Business studies	9.0	Arabic	0.3
Home Economics	7.5		

Table 11: Number of subjects at SEC level held by respondents.

No. of subjects	%	No. of subjects	%
0	30.6	7	8.11
1	2.4	8	11.0
2	2.7	9	12.5
3	4.2	10	6.6
4	3.0	11	4.8
5	6.0	12	2.1
6	6.0		

SEC level

69.3% of the respondents were found to possess a number of SEC qualifications. The number of qualifications at SEC level held by the respondents varied from just one subject to up to as many as twelve. The majority of the respondents had 7-9 SEC qualifications although an additional 15% had more than 9. Overall, those with SEC qualifications tended to have qualifications in 6 or more subjects as required for entry into most of the post-secondary schools.

The table shows that the subjects with the highest percentage were those that are compulsory. The percentage is high because all students study these subjects. This is not the case with most of the other subjects. However, when one considers that qualifications in these subjects are necessary for entry into many of the courses at post-secondary level, the percentage is not as high as one would desire. If we want to train young people to follow post-secondary educa-

Table 12: Percentage of respondents with Intermediate level qualifications.

Number of Intermediate subjects	Percentage of respondents
1	17.6
2	17.6
3	31.1
4	32.4

tion, the percentage of students obtaining school leaving certification in the core subjects must be higher.

Intermediate level

Only 22.1% of the respondents stated that they had qualifications at Intermediate level. This percentage is low when one considers the percentage of the cohort who opted to follow the general post-secondary course. From these, one third had three Intermediate subjects while another third had four.

Advanced level

32.2% of the respondents possessed qualifications at Advanced level. They possessed mainly one or two subjects, while a few had three. This pattern was obtained due to the new general post-secondary education system introduced in Malta where students are now prepared at Advanced level in two subjects and in another four at Intermediate level. It also shows that

Table 13: Number of subjects at Advanced level.

Number of subjects at Advanced level	Percentage
1	10.4
2	16.7
More than 2	5.1

the majority of young people who opted to start working were those who do not manage to obtain the required qualifications to be able to go to University.

Other types of qualifications

Respondents were asked to write down any other qual-

ifications that they possess. Only 16.4% of all the respondents stated that they had other qualifications besides SEC, Intermediate and Advanced levels. These are listed in the table below. The most common type of certification mentioned was the City and Guilds. Students attending vocational post-secondary education usually obtain this type of qualification. In fact, the next high qualification was the Diploma level. This was mentioned in a number of areas but it shows that these young people had taken up paths different from that of general post-secondary education. The remaining qualifications were either related to other interests such as music or to professional development such as obtaining ECDL, ACAD, IATA and other qualifications in the different areas of work.

Table 14: Frequency of respondents' other types of qualifications.

Qualification	%	Qualification	%
City & Guilds	25.5	Typing	3.6
Diploma	21.8	Water, electricity licence	1.8
Music	12.7	NVQ level	1.8
ECDL	9.1	ACAD	1.8
Secretarial	7.3	Accountancy/marketing	1.8
IATA	5.5	Customer Care	1.8
Trades	5.5	Programing	1.8

2.5 What type of jobs do young persons in the different paths end up in?

An insight into the types of jobs that young persons end up in can be obtained from the survey responses. Significant differences in type of employment were found across gender and across type of secondary school attended. There was no difference noted across father's occupation or region of residence.

The majority of the jobs of the respondents were clerical, this amounting to a third of those with a full-time job. The next most frequent were the machine operators within

factories, these amounting to one fifth at 20.3%. One then finds technicians and associated professionals at 16.0%, and 11% in each of the service and market sales workers and elementary occupations. If one were to group together the service workers, machine operators and elementary occupations, it can be found that they make up nearly half of the working cohort. Technicians and associate professionals are related to the vocational aspect of education. One would say that this percentage tends to be low. One can explain this either in that young persons need to be of a certain age before they start full-time work or that fewer students attend this type of vocational schools. In addition, it may also be that there are fewer job opportunities for these sectors.

Table 15: Frequency of types of young persons' employment.

Type of employment	%
Senior Officials & Managers	2.0
Technician and associate professionals	16.3
Clerks	33.3
Service workers and market sales workers	11.0
Craft and related trades workers	6.1
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	20.3
Elementary occupations	11.0
Total	100

Table 16: Types of full-time employment across gender.

Type of employment	Female%	Male%
Technician and associate professionals	13.3	19.8
Clerks	45.0	23.1
Service workers and market sales workers	10.0	12.4
Craft and related trades workers	1.7	10.7
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	26.7	14.9
Elementary occupations	3.3	19.0
Total	100	100

Table 17: Type of employment held across type of secondary school attended.

Type of employment	Junior Lyceum%	Church & Private%	Area Secondary%
Technician and associate professionals	23.0	27.5	4.5
Clerks	51.4	47.5	6.7
Service workers and market sales workers	7.5	1.0	15.7
Craft and related trades workers	3.7	5.0	10.1
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	10.3	5.0	39.3
Elementary occupations	3.7	5.0	23.6
Total	100	100	100

Differences in the type of employment held by the different genders was found to be statistically significant with a χ^2 of 35.53 and a p-value <0.001. It appears that many females, (45%) take up clerical jobs. Another one fourth of females then work in factories (26.7%). In the case of males, there is a greater tendency for males to have elementary and trade related jobs than females. Otherwise there is no difference in gender within technical and associated professions and the service and sales sector.

Statistically significant differences ($\chi^2 = 95.1$, $p < 0.001$) were also obtained between the type of employment held and the type of secondary school attended. It can be observed that the majority of young persons taking up technical and associate professions, and clerical work come mainly from Junior Lyceum, Church and Private schools. On the other hand, a big percentage of young persons from Area Secondary schools tend to take up jobs in factories, trade related or elementary types of jobs. There was also a higher percentage of young persons from Area Secondary schools working in shops and the service industry. Such findings make sense when compared to results obtained by the tracer studies. The types of jobs taken up by students from Area Secondary Schools do not require post-secondary education. The implications of these results is that

the type of secondary school attended is in some way related to the path to work taken.

Figures 4 to 7 trace the jobs that young persons have according to the type of path chosen on completion of post-secondary education.

It can be seen that most of those who choose to follow the general post-secondary education end up in clerical jobs. One must note at this point that the sample in the survey does not include those who proceeded to University and so the figure shows the paths taken by those who chose to go to work on completion of general post-secondary education. One fifth end up in profession associated and other related jobs, followed by work within the service sector.

The majority of those who leave school on completion of compulsory education end up mainly in low level occupations such a machine operators or elementary jobs. Only about 10% manage to find clerical jobs or work as technicians and associated professionals. There are few job opportunities with future prospects for advancement for young persons who opt out of education at the age of 16.

Figure 4: Jobs obtained by young persons with general post-secondary education.

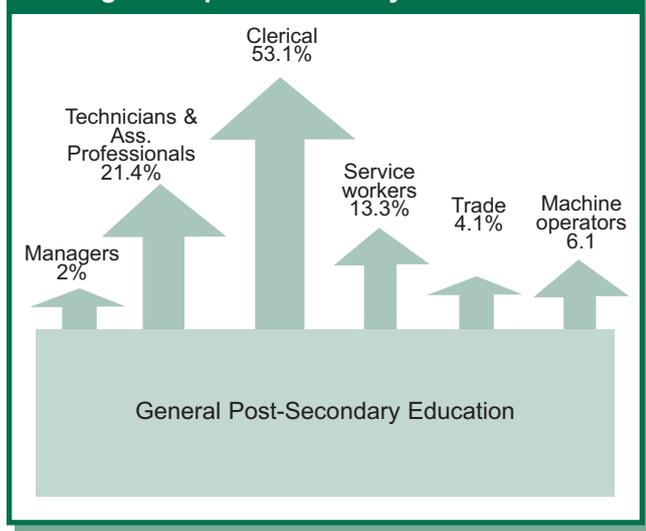
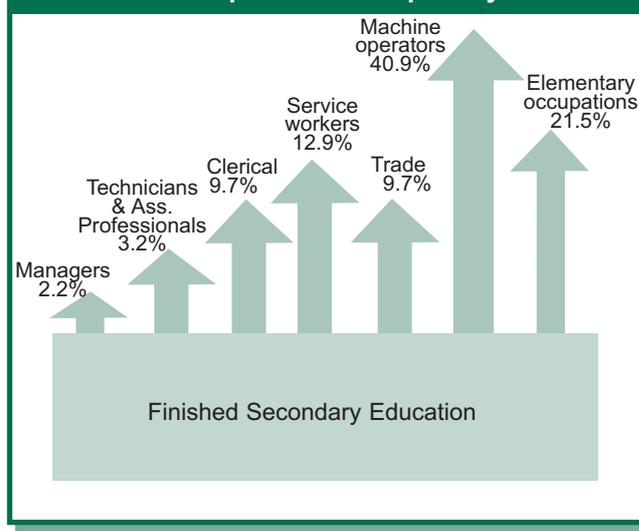


Figure 5: Jobs obtained by young persons who find work on completion of compulsory education.



The patterns of job opportunities for school leavers is reinforced by the trends obtained in the tracer studies. The most common job opportunity for school leavers across all the years is that of a machine operator with-in industry. Such a job requires long hours of repetitive work and training is often provided by the employer. Another main occupation is that of a sales assistant. This is another example of a job that does not require any particular skill, whether one works inside a shop or else acts as a supplier to other shops. Job opportunities also exist within the tourism industry. Despite the fact that I.T.S. students are being trained for such job responsibilities, no particular skill is being demanded from persons working as waiters. The same can be

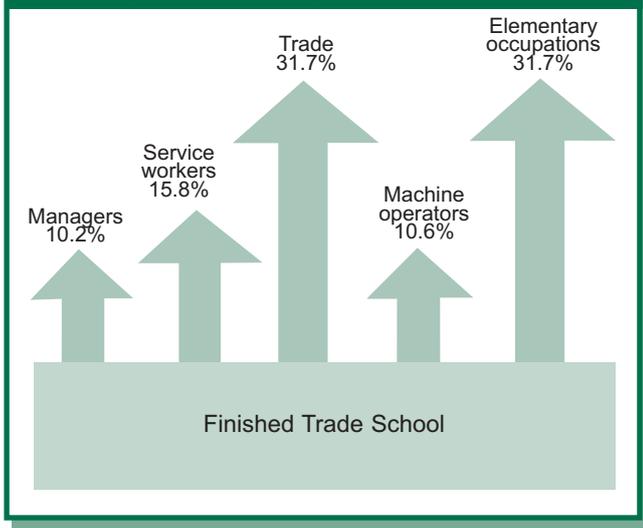
said for those working as cleaners or chambermaids. The number of opportunities for cleaners and chambermaids has risen in recent years. This can be explained in terms of the number of cleaning contractors set up recently due to many public and private companies contracting out this service rather than employing persons directly responsible for cleaning.

It can also be noted that a good number of school leavers find employment within the trade sector. This may result from the large number of students from trade schools having received training in a number of trades enabling them to find work within their training area.

Table 18: Frequency of main jobs for school leavers.

Work Type	1992	1993	1994	1995	1997	1999	2000
Machine Operator	661	508	628	528	292	241	286
Salespersons	119	50	96	213	132	184	182
Cashier/Receptionist/hostess	131	80	1	24	10	30	58
Clerk/Secretary	77	49	38	92	40	27	23
Waiter/Catering	-	37	103	147	91	111	103
Chambermaid/Cleaner	-	-	19	38	57	105	43
Hairdresser	2	3	5	10	-	20	23
Farmer	-	1	-	2	2	4	14
Tradesperson	98	70	116	180	81	57	55
Labourer	-	25	22	-	60	132	122
Family Business	-	36	15	-	11	10	4
Others	139	38	49	25	33	43	44
Total	1227	900	1092	1354	812	904	957

Figure 6: Jobs obtained by young persons from post-secondary trade schools.



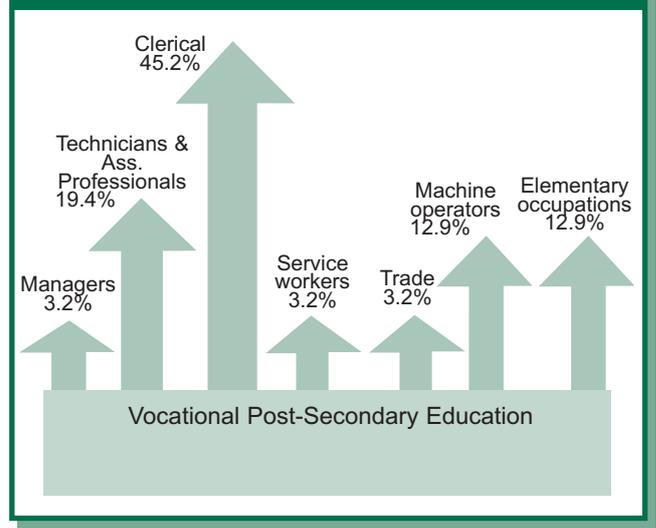
There are a number of features common to the jobs listed. First of all, most of the jobs do not require any specific skill. The exceptions to this would be those engaged in a trade and those performing clerical duties. Secondly, most of the jobs are also low paid jobs, many of them, probably earning a minimum wage. The only exceptions to this pattern are those working in the family business. When one considers that these are students who have received compulsory education, it shows that in today's society, compulsory schooling is not enough to prepare young people for jobs of a certain responsibility. Further education is necessary for better employment possibilities and consequently better pay and better quality of life.

Meanwhile, it is only one third of young persons from trade schools that end up working within the trade. Another third have elementary occupations for which no training is required. The rest end up as either service workers or machine operators. A small percentage are managers as they are self-employed and direct their own business concern.

Contrary to expectations, the majority of young persons attending vocational post-secondary education were found to have clerical jobs. Only one fifth of the respondents seem to have found work within their training. This raises questions with respect to the role of vocational education. However, one must note that when these young persons were within vocational education, the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) had not as yet been established.

A view of employment openings for young people was also obtained from the interviews carried out with employers. Many employers stated that a young per-

Figure 7: Jobs obtained by young persons from vocational post-secondary education.



son who is about to enter the workforce usually starts at the lower rungs. However, the specific training offered by the various post-secondary and tertiary institutions, enable young people to start at higher levels. Employers stated that there were four main levels of employment for young persons. These included:

Manual work: These types of jobs do not usually require any previous training and young persons with school leaving level of education are usually employed in such posts. Jobs include waiters, deliverymen, room attendants, salesmen, plasterers, machine operators and other similar jobs.

Clerical: These jobs are usually within the administrative section of businesses. The most common employment is that of a junior clerk as employers feel the need to train employees such that they become accustomed to the administrative system of the company. The background level of education of young persons employed in such posts varies. A number of employers said that it was not necessary for the young persons to have qualifications such as 'O' levels and 'A' levels although they were considered an asset. What is important is that the young person is willing to learn. Other employers, however, stated that they required specific educational qualifications such as 'A' levels or MCAST certificates as in the case of recruitment by banks.

Skilled or Vocational: These include those jobs that require specific skills and consequently specific training. Young persons opting for such jobs usually need to attend vocational post-secondary education in order to have the necessary training to qualify to perform such jobs. These would therefore include examples of work such as in the health sector for those who attend-

ed the institute of healthcare, technical jobs for students from the Technical Institute, I.T. jobs for those attending MCAST, and Craftsmanship jobs for those attending trade schools.

Graduate level: Categories of young persons tend to be recruited at higher levels within businesses. These are usually graduates who are recruited for special jobs. Employers mentioned recruiting engineers, teachers, accountants and other types of young graduates within their companies.

Age of recruitment

With respect to age of recruitment it emerged that most do not usually employ young persons below the age of 18. Various reasons were given for such policy. These reasons included:

Health and safety regulations: This was mentioned by one particular (large) employer within the manufacturing industry who asserted that due to health and safety regulations for under 18s, the company opted to recruit persons who are only above the age of 18.

Administrative demand: Employers mentioned that in the case of under 18s, parents are the signatories together with the young persons. This added to the administrative procedures necessary in regularising employment. There were also additional problems encountered in the case of persons who are not yet 16 but have completed compulsory education as a special permit is required for these young people to be issued with a workbook.

Job responsibility: Employers stated that although

there was no particular policy not to recruit people under the age of 18, they were looking for persons with a degree of maturity and consequently under 18s were rarely chosen.

Qualification requirement: Employers require specific qualifications for particular jobs. These qualifications are often obtained on completion of post-secondary education and consequently such young persons will be 18 by the time they start looking for work.

Type of work contract

Respondents were asked whether their job was on a definite or indefinite contract. About one third of the young people were found to work on a definite contract. This means that their employment can be terminated at the end of their employment. When looking at the sector in which persons tend to be on a definite contract, the main sectors were clerical (36.1%) and in factories (24.9%).

The duration of the definite contract tended to be between 1 and 5 years. It can also be noted that about one fifth of those who answered this item had short-term contracts in the region of a number of months. One needs to be careful in drawing conclusions when one starts to subdivide the cohort into separate groups, as numbers become very small.

Young persons were also asked to state how long they had been in their present employment. As the table below shows, the majority (a little less than half) of the respondents had been in their job between three and five years. Another third, however, had been in employment for less than two years.

Table 19: Type of contract for young people's employment.

Type of contract	%
No workbook	1.3
Definite Contract	36.0
Indefinite contract	59.7

Table 20: Length of definite contract.

Length of definite contract	%
0-3 months	8.5
4-6 months	18.6
7-11 months	8.5
1-2 years	32.2
More than 2 years	32.2

Table 21: Length in present full-time employment.

Length in present full-time employment	%
Less than 2 years	31.6
2-5 years	47.6
More than 5 years	19.0
Total	100

Table 22: Length in present employment across age group.

Length in employment	16-18 yrs	19-21 yrs	22-24 yrs
Less than 2 yrs	72.7	40.0	21.4
3-5 yrs	27.3	49.2	53.8
More than 5 yrs	-	10.8	24.8
TOTAL	-	100	100

Table 23: Length in part-time employment.

Length of employment	%
0-2 years	47.2
3-5 years	41.5
More than 5 years	1.9
TOTAL	100

Table 24: Net income for respondents.

Net income	%
< Lm100	6.3
Lm101-Lm200	11.5
Lm201-Lm300	39.9
Lm301-lm400	31.2
> Lm400	9.9
TOTAL	100

A better insight into whether young persons tend to keep their job or whether there is a degree of job mobility is to compare the respondents' age to their length of time in this employment. In fact the length in the present employment across age groups was found to be statistically significant with a χ^2 of 28.01 and p value <0.001.

As can be expected the older the young persons, the longer they had been in their employment. However, it is also important to note that the percentage of young persons in the older age groups that had been in employment for 3 or more years is quite high, with over half (53.8%) having 3-5 years of experience and another 24.8% having more than 5 years. When one considers that those young persons who attended post-secondary education would have only started working at the earliest at age 18, it appears that young persons tend to stay in their job. This is in line with what most employers stated when they commented that the turnover tended to be quite low. However, this can be further investigated through the work experience history that these respondents have.

In considering those young persons with a part-time job, it can be seen that a greater percentage of young people hold such jobs on a relatively shorter period, with most of them having had the work for less than 5 years. On carrying out a cross tab across the age groups, no statistical significances were obtained. Part-time work appears to be short – term for most of the respondents.

Young persons' income

Respondents were asked to state their net income. It can be seen that most of the young people earned Lm200-Lm400 each month net. This shows that many of them lie within the average income. Only 10% earned more than Lm400 per month, even though this may be due to overtime.

Differences in wages across gender was found to be statistically significant with a χ^2 of 20.29 and a p-value < 0.001. As the table indicates, males tend to have a higher income than females. In fact the percentage of males with a wage greater than Lm400 was three times that of females. More or less the same percentage of males and females had an income between Lm300 and Lm400 whereas the percentage of females with lower income was higher. This may be due to fewer females being promoted to higher levels of management due to their gender rather than being paid less for the same work.

A difference in wages across the different age groups was also found to be statistically significant with a χ^2 of 48.67 and a p-value <0.001. The trend shows clearly that the older the employee the better is his/her salary. In fact whereas 22-24 year olds had a salary of Lm200 or more, 19-21 year olds had a salary between Lm200 and Lm400 while for the youngest group the salary was less than Lm300. This is understandable as most often employers first put employees on probation and then if they show that they are willing to work hard, they would give them greater responsibility and consequently also greater income.

Table 25: Income levels across gender.

Income	Females	Males
Less than Lm100	3.9	8.9
Lm101-Lm200	18.8	4.8
Lm201-Lm300	42.2	37.9
Lm301-lm400	30.5	33.1
> Lm400	4.7	15.3
TOTAL	100	100

Table 26: Income for the different age groups.

Income	16-18	19-21	22-24
Less than Lm100	18.2	10.5	0.8
Lm101-Lm200	27.3	17.4	4.5
Lm201-Lm300	39.4	41.9	39.1
Lm301-lm400	6.1	26.7	41.4
> Lm400	9.1	3.5	14.3
TOTAL	100	100	100

Table 27: Differences in income across type of secondary school attended.

Income	Junior Lyceum	Church & Independent	Area Secondary
Less than Lm100	5.5	10.6	5.5
Lm101-Lm200	10.1	10.6	15.4
Lm201-Lm300	31.2	31.9	53.8
Lm301-lm400	39.4	34.0	20.9
> Lm400	13.8	12.8	4.4
TOTAL	100	100	100

A difference in income across the type of secondary school attended was also obtained. As is expected, young persons who had attended Junior Lyceum, Church and Private schools tended to have a better income overall than those who had attended Area Secondary Schools. This is in a way understandable as a difference across school was also found across the different types of employment where those from Area Secondary Schools had lower status and consequently lower paid jobs.

2.6 Conclusion

The study has shown that the transition path together with opportunities of work are closely related to the type of secondary school attended. Students who go to Area Secondary Schools have a very low possibility of making it within the general post-secondary edu-

cation strand. The data has also shown that it is very difficult for students to cross over from one path to another, this being particularly accentuated in cases of changing from the vocational to the general education path. This is opposite to trends in other countries such as Sweden and Norway where vocational and general education courses are getting closer by allowing students to take up a combination of courses from both strands concurrently (OECD, 2000). Other approaches allow apprentices and vocational education students to access tertiary education as in the case of Australia, Austria, Switzerland and Norway. This was achieved through granting credits to non-university tertiary courses to those who have completed upper secondary vocational courses. Vocational education in Malta has gone through great restructuring in the past few years and these are possible paths that it can choose to follow in collaboration with the University of Malta.

Chapter 3

Young people seem to settle down in their first employment soon after they complete their studies. On the other hand they seem to require more preparation before they embark on their career.

The Transition Process: an insight

The previous chapter has identified the overall trends of the transition process in Malta: the paths taken at post-secondary level; the qualifications that young persons obtain; and the jobs that young persons find. This chapter gives a deeper insight to the process being followed at the school to work transition of young persons and looks at whether they are being prepared well for the world of work, the process of finding a job, job mobility and/or unemployment during the transition, and young persons' fears and aspirations.

3.1 How well are young people being prepared for work?

Respondents in the survey were asked to rate how well they had been prepared for the world of work. It appears that comments were between not so much and well enough. Only about 14.9% said that they were little prepared.

The degree of preparedness was found to be statistically significant with χ^2 of 23.3 and p-value <0.001 across the type of secondary school attended. Young persons who attended Church and Independent schools stated that they felt overall well prepared for work more than students from Junior Lyceum and Area Secondary School.

The difference may be that since Church and Independent schools are very much academically oriented they tend to stress the importance of choosing what to study as it will influence future career choices. The problem with Junior Lyceum schools may be that they tend to be greater in student population and so it

is difficult for these institutions to provide individual advice. However, the table here just shows the differences and not the reasons for it.

Only one quarter, 25.1% of the respondents, stated that they found it difficult to get used to work. This means that the majority of young people do not usually experience any problems. Various reasons were given for not getting used to work quickly. The most common problem was the difference between the world of work and school. This accentuates how much schools have become detached from the real world and also from work. Another factor that was mentioned was the degree of responsibility that one needs to have and to shoulder at work. This is also a situation different from school. Many of our young persons are being sheltered and not exposed to the reality of life. It then comes as a shock that they have to shoulder an amount of responsibility and that they need to answer for their own actions. If one has an overview of the reasons mentioned, a number of them reflect problems with the individual while the rest involve problems at work. Problems related to the individual include the difficulty to get used to hard work, long hours, the need to be at work on time, to do as you are told. In the case of problems related to the workplace, these include: a high degree of control; problems with colleagues; disorganisation in the workplace; etc. Obviously young persons need to learn how to deal with particular situations. Unlike school, the workplace is different in that you are not sheltered in the way students are and unless young persons realise that they have grown up and need to deal with problems themselves they will persist in having problems at work.

Table 28: Level of preparedness for work.

Level of preparedness	%
Very well	8.5
Well	35.8
Just about	36.7
A little	14.9
Not at all	3.8
TOTAL	100

Table 29: Degree of preparedness across schools.

Level of preparedness	Junior Lyceum	Church & Independent	Area Sec Schools
Very well	6.4	19.3	5.4
Well	35.2	54.4	29.7
Just about	45.6	10.5	45.0
A little	12.8	15.8	19.8
TOTAL	100	100	100

Table 30: Reasons for difficulty in getting used to work.

Reason given	%
Different from school	33.3
Do not want to work	1.4
Too much control	1.4
Lack of organisation	1.4
Problems in getting used to it	16.7
Too much responsibility	29.2
Had problems with colleagues	4.2
Difficulty in expressing myself	2.8
Did not know what was expected of me	1.4
It was hard work	1.4
Hours were too long	6.9

Table 31: Reasons given for wanting same/different work.

Reason	Wants same job%	Wants different job%
Too much hard work	0.7	11.6
Would like to further studies	2.0	14.0
Happy at work	84.5	3.5
Good salary	0.7	1.0
Want something better	0.7	2.3
Want something more interesting	0.7	5.8
Job is challenging	0.7	2.3
I do not like my work	0.7	2.3
I want a better salary	0.7	19.8
Prefer better working conditions	2.0	32.6
The work is boring	-	1.2
It is dangerous work	-	1.2
I get to meet a lot of people	6.8	1.2
I had problems with colleagues	--	1.2

Respondents were also asked if they would make the same decisions about work were they to start all over again. Over half of the respondents said yes, this amounting to 63.3% of those who are working. On the other hand, there still is a percentage, amounting to over a third who would do something different.

A better insight is obtained when one considers the type of reasons given by the respondents for their choice, as outlined in table 31.

Employers were also asked to comment on how well prepared they felt that young people were. There was more or less a similar response from most employers across the different sectors. The general response was

that young people were well prepared academically. It was only one employer who stated that he had come across too many young persons who could barely read and write well, something he noticed from the application forms filled in by young people when applying for a job.

Employers stated that young persons tend to lack soft skills. They mentioned aspects such as:

Discipline: A good number of employers stated that on the whole young persons tend to lack a sense of discipline, which is often reflected in a lack of respect towards their employers and to the rules of the company. This was also reflected in a lack of drive at work;

Communication skills: A very common comment was that many young persons lack communication skills. They have problems expressing themselves and it is often difficult to make them understand what you want from them;

I.T. training: One particular employer stated that although many young persons have good I.T. skills, they encountered problems when they were asked to apply them to specific requirements. They required more coaching than one would expect from a trained person;

Poor training in skills: Employers from different sectors mentioned that there was no training in the type of skills they look for in young people. A manufacturing company made this comment specifically about sewing skills. Another employer similarly stated (employer was referring to woodwork skills in particular) that trade schools were too generic in the type of training they provide and often the machinery used is outdated. A similar comment about machinery was also made with respect to the provision of technical training;

No concept of quality service: This comment came from the tourism sector. The employer stated that young persons consider providing a service to somebody as demeaning rather than a gesture of respect. They have no sensitivity to clients' needs in order to provide service that is desired rather than what the employee thinks that the client wants. The employer stated emphatically that such an attitude needs to be dealt with as part of compulsory education.

Employers also commented that young workers bring with them both strengths and weaknesses. Being young is often associated with enthusiasm and a positive attitude to life, full of aspirations and hopes. It is also considered as the rebellious generation, fighting for principles, be they religious, social or political. Young people are therefore different from adults. They thus bring with them different qualities, some of which can be assets, others problematic to employers. During the interviews, employers have highlighted these two opposing aspects of young people in their workforce.

Strengths

Employers mentioned many types of strengths that young persons bring with them. Obviously, in many cases, as many employers pointed out, the characteristics mentioned were general trends as one comes across different types and characters. Three main general strengths could be identified from the attributes mentioned.

Personality aspects: Many employers stated that the very nature that persons are young, they tend to have certain personality traits and a positive attitude to life. The characteristics mentioned include:

- full of energy;
- enthusiastic;
- strength;
- do not grumble;
- flexible;
- outspoken;
- humorous;
- co-operative;
- optimistic;
- have ideals;
- have dreams; and
- in the case of young person involved in social groups, possess good life skills.

Employers felt that these elements make young persons a good asset within their workforce. Employers would therefore be ready to invest in young people.

Employability aspects: Employers also mentioned attributes that young people possess that are directly related to performance at work. Such attributes make young people more employable. Characteristics mentioned by employers included:

- *They can be moulded/trained:* Many employers mentioned this. In some cases they said that it was often better if it is the young person's first employment as they would not have picked up undesirable practices from elsewhere;
- *Initiative;*
- *Ready and willing to learn:* As one particular employer stated 'you cannot teach old dogs new tricks'. A number of employers stated that young persons more readily accept new challenges and innovations or changes in job responsibilities than older workers;
- *Bring fresh ideas;*
- *Have strength* and so can endure strenuous work and long hours;
- *Obedient:* they do all that is asked from them;
- *Are loyal;*
- *Can withstand pressure; and*
- *Willing to perform and meet deadlines.*

All these characteristics are aspects that employers look for in their employees. They therefore make young persons employable.

Potential for professional development: Being young brings with it the option of long years of service

to an employer. This is an aspect that young people bring with them. As employers pointed out, young people:

- are willing to undergo rigorous training;
- desire to pursue further studies;
- desire professional development; and consequently
- are an investment for employers.

Weaknesses

Employers view the potential growth of young people as an asset. The fact that they are so young and have limited life experience, however, brings with it a number of weaknesses. The weaknesses mentioned by employers were placed under the categories of: personality aspects; work attitude; and professional development.

Personality aspects: In the same way as some personality aspects of young people are assets, others may be considered as weaknesses and may be problematic to employers. Employers have identified quite a number of such weaknesses, which sometimes make them reluctant to choose to take a young person in their employment. Characteristics mentioned include:

- *No commitment to work:* Youth are more concerned about other aspects of their life, often leisure. So in many cases they just do their job and stop there, with little sense of pride and self-satisfaction;
- *No sense of responsibility:* One particular employer stated that he encountered great problems with young people as it was common for them not to turn up in time or at all on Monday morning due to having stayed up partying all Sunday night. A number of employers mentioned, young people *felt tired all the time* as they probably do not get enough sleep;
- *They are too leisure oriented:* This has already been highlighted in the previous points but employers also mentioned that young people insisted on taking leave and refusing overtime in periods of high workload. This was mentioned particularly in the tourism sector where summer is the busiest period of the year;
- *Too many commitments outside work:* Employers mentioned that young people were often still following courses and sitting for examinations and this disrupted the person's work in different ways;

- *Too many hobbies:* Young people seem to have too many interests outside work and this tends to be a deterrent to work performance. This may be due to young persons having difficulty in striking a balance between work and leisure;
- *They are often gullible:* Employers stated that young persons tended to be gullible and often tended to have tricks played on them. Such situations interfere with work. In addition, employers often have to deal with such situations and this is time consuming;
- *They tend to do all that they are told:* This aspect was considered as a weakness as often young persons tend to do all that their colleagues tell them. This sometimes brings about situations where colleagues abuse young persons by getting them to do things that are not necessarily their responsibility. These situations create problems to employers who consequently tend to prefer older and more mature employees;
- *Young people tend to be emotionally immature:* Youth are often too sensitive and tend to over-react when they are reprimanded. This characteristic makes it more difficult for employers to deal with young persons;
- *They want instant-response:* Young persons tend to want approval and reward instantly. • This is often not the way things are in the world of work and young persons need to adjust to a different way of working; and
- *Appearance not up to standard:* Young people tend to be sloppy in the way they dress and have a slumped posture. Employers stated that many times they need to point this out and mould young people even in the way they dress and carry themselves. This was mentioned particularly in the service-oriented sectors.

Attitude to work: Employers also identified particular attitudes that young people tend to have towards work that they found undesirable.

The characteristics they mentioned include:

- *No effort:* Employers stated that young people tended to do what they are expected to do reluctantly. There was no visible effort to try and do their best;

- *Consider work too hard:* Employers found that young persons made a fuss about how hard the work was rather than making that extra effort;
- *Do not wish to work extra hours:* Employers also mentioned that they needed employees who were ready to work overtime when there was a greater demand for work. Young persons overall tended to be reluctant to work overtime and this created problems to employers who needed to rely on their workforce depending on market demands;
- *Lack work experience:* Many young people would either be looking for their first job or have limited job experience. Employers consider this as a weakness as many realise that they would be dealing more with students than with adults and a greater effort would be needed for these young workers to adjust to work requirements;
- *They often need training:* This aspect is closely related to lack of work experience. Employers felt that young persons need more training than older workers due to their lack of work experience and this makes young people less attractive to employ;
- *Incapable to show their potential during interviews:* A few employers remarked that young people were not capable of showing their abilities during interviews. Many times they just sit down and just give one-word answers to the questions posed. In such situations, it is difficult for employers to assess the potential such candidates have.

Professional development: Employers complained about certain attitudes that young people have with respect to career advancement and that can be translated into a weakness. Employers complained that young people:

- *Had no conception of career advancement:* This was not a characteristic of all young people but in a proportion of them. Consequently, young people do not take their work as seriously as they should but view it only as a means of earning money in the short-term. This attitude is not usually appreciated by employers;
- *Are over-ambitious:* On the other end, one finds young people who are over-ambitious

and tend to want to be promoted immediately. Such attitude at the other extreme end also tends to create problems to employers;

- *Do not realise the limits of their potential:* One particular employer highlighted the issue that often, young persons' immaturity does not allow them to realise that some responsibilities are beyond their current capabilities. This again tends to create problems to employers.

Managing young people at work

Most of the employers stated that overall there was no problem concerning managing the young workforce. They also stated that they applied very strict rules on the job and the consequences were severe for those who did not comply. In most cases, employers said that new recruits usually underwent a rigorous induction course where codes of conduct were explained clearly. The consequences of not abiding to these rules are also usually explained at this stage. Employers also stated that they had a very rigorous recruitment exercise and so most probably the problematic young people would not have made it through the selection process. It appears, however, that overall, young persons obey rules when they are strictly enforced.

Several factors influencing adherence to rules were mentioned. One particular employer referred to home background. Young people from better home environments and social class tend to accept reprimand much more than young persons coming from a lower class background. Another reason put forward was that young people tend to pick up bad attitudes towards work from colleagues and friends. The employer mentioning this in fact stated that he preferred to be the first employer of young persons so that he could train them within the code of conduct of his company without any problems. Another aspect mentioned was that young persons who had either a loan or were married were much easier to manage as they usually valued their employment and wanted overtime due to their financial commitments.

Some employers did identify particular issues relating to managing young employees. Aspects mentioned include:

Some young employees lacked a sense of discipline: This was problematic as somehow young persons find it difficult to respect their superiors and to follow their instructions without any confrontation. This problem is also demonstrated in the lack of rigour that young persons often demonstrate at work;

Young persons tend to lack self-confidence: This often

creates problems in situations where young persons are too shy to speak up when they do not understand instructions given to them, wasting a lot of time and work within the company. As one employer put it 'young persons are fragile and thus need guidance in order to build their self confidence';

Young people have problems to find a work-life balance: There are some who, on the one-hand refuse overtime in order to be able to go out more often. This leads young employees to be distracted at work. On the other hand, there are others who opt to work for long hours, having little time for rest and leisure;

Young employees are easier to manage: A few employers, on the contrary, mentioned that young employees tend to be open to ideas and want to learn. They listen when employers want to make changes and implement new systems. They commented that it is usually more difficult to get older employees to accept changes and innovation.

3.2 How do young people experience the move from school to work?

The survey and focus groups also gave a better insight to the problems and difficulties young persons face in looking for employment. The survey provides information about how young persons find work, how many times they have been called for an interview and the reasons for which they have not been chosen. The interviews provide insight of how young persons experience this phase.

Respondents in the survey were asked to indicate how they found their present employment. Young people find work in different ways. One third of them do so by answering to an advert in local newspapers. Friends and family are also a means of finding work. It appears that having contacts is one way of being given oppor-

tunities. Ten percent stated that they approached the firms themselves. What is striking is the low percentage who found work through ETC. One must, however, keep in mind that these young persons have found a job some time ago and ETC may have introduced more effective services since then.

The way in which young persons find work was found to be statistically significant with a χ^2 of 34.52 and $p < 0.001$ across the different type of secondary schools attended. In the case of Area Secondary Schools one sixth of the respondents found work by asking companies themselves. This may result from the way that factories recruit new employees where they keep lists of people looking for work as a reference. Young persons set to work in factories tend to be familiar with the way the system works and so they go and list themselves with the various factories. This method, in fact was mentioned during the group interviews with young people. They are also the highest who find work through friends. This again may be due to many students in this type of school being oriented towards the same type of job. A couple of employers in manufacturing, in fact, had commented that young persons tended to come and go in groups of friends. In the case of Junior Lyceum schools, many of the young persons find work through the newspapers. This percentage is much higher than that for the other type of schools. In the case of Church and private schools, they have a greater percentage who have chosen the option 'other'. These included examples such as government recruitment but it is not clear in what way these young persons have found their job.

A large percentage of respondents stated that there have never been instances where they have applied for a job and not been chosen. This probably also means that once young persons find a job they tend to settle down. It also means that young persons do not seem to have great problems in finding work.

Table 32: Ways by which young people find work.

Method of finding employment	%
Newspapers	32.0
Family	17.0
Other	14.5
Friends	20.3
E.T.C.	6.2
Asked companies directly	10.0
TOTAL	100

Table 33: Number of unsuccessful job applications.

Number of applications refused	%
Never	46.3
1-5	45.4
6-10	4.0
11-15	1.7
>15	2.6
TOTAL	100

On the other hand, in the focus group interviews, those youth who were looking for jobs within the manufacturing sector said that there were very few jobs available at factories and so it was difficult to find work.

'there is no work available'
(Person registering for work)

'How can I find work if everybody is laying off people'
(Person registering for work)

Those young people who wanted to find a clerical job were aware of their lack of qualifications and their low probability of finding the job they would like since so many other young persons with Ordinary and Advanced levels exist. They also stated that University graduates were now also taking up jobs, leaving fewer opportunities to lesser qualified young persons.

'I do not have many qualifications, how can I compete with those having many O and A Levels?'
(Person registering for work)

'Today there are many graduates who are taking up jobs that we could have taken. How can I find work?'
(Person registering for work)

Sixteen to eighteen year olds experience particular difficulties in finding work. The young persons interviewed mentioned various reasons for not being able to find work. The two most common reasons were their lack of work experience and the fact that they as yet are not 18 years old. A number of them mentioned instances when they went to ask for work and the employers told them they only employ persons who are over 18. This was mentioned mainly with respect to the job of a salesgirl. The other requirement needed by employers was work experience. Understandably, those who had just finished their compulsory education argued that it was difficult for them to have work experience if they had just finished school.

Table 34: Number of job interviews.

Number of applications refused	%
Never	31.3
1-5	58.2
6-10	5.0
11-15	2.8
>15	2.8
TOTAL	100

'They want you to be 18 years old'
(16yr old looking for work)

'I did not find because they ask you if you are 18 and we are neither 18 nor do we have work experience'
(16yr old looking for work)

'They ask you if you have work experience'
(16yr old looking for work)

Young persons have problems in finding work due to three main factors: their age; their qualifications; and their lack of work experience. The first two factors show the need for young persons to continue with their education after compulsory age as otherwise the opportunities available to them are very limited. This is also highlighted in the interviews with employers. The last factor shows that young people are not really being prepared for the world of work as on completion of their basic education they have no idea or experience of what work entails. On the other hand, employers are not willing to teach this aspect to first-time workers.

Number of interviews

One third of the respondents stated that they never had a job interview. Otherwise, more or less, respondents seem to have had between 1-5 interviews, this amounting to 58.2%.

Young persons indicated a number of reasons for not being chosen for a job. The main reason appears to be the lack of work experience. Age is also mentioned as a problem for not being offered a job. Lack of qualifications also fares high on the list. In such circumstances it makes sense to encourage more people to proceed to post-secondary education. They will have more training and qualifications and they will be older when they start looking for work. However, it is also important for post-secondary institutions to try and provide as much work experience as possible with post-secondary education. Finally, it is important to note that a percentage of respondents pointed out that they were never given any response to why they had not been chosen.

Table 35: Frequency of reasons for not being chosen.

Reason	%
Too young (under 18)	19.2
Lack of qualifications	16.1
Asked for too much money	2.2
Others	10.7
Without work experience	33.9
There were better applicants	8.5
Asked for workbook	9.4
TOTAL	100

Table 36: Mean rate given for different attributes when recruiting young people.

Attribute	Mean rating
Positive attitude to work	8.6
General appearance	5.4
Specific physical attributes	3.2
Maturity and stability	7.6
Versatility/flexibility	7.4
Leadership skills	5.8
Member/potential member of union	1.2
Past work experience	7.2
Ability to communicate	7.8
Basic reading writing and arithmetic	8.0
I.T. literacy	7.0
Specific education qualifications	5.7

3.3 *What do employers look for when recruiting young people?*

Employers were given a number of attributes and asked to comment on how much importance they give to each when they come to recruit young persons. Rating was from 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest level and 10 the highest. The weighting given for each of the different attributes is discussed in turn. The table above gives the mean rating for each attribute. Those attributes that were considered as not applicable or irrelevant by employers were given a rating of zero.

The most valued attribute among employers is a positive attitude to work. This is followed mainly by basic education, the three Rs and personality attributes – ability to communicate, maturity and stability and versatility. I.T. literacy and past work experience are also well appreciated. Unlike to what many educators and parents believe, specific education qualifications did not rank that highly with just 5.7. In addition, during the interviews, it was mentioned that qualifications played an important part when recruiting people in highly specialised jobs, often requiring graduates, eg. accountants.

Employers rated a positive attitude to work as very important with nearly all employers choosing between 8-10 as a degree of importance. In fact, many stated during the interview that this was one of the most important attributes they looked for in an individual when recruiting.

Most employers stated that appearance was not one of the most important attributes they considered when

evaluating job candidates. However, they also stated that it was important for one to look smart in posts involving contact with customers. This aspect was considered particularly important in the tourism sector in jobs such as the front desk. However, it was also rated highly in the case of waitering. On the other hand, in the case of other types of jobs that do not require contact with people, general appearance was irrelevant, hence rated as not applicable.

Most of the employers stated that physical attributes were irrelevant, as even in the cases where jobs required people of good general appearance, employers were not looking for any particular physical attribute but that the person was smart. The physical attributes that were mentioned included strength within the construction industry and height by a manufacturing company due to the large machinery used needing people who are of a certain height.

All employers rated maturity as important. Some employers mentioned that they preferred candidates who were stable in the sense that they are either married or have a bank loan. They stated that such persons were more eager to work overtime and focused more on their work. Young persons who were not yet stable in their life tended to be too leisure oriented, did not like to work overtime and often were immature.

The ability to be flexible was considered very important by most employers. They stated that this allowed the possibility to use employees according to the business' needs. This aspect applied practically across the different economic sectors and company size. It also reflects today's market demands.

Overall, most of the employers stated that it was not that important for young persons entering the workforce to have leadership skills. They sometimes also expressed concern in that maybe it was better if they did not possess such skill at this stage. When one starts a job, as in the case of many young persons, it is usually within the lower rungs, and so it is important that they follow rules than start leading. The latter attitude, in fact can sometimes lead to problems of management. On the other hand, for young people recruited at a higher level as in the case of graduates, possession of leadership skills is considered as very important since such persons would be in positions of greater responsibility with personnel answering to them. These two aspects explain the wide distribution of the ratings obtained.

Most of the employers stated that they did not consider whether a person forms part of a union or has the intention to become a union member when they are recruiting people. In fact, most of them rated this aspect as not applicable or else gave it a low rating. The only exception was within the construction industry where employers stated specifically that they preferred if their employees were not union members.

Most employers consider work experience an asset. However, in some cases, employers stated that it is better if young people start their first work experience with them, as they would have the opportunity to train them in the way they would like them to be. Persons who had worked in other places may have picked up some habits or attitudes, which employers do not usually like. This aspect was mentioned particularly in the construction sector and small-size businesses. Some employers felt that they needed to train new employees and in such circumstances it was not that important when the person did not have much work experience. However, when asked to rate the importance they give to past work experience, they still gave it a high rating overall.

Employers across all sectors consider the ability to communicate as very important. They stated that it was necessary for employees not only to be able to communicate with clients but also with other employees and with their employer. It was therefore an important asset as it ensures the smooth running of their enterprise. Employees need to be able to express themselves well when they want something and to be able to understand what is required of them and to speak up when they are not sure. This can be ensured through good communication skills. All employers consider basic literacy to be necessary. The one who rated it as not applicable was due

to the qualifications necessary to enter in employment within his sector and obviously candidates need to have basic literacy. However, in many cases, employers stated that basic literacy involved also basic knowledge of the English language even for manual jobs, as they often required employees to manipulate machinery where the instructions were in English. It was therefore difficult for an illiterate person to work. On the other hand there were also other employers who stated that it was not important in the case of employees in manual and unskilled jobs.

The need to be I.T. literate is not necessary for all jobs. Whereas employers rated it highly in the case of administrative jobs, it was not important in the case of manual jobs since such persons would not usually use computers. This explains why a number of employees rated it as not being a relevant attribute.

Although considered as an asset, qualifications were not considered as the major determinant for recruitment. Employers stated that some jobs did not require specific qualifications and so they usually tended to consider the persons as individuals rather than to just look at their educational background. In the case of administrative jobs, qualifications were considered an asset. However, although giving value to qualifications, employers also pointed out that sometimes they have come across better candidates with fewer qualifications. In the case of higher posts filled up by graduates, however, the University qualification was considered a requisite.

The overall trend was that although qualifications are important to a certain degree, experience has shown them that a well-qualified candidate may not necessarily make a good employee as there are other attributes besides qualifications that make a good employee.

These ratings show that employers look for different types of qualities in their employees. At this point of the research one needs to highlight the issue that whereas our educational system focuses strongly on academic achievement, less importance has been given to the other qualities that employers look for. This issue will be dealt with in more detail at a later stage.

3.4 *How smooth is the transition from school to work?*

At this point one asks how smooth the transition from school to work is. Do young people have problems in finding their first employment? Do they experience long periods of unemployment? Do they change jobs

Table 37: Frequency of number of jobs held before present employment.

Number of previous jobs	%
No jobs	53.8
One job	25.1
Two jobs	13.6
More than 2 jobs	7.6

Table 38: Frequency of full-time jobs.

Which job	Percentage of jobs full time (%)
First job experience	52.6
2nd job experience	66.1
3rd job experience	83.3
4th job experience	77.7
5th job experience	33.3

Table 39: Percentage of jobs across the level of education.

Number of previous jobs	No qualifications	SEC standard	Advanced standard	University certification	Non-University qualifications
	%	%	%	%	%
None	71.1	57.4	43.0	51.2	35.3
1	18.4	26.6	23.3	29.3	35.3
2	10.5	9.6	20.9	7.3	20.6
>2	0	6.4	12.8	12.2	8.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100

often? Answers to these questions were obtained from the survey. In one of the items, the respondents were requested to list their previous work experiences and to give details about each one of them. One finds that for half of the respondents, their present employment has also been their only employment. This means that in their case, they have settled down directly in their first job, the transition apparently being very smooth to them. However, it can also be observed that another 25% had had only one other job before their current employment. It can therefore be concluded that young persons in Malta do not seem to have problems getting used to work and to the job they have. The group of interest to this study then are those who have had two or more types of jobs in order to try and understand why they seem to have moved from one job to another.

The number of jobs held was found to be statistically significant with a χ^2 of 29.5 and p value <0.001 the highest level of education. It shows that the majority of young persons without any qualifications tend to stay in their first job. However, the percentage is also high for those with SEC level, A levels and with University certificates. It is only one third of those with non-University certificates that have greater job mobility. This group includes those with vocational and technical qualifications. Since the number of persons qualified in these areas are few, then it may be that they have come across better opportunities and moved on to a different job.

Since those with a higher educational background seem to change their job more often, it is worth investigating whether these were just summer jobs that young persons tend to have when they are still at school or whether it is really the case that those with a higher educational level have greater job mobility. An exercise carried out involved seeing how many of the jobs in the respondents' work history were full-time and how many were part-time. When one looks at the frequencies, most of the jobs were full-time and for periods longer than three months, which means that a percentage do move from one job to another. A number of respondents, however seem to have one part-time job as half of these jobs were part-time.

One can therefore conclude that a large percentage of young persons settle in their first job and their transition to work is practically from school to one work. Another percentage of young persons tend to have a part-time job before they move on to the full time job. However, there exists the third group who move from one full time job to another before they settle down. The tendency for more mobility appears to be greater for young persons with specific training and academic background.

In the interviews with key people, the Assistant Director responsible for guidance and counseling mentioned a number of aspects that young persons experience in making the transition from school to work. These include:

Culture Shock: The Assistant Director stated that students experience a culture shock when they start working. This happens because on most occasions young persons change from being a student at school to full-time workers abruptly. Whereas at school students are within a protected environment, this is not the case with work where young people suddenly find themselves in a situation where they need to fend for themselves.

Need to deal with older people: Young people are mainly in contact with others of their own age when they are at school. The only adults they come in contact with are either their parents and relatives or their teachers at school. When young persons start work, they find themselves in an environment with adults around them. This is a new situation to them and it takes time to learn how to interact and deal with other people within the workplace.

Students are overprotected: This aspect is related to the two issues just mentioned. In the school environment, the students are overprotected. The lack of preparedness for adult life makes them very vulnerable when they find themselves in the work environment.

Harassment: The young persons' naïve attitude to work can easily lead to cases of harassment. Young persons are soft targets and consequently can easily be vulnerable to bullying from older colleagues. The lack of experience makes it very difficult for young persons to react and fight when difficult circumstances arise.

Lack of knowledge on rights: Young persons usually have little, if any, knowledge of their rights as workers. They can thus easily be taken advantage of by both employers and other senior staff.

Other issues raised by the Assistant Director referred to gender difference and social class. It is her opinion that boys tend to exhibit a tougher attitude whereas girls tend to be weaker. In the case of non-academic oriented students, especially girls, they tend to go directly to work full-time in factories. It was also her belief that social class plays an important role. For example, some establishments are only willing to give employment to young people from Junior Lyceum schools or Junior College or private schools but not to those from other types of schools.

Periods of unemployment

Respondents in the survey were also asked to state whether they have gone through periods when they were unemployed. 35.6%, that is one third of the respondents have been unemployed at some time. The rest, 64.4% have moved from school to work with-

out any problems in finding employment.

The length of the period of unemployment varied from a matter of months to a number of years. However, overall, unemployment was usually a matter of months, probably until an appropriate job comes up. In fact, the greatest percentage is in the period of 0-3 months followed by 4-8 months.

It can also be noted that most of the young persons were unemployed only once. This actually applies to 94% of those who were unemployed. This further substantiates the argument put forward that once young persons find a job they tend to settle down. The main period of unemployment is only until they find their first job.

The majority of the respondents also stated that they did register for work at E.T.C. during the period that they were unemployed. In fact, this amounts to 73.2% of those who were at one time unemployed. A quarter, however, did not bother to register for work. When one considers that most young persons have been unemployed for a few months, this may be understandable, especially if they are looking for their first job.

These trends are consistent with employers' comments. Employers stated that generally turnover among young persons is quite low with very few employees leaving their employment after some time. Turnover was stated to be higher in the tourism industry where, as employers stated, there were a lot of opportunities due to the large number of hotels and other related workplaces. Often young persons left for career advancement or to work in a different sector. Turnover was also noted to be high with engineers who seek better employment opportunities abroad and manual workers in factories due to production pressure. However, as one particular employer noted, 'turn over is always low when there are few opportunities out there'. Since there are currently limited employment opportunities in the country, turn over would consequently be less in any sector.

Table 40: Periods of unemployment during transition.

Length of period of unemployment	%
0-3 months	37.5
4-8 months	30.0
9-12 months	16.6
1-2 years	9.2
More than 2 years	6.7
Total	100

Several reasons were put forward as to why young persons tend to leave their employment:

- In some cases they are forced to leave by the employer. This does not necessarily mean that the employer terminates their employment but that employers tend to be tough with such employees in order to convince them to leave. This usually occurs when employees are not ready to work hard enough;
- Young persons tend to leave their work in search of career advancement or in finding better working conditions;
- In some cases young persons leave employment in order to continue their studies. This was mentioned in the case of banks;
- Young persons tend to experience burnout after a number of years due to the continual pressure on the job. Employers in the I.T. sector mentioned this with respect to programmers. In the case of factories, machine operators may experience problems in keeping up with production demands and so after some time opt to leave;
- Young people tend to be adventurous and so are more willing than older employees to risk and try out new employment;
- Young persons wish to have a less hectic life. This was mentioned by an estate agent with respect to their sales consultants who work on commission basis and have to deal with clients at practically any time of the day at any place. This job demands a lot of effort which is not automatically fruitful and so young persons may tire from having such a job and opt for something less demanding and more stable;
- Young persons tend to be more impulsive and tend to over-react. In such circumstances young persons would more easily quit a job than older more mature persons;
- Some young people may opt to start their own economic activity. This was mentioned within the construction sector with respect to plasterers;
- Others may wish to try job opportunities abroad. One particular manufacturing company said that it tended to lose engineers as they had much better work opportunities abroad and so a good number decide to spend part of their work-life abroad;
- Youth may also feel that the financial burden is too much. This again was mentioned by an estate agent who pointed out that those working on commission basis had to wait for the contract in order to be paid their commission and this took about 6 months. The first few months of their employment would therefore bear no financial income.

Table 41: Reasons given for wanting the same or different job.

Reason	Want the same job %	Want a different job %
Too much hard work	0.7	11.6
Would like to further studies	2.0	14.0
Happy at work	84.5	3.5
Good salary	0.7	1.0
Want something better	0.7	2.3
Want something more interesting	0.7	5.8
Job is challenging	0.7	2.3
I do not like my work	0.7	2.3
I want a better salary	0.7	19.8
Prefer better working conditions	2.0	32.6
The work is boring	-	1.2
It is a dangerous work	-	1.2
I get to meet a lot of people	6.8	1.2
I had problems with colleagues	-	1.2

3.5 How do young persons view their future?

One of the aims of this research was to obtain insight into young persons' aspirations about their future, what were their fears and whether they were ready to undergo further training as part of lifelong education in order to advance in their work and their personal development. Insight is provided from the survey and the group interviews.

Respondents in the survey were asked if they would make the same decisions about work were they to start all over again. Over half of the respondents said yes, this amounting to 63.3% of those who are working. On the other hand, there still is a percentage, amounting to over a third who would do something different. A better insight is obtained when one considers the type of reasons given by the respondents for their wish to change job.

The majority of those saying that they would choose again the same type of work said that they felt like this because they were happy at work. A few said that they liked to meet a lot of people. The remaining respondents said that they were happy but they either want to further their studies for a better salary or better working conditions. It is interesting to see that payment is not the main factor that determines how happy an employee is at work.

Those who would prefer to have another type of job gave a number of reasons. The most common reason was better working conditions. It was then followed by a better-paid job. They also lamented that the work was too hard. They also would like something more interesting. Some respondents in fact expressed a wish to do this by saying that they would like to stop working temporarily in order to further their studies. Most of these respondents wish to go to University.

Aspirations

Respondents in the survey stated what their aspirations

were with respect to their working career. Many of the respondents ticked more than one option showing that young persons hold a number of goals that they would like to reach.

Practically half of the respondents want to advance in their work. This shows that a good percentage of young people see their present job as one step in their career. In fact there are also 18.2% who already view career advancement. One fourth have stated that they already have the job they want. This does not mean that these young persons do not have any work aspirations as in fact the majority of those who chose this option ticked other options too. It is also noticeable that one sixth would like to become self-employed. This is the second time that a number of young persons would like to be entrepreneurial and as already advocated, this should be encouraged and support provided. A small percentage would like to stop in order to take care of the family. When one considers that half of the respondents were women, it shows that today women do not view the work in the house as the eventual option. They are considering their work as a major part of their life with aspirations similar to those of men, at least at this young age. Another one sixth would like to further their studies. This shows that the majority of the young persons today have not yet endorsed the concept of lifelong learning. Among the young persons interviewed, there was a large number who as yet have had only a limited experience of work.

The young persons spoke about their future in different ways, mainly with respect to: how well they felt they are being prepared for work; and the employment opportunities that exist in their area of specialisation. They expressed their fears with respect to finding work once they finish their post-secondary training. Training with respect to entrepreneurship was also discussed in view of having the aspiration to eventually being self-employed.

Table 42: Frequency of work aspirations held by respondents.

Aspiration	%
Already found the job I want	23.0
To progress within my own work	48.4
To become self-employed	16.7
To do another job	17.9
To find work quickly	15.2
To continue studying while I work	16.7
To stop working to take care of the family	7.2
To advance in my career	18.2

First of all they stated that they felt that they were trained well to do the work in their area of specialisation. This level of competency is very important to achieve as employers need to appreciate and recognise the effectiveness of these post-secondary institutions.

'when we leave we would have been well trained by the school to do our work well'
(School of Hairdressing)

A number of the young persons interviewed stated that they felt that their post-secondary school prepared them well for the world of work. They said that they have had sessions within their course where they were taught about how to apply for jobs. On a more practical aspect they said that a number of their teachers are directly involved with industry and so they give them practical tips about work in their line of study.

'School has prepared us not only on how to do our work but also on how to look for work'
(School of Hairdressing)

'Yes, here we were prepared for everything, sometimes by the teachers, when talking among us. many teachers work with companies themselves. During lectures they tell us how directors and managers work, even the assignments are placed in real life contexts'
(MCAST student)

'In English lessons we are learning on how to apply for work'
(MCAST student)

'The course covers everything, it is very practical, not theoretical'
(MCAST student)

Obviously, they also recognised that it also depends on their initiative in being successful to find a good job.

'The school helps us but you need to have initiative'
(School of Hairdressing)

Some of the young persons, however, expressed concerns about job opportunities. Some complained that it was difficult to find the ideal employer.

'For example, I am interested in working with two employers, but one pays well but makes me clean the airconditioners, the other lets me do what I like at work but is not ready to pay well. What one has the other lacks'
(School of Hairdressing)

A number of young persons expressed concern about finding a job. They mentioned different reasons for their concern. They were afraid that since their course was new, employers may not recognise the quality and level of their training and would not be willing to take them up as employees. In addition, since quite a large number of students were following the same course, there was going to be great competition for jobs. This concern was even greater since they felt that employers would still prefer university graduates to them.

'as it is MCAST accepts many students and I am afraid that there will be many others before me looking for jobs'
(MCAST student)

'I do not think that MCAST students will experience difficulties because the BTEC is still new and I do not think that employers as yet understand what level it represents'
(MCAST student)

'I think that when I get the Diploma it will not be appreciated because the degree is not as yet recognised in Malta'
(MCAST student)

A number of young persons expressed their opinions about training in entrepreneurship. This issue was discussed in detail particularly by students at the School of Hairdressing since many of them had aspirations to eventually open their own salon. They complained that although the school prepared them very well technically, they were trained in order to find a job in a salon rather than to set up their own business.

'At school they tell us to first get experience as employees and then become self-employed'
(School of Hairdressing)

'We are prepared to look for work with an employer, but not as much to be self-employed'
(School of hairdressing)

When the young persons interviewed were asked about the type of training and support in entrepreneurship they would like to have, they made a number of suggestions. One particular student mentioned the possibility of getting support from the ETC. However, he pointed out that ETC provided more support in finding work with an employer than in opening your own business.

'I asked at ETC. They give you advice, but more on how to find work than on how to become self-employed'
(School of Hairdressing)

Another student mentioned support from his parents. He pointed out that the major problem was to find a place where to open a salon. He had discussed this issue with his father who was willing to convert his garage. Another student stated that she had discussed it with her parents but did not know what to do.

'I always thought about being self-employed and my father said that he will convert his garage. I think that the site is the greatest problem. Now I will start setting up the place slowly'

(School of Hairdressing)

'I have discussed it with my parents but do not know what I will do'

(School of Hairdressing)

All students felt that they could have some preparation in how to set up their own business. One student stated that she was aware that such training was provided in similar types of schools abroad. It was an aspect which the school did not cater for in the way that the students felt they needed.

'Abroad, students are taught everything'

(School of Hairdressing)

'They usually ask an accountant'

(School of Hairdressing)

One must say at this point that even though it was mainly the students at the school of hairdressing who were thinking of being self-employed and having their own business, the issues that they raised apply also to the other students in different institutions.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that most young persons in Malta experience a smooth school to work transition in that they move from education to work in a short period of time and often settle down in their first employment. On the other hand, one needs to consider whether this is positive in that young persons may be settling down in the first job that they find when they could have better employment opportunities if they searched for work more intensively.

Chapter 4

Career guidance and counselling services at school are intended to provide students with enough information to make informed decisions about their education and career. The findings of this study show that despite the efforts being made by the various educational institutions, more needs to be done to provide a comprehensive information to students.

Career Guidance and Counselling Services

Decisions such as subject choice at secondary level impinge on career opportunities further on. Guidance teachers thus play a great role in informing young persons about the opportunities available and how their choices would affect opportunities in the future.

4.1 What type of guidance and counselling service are young persons receiving?

Guidance teachers can be identified as the key people responsible for career guidance and support within secondary education. The Assistant Director of Education in charge of guidance within the Education Division identified key points of career guidance as: the transition from primary to secondary; Form II/III in Junior Lyceum and Area Secondary respectively; and towards the end of secondary education.

The first decision occurs before entry into secondary education. This is due to students needing to make specific subject choice. This choice includes an additional language to English and Maltese; and another subject which usually relates to whether to take draughtsmanship (Technical and Design) or nutrition (craft/textile studies/home economics). The second decision point also refers to subject choice. This usually takes place at the end of form II in Junior Lyceum schools and Form III for Area Secondary students. This choice is considered crucial as it predetermines the career options for students at post-secondary and tertiary level. The third decision point does not refer to subject choice but to how to proceed on completion of compulsory education. The decisions involve whether or not to continue their education or to start working, and for those who wish to stay at school, which post-secondary institution they would like to attend.

Different types of activities are organised with respect to these decision points. Guidance teachers usually have talks for parents in the case of subject choice in Form I. They usually try to encourage learning an additional language. More emphasis is given to subject choice at Form II/III. The state education system usually provides one guidance teacher per 300 schools. In

addition, there are a number of counsellors who are attached to a number of schools and liaise with the guidance teachers. At this stage, the type of guidance offered includes: meetings of counsellors with guidance teachers in schools; and meetings for parents and students with subject option teachers. These activities are organised to give an overview to parents and students of how subject choice can determine their future possibilities. Individual sessions are also offered to students who request assistance.

Activities focusing on career choice are usually organised in the last two years of secondary education. Activities vary from career seminars to career orientation visits to different work places. Career seminars are usually organised in Form IV for Area Secondary students and in Form V for Junior Lyceum students. One class at a time attend these seminars. The programme usually targets issues such as self-awareness, review of post-secondary educational institutions available, job seeking skills, job analysis, use of media, how to apply for jobs and filling in job applications, writing a curriculum vitae and preparing for an interview. The seminars are usually tailored for the type of students attending the seminar.

Career-orientation visits are usually organised in Form V. Schools organise visits to workplaces. Places mentioned by the Assistant Director include: the Central Bank and other banks; the Stock Exchange; AFM; factories; Kindergarten centres; I.T.S. and hotels. She also mentioned that these visits are usually oriented for specific students. So, for example, students taking Business Studies have the option to go and visit various businesses within the financial sector. Students are also taken to the careers convention where they can get a good overview of the opportunities available. The schools are responsible for organising these visits. It, therefore, depends to a large degree, on the initiative and contacts that teachers have in the different schools. The service is thus not the same across schools, with some offering a better exposure to work and opportunities than others.

The main impression is that students who are interest-

ed in furthering their studies at post-secondary level are usually well informed of the impact of their subject choice on future career options. This is not the case for those students who would like to look for work on completion of their compulsory education. The problem is not only that of lack of information but also the tendency for factory-oriented students to have their mind set to work at a factory early in their secondary education and consequently are not interested to learn about different options available to them.

The Assistant Director also feels that the ETC can play a greater role in the preparation of young persons for the world of work. It should '*act as a facilitator from school to work*'. It can set up a job website¹, design a formal training programme to facilitate their transition, and importantly to start intervening while young persons are still at secondary school. ETC may also liaison with the Education Division in building on the tracer studies it carries out and follow up young persons at a later stage in order to trace their paths. She also suggested that there could be some type of support system set up in collaboration with the Education Division and employers. This support system can serve both as an information centre and a place where young persons can sound their complaints in order to be in a position to obtain support in how to deal with certain situations that arise at work.

The Assistant Director also made reference to employers. She stated that many times employers state that they expect young persons to be fully trained when recruited. However, they are not ready to invest in their preparation, this input varying from dedicating time to students when they visit their workplace to taking an active role in their education. There is very little contact between schools and employers and this is one aspect that needs to change.

Links between secondary and post-secondary schools

In carrying out interviews with key people involved in the school to work transition, it emerged that there does exist some form of contact between secondary and post-secondary schools. These types of links, according to persons within post-secondary institutions, are not uniform and often depend on the secondary schools' interest in the particular post-secondary institutions. One of the principals within the post-secondary sector stated that it had a structured relationship with one particular Junior Lyceum school but not with the other same type of schools, and even less contact with Church and Independent schools.

It appears that great efforts are being made by vocational schools, particularly MCAST, to build closer links with secondary schools. Efforts made include different types of ini-

tiatives. They are willing to go to any secondary school to talk to students about the courses they offer and the different opportunities available whenever secondary schools express an interest in their institution. They also try to establish contact with guidance teachers in secondary schools in order to keep them updated on courses etc. They also participate actively in the careers convention, not only by just being represented and meeting students who ask for more information but by organising a number of one hour seminars for students. The institution also publishes a prospectus, which it distributes to secondary schools and any students who are interested in its courses.

A number of issues relating to secondary schools were raised in interviews. Many concerned the type of guidance that was being offered to secondary students. People within the post-secondary schools felt that secondary students were not being informed sufficiently in order to be able to make informed choices as they lacked information about the type of courses available; the way they are structured and assessed; and the career opportunities available. This could often be noted from students' unrelated first and second choices when applying for different courses.

In raising these concerns, a number of suggestions were made. It was felt that career guidance with respect to the choice of post-secondary education should be structured rather than left to the initiative of individual guidance teachers. It should also start early in secondary education, some time during forms 4 and 5 rather than being left to the end of secondary school. There was also need for further training in career guidance such that guidance teachers can give a better service than just providing factual knowledge about the courses available.

Reference was made particularly to guidance with respect to the vocational path. The persons interviewed felt that there was not enough emphasis on vocational education as a possible route. Particular reference was made to Junior Lyceum schools where not enough information was being given about this option. The focus in such schools tends to be on the general education track. These schools are actually reinforcing the local cultural view that vocational education is inferior. There is also a lack of information about vocational courses in Area Secondary schools. The reason in this case is reversed, in that most of the students are not expected to stay on at school but to find work and so information about post-secondary schools is considered irrelevant, at least to a percentage of students within these schools.

Another issue with respect to guidance about the vocational education path concerns gender, particularly girls

¹This interview was conducted in 2002 and the ETC may have taken up some of the initiatives suggested since then.

who are significantly absent from certain vocational post-secondary courses. It was suggested that this issue be tackled early in secondary schools as it is often related to subject choice made half-way through secondary school.

Guidance and support services to post-secondary students

Students also need career guidance and support in that stage of the school to work transition where they are being trained at post-secondary level. The post-secondary institutions all have some form of support system, usually within a guidance unit. In the case of one particular small vocational institution, a lot of support is also provided by the Head. In any case, all institutions want their students to feel that the school is willing to provide support and guidance and that they are ready to help students whenever they have problems or difficulties.

People providing support services within post-secondary schools are aware of their role in helping young persons in their transition from school to work. They try to achieve this in various ways:

- **Before entry into post-secondary education:** This support mainly involves providing information about: the courses available; the way courses are structured; method of assessment; and qualifications that may be achieved while young persons are still undecided as to what to do at the end of compulsory education. This type of support is crucial, as the choice of course will determine the young persons' future.
- **During work experience periods:** Support with respect to work experience is provided in different ways. Initially, it concerns finding placements. In some cases students easily manage through personal contacts. However, students often struggle to find sponsors. Support is thus given by providing possible contacts or else in guiding students in how to look for placements. In the whole process, students are also given support before work experience starts. They help them in drawing up contracts with employers and students are briefed about how the system works, what they are to expect and what is expected from them. At MCAST, in particular, students are also monitored while they are at work.
- **Development of soft skills:** Many courses at post-secondary level are content specific and students get training with respect to that content. However, it is being recognised that soft skills such as the ability to communicate effec-

tively are a necessary component in the preparation for the world of work. Support in the development of such skills is provided in different ways. It is either a component within the training course as is in the case of the courses based on foreign training programmes or else through support provided by the guidance unit. MCAST, for example, is aware of the impact of inclusion of this aspect in the training it provides. Whereas this is automatically part of the foreign courses it provides, it is not the case for locally designed courses. However, it has the intention of introducing such training in the future.

- **Support in preparing for full-time work:** The people interviewed commented that they notice how students mature as they proceed from one phase of their training to another. They noted that in most cases the transition to work is smooth. They still, however, recognised that it tends to be abrupt in the present system and some of the students suffer from this. Students get training and support in how to look for jobs and try to follow-up students even after they leave post-secondary school. The latter, however, is usually done in an informal way although MCAST are planning to keep track of its students until the transition is complete.

One comment with respect to the provision of support to students at post-secondary level was directed to ETC. It was felt that ETC could be more actively involved by providing more information about job opportunities and availability. It was also suggested that it could be possible to have an independent agency that would be responsible for providing career guidance and support to students at secondary and post-secondary students and to follow up young people in their first phase of full-time employment until the transition to work is complete.

Two other issues mentioned included the high rate of absenteeism of certain students in secondary schools and the work culture that exists in the students' home. It was argued that these are two aspects that create problems to the smooth transition from school to work.

4.2 How effective do young persons find the guidance and counselling services?

Survey respondents were asked to describe the type and quality of career guidance that they received during their secondary years.

Table 43: Respondents' rating of the effect of guidance teachers on item a. b. c. & d. in section C.

Rating	a. (%)	b. (%)	c. (%)	d. (%)
A lot	9.6	9.0	11.0	3.3
Well	17.9	15.5	15.8	11.9
Just about	18.2	17.6	15.5	10.1
A little	38.2	40.0	34.9	35.8
Not at all	13.7	15.8	19.7	36.1
Missing	2.4	2.1	3.0	2.7
TOTAL	100	100	100	100
Average rating*	2.70	2.61	2.62	2.1

* The rating was worked out from value 1 as lowest and 5 highest.

Career guidance in secondary school

The first four items of Section C of the survey targeted how much secondary school guidance teachers had explained:

- the impact of subject choice at form II / III on future employment opportunities;
- the range of employment opportunities available;
- the work opportunities that exist according to the type of post-secondary school attended; and
- the nature of work (pay, conditions, legislation, skills needed etc.).

The respondents appear to have given guidance teachers a middle rating. The highest was that referring to subject choice whereas the lowest referred to information directly related to work. In fact, this issue had also been raised during the focus groups discussions with young persons.

The options chosen for all four parts a., b., c., and d., were found to be statistically significant across the type of secondary school attended. This indicates that there appears to be different types of provision of career guidance in the different schools.

Impact of subject choice on work opportunities

Table 44 shows the great difference between Junior Lyceum, Church and Private schools, and Area secondary schools. More respondents from Area secondary schools rated the information given about the impact of subject choice to be a little, this amounting to a little less than half of the respondents in this category.

However, one should also note that the percentage for low rating in the other schools was high at about a third of the students. This means that anyway, the information, if given by guidance teachers, was insufficient to at least one third of the students in all types of schools.

In the second part respondents had to rate the amount of information given about work opportunities. Once again, respondents from Area Secondary schools rated this information much lower than students from the other types of schools. This is worrying since most of the students in these schools are more work oriented and many leave school once they finish their secondary education. It may be that guidance teachers tend to focus more on the general education path that leads to specific careers rather than on the type of jobs one can find with the few qualifications that students from Area Secondary schools possess. This aspect of the type of guidance provided needs to be addressed.

Table 44: Rating given to part a. - impact of subject choice across different secondary schools.

Rating	Junior Lyceum(%)	Church & private school (%)	Area Secondary & Trade (%)
A lot	10.5	12.1	7.6
Well	20.3	15.2	17.8
Just about	23.3	25.8	10.2
A little	38.3	28.8	46.6
Not at all	7.5	18.2	17.8
TOTAL	100	100	100

$\chi^2=19.08$, p-value = 0.014

Table 45: Rating given to part b. - range of employment across secondary school type.

Rating	Junior Lyceum(%)	Church & private school (%)	Area Secondary & Trade (%)
A lot	10.5	10.6	7.6
Well	15.8	19.7	13.4
Just about	22.6	21.2	11.8
A little	43.6	27.3	45.4
Not at all	7.5	19.7	21.8
TOTAL	100	100	100

$\chi^2=23.178$, p-value = 0.010

Table 46: Rating given to part c. - work opportunities according to post-secondary school across secondary school type.

Rating	Junior Lyceum(%)	Church & private school (%)	Area Secondary & Trade (%)
A lot	12.1	12.1	10.3
Well	22.0	18.2	10.3
Just about	17.4	25.8	9.4
A little	39.4	19.7	40.2
Not at all	9.1	24.2	29.9
Missing	100	100	100

$\chi^2=32.67$, p-value < 0.001

Once again, it appears that students in Junior Lyceum and Church and private schools tend to get much more information about the opportunities of post-secondary education that exist and the work opportunities one can have on frequenting these types of schools. This trend is in accordance with the fewer students from Area Secondary schools that choose to take up the vocational path at post-secondary level. These findings, however, do not shed light on whether this results from the mismatched advice that guidance teachers may be providing or the disinterest that students in Area Secondary schools have at that age or a mixture of both. What can be concluded is that somehow Area Secondary schools are not succeeding in providing young people with adequate guidance and also academic capabilities.

The last part targets information about work.

Respondents across all the different types of schools gave a very low rating. This shows that guidance teachers somehow remain detached from the world of work and probably tend to focus more on the academic aspect of the career path. However, once again, the lowest rating was obtained from Area Secondary schools. This is of great concern since most of the Area Secondary students move straight to work on completing their secondary education and there will be no other opportunities for them to learn about this aspect from work except from direct experience or other informal channels. A similar trend has been identified in other countries. The report by the OECD (2000) notes that it is commonplace that less successful students receive insufficient or inappropriate guidance and support within schools and that the greatest guidance effort and most detailed information are concentrated upon tertiary bound students.

Table 47: Rating given to part d. - nature of work across secondary school type.

Rating	Junior Lyceum(%)	Church & private school (%)	Area Secondary & Trade (%)
A lot	1.5	4.5	5.1
Well	14.5	13.6	10.2
Just about	15.3	12.1	5.1
A little	41.2	24.2	38.1
Not at all	27.5	45.5	41.5
Missing	100	100	100

$\chi^2=18.38$, p-value<0.001

Table 48: Types of career guidance activities organised for secondary school students.

Activity	%
Seminars	56.1
Getting people to talk about work	56.4
Visiting work places	34.8
Visiting post-secondary schools	6.5
Attending the career conventions	23.9
Receiving individual advice	25.5
Filling in questionnaires on work interests	3.4

Types of activities organised by guidance teachers during the respondents' secondary education.

92.5% of the respondents stated that their guidance teachers had organised some form of activity and were able to identify them from the list provided. The table below shows that the two most frequent activities were seminars and having people to talk about work. The next most common activity was visiting different types of workplaces. Careers convention and individual advice was given to about one fourth of the respondents. The school to work transition is an important step in young people's lives and it is important that every individual receives the type of support that s/he needs. Although the percentages obtained are encouraging, as it appears that a good group of young people are getting guidance, it is still far off from reaching all young persons. The percentage of young persons stating that they visited post-secondary schools is significantly low. If we want more young people to stay on at school, then it is necessary to expose them to the various opportunities that exist.

Two thirds of those who said that they received individual advice stated that this was normal procedure within their school and not something that occurred because they had specifically asked for individual advice. Again this amounts to two thirds of the students receiving individual advice, but then these are only one fourth of the cohort. In other words, career guidance

teachers appear to be open to only one sixth of secondary students. Although the fault may not lie only with guidance teachers as students themselves sometimes do not ask for help, the access of career guidance to students still needs to be greater.

Places visited during secondary school

Only 32.5% of the respondents stated that they had visited some type of work place or a post-secondary institution during their secondary education. Respondents mentioned a number of places that they visited. The majority of students went mainly to factories. Otherwise students were taken to post-secondary schools, the Malta International Airport, offices and Malta Shipyards. A variety of other places were mentioned but the percentage was very low. This shows that there does not seem to be a planned programme that gives a wide overview of the workplaces that exist.

Places visited during post-secondary school

Fewer respondents stated that they visited workplaces during their post-secondary education. This is due both to fewer respondents who actually followed a post-secondary course and visits to workplaces being more rare in these institutions than in secondary schools. This is in a way worrying, especially for vocational post-secondary institutions which tend to be closer to the world of work than any other type of institution.

Table 49: Frequency of places visited during secondary school.

Workplace	%	Workplace	%
Factories	20.3	Power stations	0.45
Offices	4.8	Fish farms	0.45
Post-secondary institutions	3.9	Water Services Corporation	0.45
Malta Shipyards	3.0	ETC Job Centres	0.45
Malta International Airport	2.1	Police Head Quarters	0.45
Finance related workplaces	1.8	Armed Forces of Malta	0.45
Hotels	1.2	Television stations	0.45
Insurance agencies	1.2	Malta Freeport	0.45

Table 50: Workplaces visited during post-secondary education.

Workplace	%
Hotels	1.5
Factories	1.5
Banks	0.9
Offices, MIA, University, Hospital, TV station, Enemalta, Metco & Stock exchange	0.3 each

Suggestions about support provided by guidance teachers

Respondents were asked to suggest ways by which guidance teachers at secondary school could help young persons undergo a smooth transition from school to work. The most common comment was the need to have more information about work opportunities and the necessary qualifications needed to follow such paths. A number of respondents also mentioned the need for guidance teachers to talk more about the meaning of work. A variety of other suggestions were made. Many of them involved providing more access to activities that already exist and are organised in schools. A new suggestion made was for guidance teachers to be full-time, that is without a teaching load. Obviously they also need a degree of professional development, both in updating their knowledge about the opportunities available and in being exposed to the world of work in different areas of specialisation.

All schools provide some form of guidance to secondary students. A better insight was obtained through the focus group discussions. The young people interviewed were asked to comment on the type of guidance they had during their secondary education. The responses given show that the type of guidance experienced by young people during their secondary education varies in quantity and in quality. Some stated that the service was basic with just a few occasional

talks, while others expressed a good degree of guidance offered. Guidance teachers were also found to have organised different types of activities and provided different forms of support.

In some cases students stated that they barely had any guidance.

'nothing, they did not speak to us a lot'
(Area Secondary student)

'We did not have much guidance. There you finish form 5, you either continue sixth form or else go to work'
(Private school student)

'They never took us to see work, the told us they would take us but..'
(Post-secondary student)

'They did not take us to MCAST, here or Junior College, Fellenberg..'
(Church school student)

Some noted that they were given limited knowledge, and that most of the information provided related mainly to academic qualifications. It appears that in some cases guidance teachers were only interested in the general education path, giving much less attention to the vocational option.

Table 51: Frequency of suggestions made about guidance teachers.

Suggestion made	%
To explain the value and meaning of work, conditions etc.	12.5
To organise more visits to workplaces	6.9
To talk more about work opportunities	41.8
To give students more individual advice	17.0
To organise some form of work experience	1.5
To organise more meetings/seminars for students	3.9
To get more employers to talk about work	2.1
To get more guidance teachers full-time and to update their professional training.	5.1
To do more questionnaires about work interest	2.1
Decision of subject choice taken too early	0.6

'They did tell us about work..like what O levels you need and other things'
(Junior Lyceum student)

'More about Junior College and other things. O Levels'
(Junior Lyceum student)

'We were told more about academic studies, for University'
(Church school student)

'They tell you what opportunities there are. We were never told about this school'
(Post-Secondary student)

'About academic studies only, on our studies etc. But then where we can go for example in form 4, we have to see'
(Junior Lyceum student)

A number of young people, especially those with little or no qualifications, admitted that many times they did not understand the information provided by their guidance teachers. Among them there were also some who stated that they did not find the information provided to them of any particular interest and so they just did not give any attention to it.

'They spoke to us, but I did not understand them. They told us many things, I forgot many of them'
(Area Secondary student)

'They gave us leaflets, I went through them but did not find them interesting – there were many exams in them'
(Area Secondary student)

These comments raise the issue that there are circumstances where guidance teachers are not able to use a language that students understand. Many guidance teachers tend to assume that secondary students are familiar with the different types of qualifications one may obtain and the different types of post-secondary institutions that exist. This is not often the case with those secondary students who are not academically oriented. The guidance provided may then have the opposite effect to that intended and would probably serve to scare off students from furthering their studies rather than to attract them to stay on at school.

A few criticised guidance teachers in that they provided information for general interest. This information is limited and of little value to those students who are interested in specific careers/work.

'They used to talk to us about schools like hairdressing that we were not interested in, what I wanted was different, they did not think of me too'
(University student)

'We did not have much time to talk about these things. For example, when we had to fill in the pink form they only asked for my name, what I wanted to do and let's go. They did not ask the reasons why we choose one thing and not another, or if it matches your interests or not'
(Area Secondary student)

These opinions reflect a lack of individual attention with respect to guidance. Students are individuals, and have different interests and aspirations. It is important that at certain points some form of individual guidance is provided as it would then be relevant to the young persons in question.

There were young persons who felt that their guidance teachers at secondary school not only gave a good service but also displayed a concern about the students' welfare. However, such comments also revealed the young persons' confusion between personal and career guidance.

'If you have any problems you could go to talk to them about work and other things'
(Area Secondary student)

'Yes, we had a lot of guidance, we even had a priest'
(Area Secondary student)

Interviewees also made reference to the type of activities that their guidance teachers organised during their secondary education. Among the examples mentioned there were visits to work places and post-secondary schools as well as organising work placements for a week.

'We did not have much chance for these things, in the final year we used to visit schools and other'
(Area Secondary student)

'They had sent us for a week work's experience'
(Young person working)

'They used to bring students from different schools. They used to talk to us about life in the particular school, Junior College, Fellenberg..'
(Post-Secondary student)

'They used to organise meetings but we also could

talk private. I never went but those who did were satisfied
(Post-Secondary student)

'We had a course to see what we were good at, to help us decide'
(Area Secondary student)

'We have a personal tutor to give us guidance'
(Post-Secondary student)

Some post-secondary students made a number of suggestions as to how guidance teachers can help them with the school to work transition. Most of the suggestions made referred particularly to exposure to work opportunities and demands. Suggestions made include:

'We used to go to companies, work related to our studies, they show us what type of work we can do'
(Post-Secondary student)

'See what is involved, in what you can get yourself into, excursions to companies to show us work'
(Vocational Post-Secondary student)

It is evident that these post-secondary students within vocational institutions feel detached from the world of work.

4.3 What role do guidance teachers play in the school to work transition?

The survey gives an insight of the degree of importance that young persons give to guidance teachers when it comes to make decisions related to their studies and work. In two items, respondents were asked to list the persons who influenced their decisions, in the first case with respect to their studies, in the second case with respect to their work.

People who influence choice of studies at school

The respondents were asked to name the three persons, in order of importance, who influenced their choice of study at school. The persons influencing young people are diverse. However, it can also be seen that they tend to take the advice of one or two persons at most. In fact, 69% did not mention a second person. The persons having most influence on subject choice are parents with one third of the respondents mentioning them as the most influential and an additional 9.6% as the second most influential. On the other hand, teachers do not feature as playing an important role as expected. In fact, friends are slightly more frequently mentioned than teachers. Another 18.2 % then stated that it was all their choice and they were not influenced by anybody. Guidance teachers seem to have a very minor influence on such a decision.

Table 52: Persons influencing young persons' choice of studies.

Person	Most influential	2nd influential	3rd influential
Parents	32.5	9.6	1.2
Teachers	9.6	9.0	1.5
Myself	11.0	0.6	-
Relatives	0.6	1.5	1.2
Friends	18.2	6.9	2.1
Siblings	1.8	1.2	-
Family	3.0	0.6	-
Professionals	1.8	0.6	0.9
Media	-	-	0.3
Guidance teachers	0.3	0.9	-
M.U.S.E.U.M.	-	0.3	-
Head of School	0.9	-	-
Boy/girlfriend	0.3	-	0.3
ETC	0.3	-	-
Politicians	-	-	0.3
Missing	19.7	69	92.2

Table 53: Frequency of people influencing job decisions.

Source	Most influential(%)	2nd most influential(%)	3rd most influential(%)
Myself	18.2	0.9	-
Parents	34.0	12.5	3.0
Friends	18.2	10.1	4.2
ETC	0.3	0.3	-
Siblings	2.7	3.0	0.3
Family	5.4	3.9	0.9
Teachers	7.5	8.4	2.1
Relatives	1.5	2.1	0.3
Girl/boyfriend	0.9	1.2	-
Media	1.5	0.3	-
TOTAL	90.1	42.7	10.7

Percentages worked out of total cohort in order to enable comparisons.

These percentages raise two main issues. If parents are influential in the choice of studies then it is essential for information to be given also to parents besides students. Career guidance needs to cater also for parents. The second issue refers to the role of guidance teachers. From the percentages given, they seem to have very little influence in such situations. If they want to have a greater role in this initial but crucial stage of the school to work transition, then they need to find ways to become more accessible and to provide more support than the present system does.

Persons influencing choice of job

Parents appear to play an important role in work-related decisions. In fact, half of the respondents stated that their parents influenced their decisions about work. However, one can also note that teachers do not seem to have a role in such decisions. Otherwise, it appears that young persons either decide what to do on their own or else they follow the advice of their friends. In either case, the young persons themselves or their friends are not the best sources to give advice.

They tend to be inexperienced and often immature due to their young age. Decisions related to work are crucial and young persons need a degree of guidance. Schools and the E.T.C can contribute, both by providing more knowledge and by taking up a greater degree of responsibility in preparing young persons for the world of work.

4.4 Conclusion

The research has shown that there is a lot of good will in terms of the provision of guidance at both secondary and post-secondary level. However, the service still tends to be disjointed and too dependent on the initiative of individual teachers. Young persons deserve a better service and sustained support if we want to ensure that their transition is to be smooth. Information and guidance have become an increasingly important aspect of the labour market, especially for the long-term unemployed and for others at risk of being excluded (OECD, 2000).

Chapter 5

In Malta there already exist a number of arrangements that help students acquire work experience while at school. The study sought to get information about such arrangements and discover ways of how they can be improved.

School to Work Links

The link between work and school was researched and data obtained from different sources: the interviews with key people; the focus group interviews; the employers and the survey.

5.1 What type of work experience do young persons have at post-secondary level?

A number of post-secondary institutions provide some form of work experience, either as apprenticeship schemes or summer work experience. In addition, it is also commonplace for young persons to have some form of part-time work.

The issue of work links was discussed during the group interviews with young persons. Issues raised included: the type of placement provided and whether the work experience provided is really well organised and directly related to the students' studies; and the relationship between the students and their sponsors. Problems mentioned vary from personal relationships to remuneration.

Problems related to the type of work placement included the lack of organisation and the relevance of the students' studies to their work experience. This can be noted from the young persons' comments.

'I am following a management course, I am not good enough to work as a manager now, too many theories..you do not do management during a placement, I have cleaned toilets, rooms and bathrooms, swept floors, there should be all types of work experience'

(I.T.S student)

'I wanted to do front office experience to learn and was not allowed because she said that I did not know, but I wanted to learn, I'm a student after all'

(I.T.S student)

'My experience of work placement was not up to my expectations and my needs as part of my training'

(I.T.S. student)

Another student mentioned that she experienced a contradiction between the ways and methods that they were being taught at school and the practices being adopted at work.

'We sometimes come across practices that go against our training, and this works against you as you should be learning'.

(I.T.S. student)

This raises the issue that it is not just a matter of providing work experience, but good quality work experience. Young persons need to experience examples of good practice.

One student lamented about the structure of apprenticeship where he goes to work some days of the week. He said that he was having an intermittent experience and consequently it was very difficult for him to get used to work.

'We were half work, half school and now school only. So you have only twice a week and it is difficult to get used to the routine'.

(MCAST student)

Most of the young persons' comments, however were about their relationship with their work sponsor. The students mentioned different levels of problems. There were personal relationships problems where the students felt that their sponsor did not respect them and disregarded their opinion or gave them elementary work with little, if any, learning opportunities. Students, however, also mentioned problems related to payment. There were cases where students were being kept extra hours without being paid for overtime. Students felt that they were being exploited by their sponsors.

Students mentioned different aspects of personal relationship problems. Some students felt that sponsors did not accept that they were being taught at school and so could have an opinion about things related to their work. They said that their opinion was not worth anything. This irritated them.

'Since you are a student you are considered differently, and for example they tell you, "no not like that", only their version is correct, and so you feel down because you say, "am I doing well or not?" You cannot know if you are doing well and they don't encourage you or try to help you'.

(School of Hairdressing)

'We were given a chance to learn in a salon but she wanted to have her say, I teach you and you do the work for me, it is true, she teaches me, there isn't that relationship that you are there for training'.

(School of Hairdressing)

On the other hand, there were also those students who said that they had a positive experience at work and felt respected and appreciated.

'Where I go there is dialogue, she cares and sponsors the school, knows what we get, knows our teachers'.

(School of Hairdressing)

'There are some who opened a salon, and recruited all from here, because they know us'.

(School of Hairdressing)

Students also complained that their sponsor abused them. They were often kept extra hours without paying them any overtime. The students felt that they were vulnerable and in most cases they had to accept it since the completion of their studies depended also on their work phases.

'They all take advantage at work'.

(School of Hairdressing)

'In my case, I told her that she was not paying my overtime, sometimes I used to stay late, an hour a day. I told her many times but she never took notice, and every time she told me in a little time, gets nervous and so on..'

(School of Hairdressing)

'I think that it is worthwhile for them, financially, that is why they accept and so they have as much work as a normal hairdresser because I am in the third year'.

(School of Hairdressing)

'If I speak up, she does not like me, now I am in the last bit and so I will not speak up now'.

(School of Hairdressing)

'I told her once, twice, and then stopped telling her'.

(School of Hairdressing)

'I did not have a good experience because I was not

paid and I.T.S. had to give me the stipend'.

(I.T.S. student)

Another student expressed encountering a similar problem but in his part-time job.

'At the moment I have this problem that I stay late and am not paid for it. I am supposed to work up to nine o'clock as a waiter, at work you cannot say at what time you will finish. Although at eight we start preparing to close so that at nine we leave, it is not always possible, I have worked up to ten many times, even half past ten and was not paid for the extra hour and a half'

(School of Hairdressing)

Such instances raise serious concerns. Young people are inexperienced and vulnerable, and do not know how to tackle certain difficult situations. It is then easy for employers to exploit them. If young persons are to make a smooth transition from school to work, it is important to avoid such situations from occurring. Some form of support system in order to protect young workers is needed.

These experiences also highlight the need for sponsors to be regulated more and students' work phases be monitored better. In most of the cases, the students did not blame their school or E.T.C. who are responsible for apprenticeships. However, they felt that they could be provided with more support and guidance in how to deal with such situations when they arise.

The students said that they did obtain some form of support from their schools. However, this varied, depending on the problem and the institution involved.

'It is more an employers' problem than the school's, once I had a problem and I spoke out about it and was helped a lot, both from E.T.C. and also at school'.

(School of Hairdressing)

'If you have a problem you can go to ETC.'

(School of Hairdressing)

Other students complained that they did not find the support that they expected from their school. Tutors sometimes did not turn up at the workplace and when they did, this was a rare occurrence.

'You phone the I.T.S. and they tell you that you will get paid, now it is in their hands'.

(I.T.S. student)

'Maybe they come to check on you once every three months'.

(I.T.S student)

'There is no dialogue between the school and the employers'.

(School of Hairdressing)

'I was only given a booklet about how much I should get paid but on how to deal with problems, nothing'.

(I.T.S. student)

'They visit you for five minutes and tell you that they need to leave quickly'.

(I.T.S. student)

Such comments show that young persons at post-secondary school need to be monitored and provided with support. The support can either be provided by ensuring that the situations mentioned are not permitted to occur as much as possible or else by providing a support service aimed at helping students tackle work-related problems. After all, these are problems that adults often encounter and young persons need to also learn how to deal with them.

Some students did, in fact, make a few suggestions of how their work experience could be improved. One particular student mentioned the need of work-plans which state the different experiences students need to have during their work phases. Others mentioned more support from their guidance teachers.

'I feel that I need training, how to be diplomatic'.

(MCAST student)

'How one can handle situations like this'.

(MCAST student)

'There should be a work programme that is approved from here so that when we go to work there is an agreement with the hotel'.

(I.T.S. student)

'That things are made clear before we go to work that we are to be paid, not first we are told that we have a contract and that he knows that we should be paid and then he tells you that he did not know that you should get paid'.

(I.T.S. student)

Like any other system, work experience for post-secondary students brings with it a number of problems. However, if young persons are to be prepared for the world of work and to be well trained in their area of specialisation, it is necessary that some of the problems mentioned be tackled immediately as they are unacceptable.

5.2 What types of links are there between education institutions and employers?

Post-secondary schools, in particular Vocational schools require links with employers as they need to find work placements for their students. However, more importantly, they are also responsible to provide the right type of trained worker for the needs of employers. It is only through dialogue with employers that schools can know the type of skills that employers want workers to have.

Employers interviewed were asked whether they had any links with education institutions, and if so, of what type. Different levels of links were mentioned:

- **No Links:** About one third of the employers interviewed stated that they had no links with educational institutions. However, in many cases, they were aware of the type of institutions that exist at post-secondary level in their sector, and in many cases, spoke positively about them;
- **Provision of summer jobs:** A number of employers from different economic sectors stated that their links with the education system was in accepting students for work experience in the summer months. MCAST was often mentioned in such cases, particularly with respect to I.T. students. This is understandable since MCAST runs this particular type of training;
- **Placing for apprentices:** A few employers stated that they usually take on apprenticeships in the technical area. In many cases, the employers take on apprenticeships on a regular basis;
- **Role within educational institutions:** A few employers mentioned that they were in some way involved with education institutions. The links mentioned were: organising visits for secondary students around the work place; inviting members of staff involved in teaching at one of the educational institutions; and having a member of the company (at top management level) on the MCAST board.

The overall message by employers was that although young persons are being well prepared academically, they lack soft skills, or as one particular employer stated: *'character formation'*. They felt that the educational system should also cater for this aspect of young per-

sons' personal development.

On the other hand, several issues were raised with respect to employers during the interviews with key persons. The main issue raised by people within post-secondary institutions revolved round their role of providing work experience to post-secondary students. This refers in one aspect to the willingness of employers to accept trainees. One vocational school said that a number of its past students eventually become sponsors themselves. This is possible since it is common within the sector for individuals to open their own business and be self-employed. In other instances, however, students have to find sponsors themselves and they encounter difficulties. Many find employers from people they know and contacts that they have. However, if they do not have any personal contacts, it becomes very difficult as often employers are reluctant to provide placements. It was mentioned that this situation arises mainly because ETC recruits as many school leavers as possible at the beginning of the year without taking into consideration that there may be some students who would not be able to get a work placement for summer.

Finding employers to act as sponsors is but the first step of the relationship between post-secondary schools and employers. Employers need to have contact in order to know the type of training students are getting and what type of work experience these trainees need to have. There is very limited dialogue between the schools and employers who tend to consider their needs and very few are interested in the training of young people. There is definitely room for improvement in this aspect. In addition, schools find it difficult to know what employers expect as employers very rarely say specifically what they are looking for. However, some are concerned with attitude and commitment to work and the ability to work in a team.

Views from ETC about work experience

The ETC feels that the present educational system is too academically oriented. In addition, unfortunately, students do not appreciate the relevance and purpose of education for securing a good stable job in the future. Schools, overall, tend to provide young people with academic skills. They do not usually train students in other competences such as communication and presentation skills. These are attributes that employers tend to value in their employees. Employers, in fact, tend to be unhappy with the quality of young workers who are just out of school. The group of young people who satisfy most employers' demands are the machine operators in factories, even though they are often found to lack a work ethic.

The ETC is aware that young people following vocational training, usually within an apprenticeship scheme, are at an advantage. First of all, apprentices experience work gradually while they are still studying. In addition, in many cases, employers recruit them on completion of their training. Unemployment is very low for those who go through an apprenticeship scheme successfully when compared to other young persons in other forms of training courses. The ETC is concerned about the employability of those young persons who have chosen the general education path at post-secondary level but did not proceed to University. This group of young persons have only an academic background and have problems finding employment. This problem is going to become greater once young persons start to graduate from MCAST. Training provided at MCAST is more job oriented due to the vocational inclination of the institution. Employers will therefore tend to prefer young people from MCAST, even for clerical and administrative jobs.

The ETC is involved in different ways with schools and the educational system. It allows students to visit ETC, organises meetings for guidance teachers and is also represented on boards such as the Apprenticeships Board. The deputy chief executive, however, feels that ETC's involvement in the school to work transition is not enough and there is room for a greater role. He also pointed out that although ETC is responsible for apprenticeships and deals with complaints during apprenticeship, it does not do any follow up on young people once they start work. This also needs to be addressed.

The ETC has a number of initiatives that target young people and their transition from school to work. Many of them target unemployed youth and include:

- **Traineeships:** These are short-term apprenticeships, made up of on-the-job work/training with an employer and off the job training at the ETC centre Valletta or other ETC approved training institutions. Initiatives included training in the I.T. sector, construction trades and in pipefitting and welding;
- **The Basic Employment Training (BET):** This training programme provides basic employment skills to young school leavers who are coming out of the present educational system with little or no skills or qualifications and do not intend to continue with further training and education;
- **Job Start Youth Initiative:** Job plans are drawn up for unemployed youths in order to help them

integrate in the labour market in the shortest time possible;

- **Job Experience Scheme:** Youths are exposed to work for a period of 13 weeks;
- **Youth Outreach Programme:** Skills in team work, writing skills, telephone skills and job search are taught in this programme. (ETC, 2002).

In addition, the Acting Senior Manager of the Employment Services Division, mentioned other ongoing initiatives aimed at reaching youths. The profiling system was introduced, Job clubs were being set up in different localities, live-ins were organised as well as information sessions about apprenticeships. However, ETC acknowledges that the problem of limited employment opportunities does not stem after the end of compulsory education but while the young persons are still at secondary school. In fact they are currently working on a possible programme that may be implemented in schools in collaboration with the Education Division.

The ETC also has a training branch which provides training courses for both job seekers and those who are looking for professional development and opportunities of advancement at work. It consequently runs a

number of courses. The ETC is sensitive to job market needs and usually tailors its courses to areas and skills where employment opportunities exist. The manager in charge of training expressed ETC's efforts in trying to keep in contact both with schools and with employers in order to try and be as effective as possible. The training that the ETC provides is very much person oriented, as it believes that it is important to cater for the whole person. Although the courses are open to people of all ages, they are aware that particular courses would be of interest to young persons and often ETC guides them to what training to follow.

5.3 Are young persons being given work-related skills?

Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they had specific competences and if so, where they had learnt them. The competences include:

- writing a curriculum vitae;
- filling in an application form when applying for work;
- knowledge of conditions and laws related to work; and
- knowledge of the role of the union at work.

Table 54: Frequency of competences held by respondents.

Competency	Yes (%)	No (%)	TOTAL
Writing a C.V.	72.9	21.7	100
Filling in an applications	73.2	26.8	100
Knowledge of work conditions and the related laws	34.3	65.7	100
Knowledge of the roles of a trade union	25.7	74.3	100

Table 55: Source of learning work-related competences.

Source	a.(%)	b.(%)	c.(%)	d.(%)
Myself	7.1	19.6	10.1	6.8
Parents	1.3	4.5	5.5	9.5
School	74.1	58.5	39.4	51.4
Media	-	-	0.9	9.5
Siblings	2.7	1.8	1.8	-
Friends	3.1	2.1	2.8	-
Work	-	1.3	17.4	14.9
ETC	3.6	3.0	12.8	1.4
Family	7.6	6.7	7.3	2.7
Union	-	-	0.9	4.1

It can be noted that whereas three quarters of the respondents know how to write a c.v. and how to apply for a job, this percentage falls to 34.3% and 25.7% in the case of knowledge of work conditions and laws and the role of the union at work respectively. This shows that whereas young persons are being prepared in how to look for work, they are not being given the knowledge and competences they need to have in order to know the rules and to avoid being taken advantage of once they start work.

Respondents have mentioned various sources from where they have learnt these specific competences. The school seems to be where young people learn basic competences and knowledge related to work. However, one must keep in mind that schools should prepare all students. In such circumstances, the percentages obtained show that schools can do better and develop these competences in a greater percentage of students.

One also notes other sources of information. These sources are varied, but what is noticeable, is the small role that parents seem to play in the preparation for work. There is also a significant percentage who stated that they learnt things by themselves, particularly in how to apply for a job. It is important to point out the limited role that the ETC has. This may be due to young people coming in contact with ETC only if they have problems in finding employment.

5.4 What is youth and employers' opinion of apprenticeship schemes?

The survey provides an insight into young persons' knowledge of apprenticeship schemes. Only 16.7 % of the respondents said that their guidance teachers had talked to them about the different apprenticeship schemes that exist. This percentage is very low and reflects the low value given to post-secondary vocational education. It is important for the country's economy to have a supply of technical and skilled people who can be trained within the vocational route. Guidance teachers should also inform more students about these possible openings. Most of the respondents had already finished their education when MCAST was set up. It is believed that MCAST has definitely served to provide more information about the courses it offers and the possible work opportunities that exist. This information, however, cannot be obtained from the respondents in this survey.

From those who were told about the existence of apprenticeship schemes, 49.1% of them were told

about the ESTS scheme, 38.2% about the TAS scheme and only 10.9% were told about both schemes. This result further highlights the need to inform secondary students about the availability of the different apprenticeship schemes even though they may not opt for them. However, it may be the case that more students can be attracted into such schemes if they know about them earlier in their education when they are still at secondary school.

One question posed to the employers participating in this study targeted their opinion of apprenticeship schemes. They were asked to give their opinion on whether they considered the possibility of apprenticeships within their sector and whether they prefer to recruit a person having gone through an apprenticeship scheme to one who does not.

Most of the employers spoke favourably of apprenticeship schemes. They were all in favour of apprenticeship schemes in helping young people make the transition from school to work smoother. Positive comments were made about apprenticeships in the different sectors. They, however, still felt that the system needs to be reviewed, as there is room for improvement. They considered the setting up of MCAST as a positive step in improving the provision of vocational training. They also felt that the government could invest more in apprenticeship schemes, and should involve employers more.

Most of the employers felt that there were opportunities of developing apprenticeship schemes in economic sectors where they do not as yet exist. This, however, was stated mainly in principle, as they also raised problems which present systems have. The main difficulties mentioned were:

- **Continuity problems:** Schemes required students to spend some days of the week at work and the other days at school. The problem was the daily demand for work within the company. This was a great problem in customer service provision where it is necessary to provide a service quickly and efficiently;
- **Investment demand:** A number of employers stated that in the case of summer work, they dedicated some time of their full time employees to coaching these young persons in their job. This meant a reduction in production of these employees, generating greater running costs. In addition, they also stated that once they had trained these young people, they leave to complete their studies and felt that the effort made would not have been worthwhile;

- **Confidentiality problems:** A number of employers stated that it was difficult to accept trainees in their sector for short periods of time. The main difficulty was the need for high confidentiality within the sector. Confidentiality referred both to personal details about clients and about new services being developed within the company. These concerns were raised by employers within the financial sector, where as one employer stated *'their services are easily reproduced'* and so it was essential to always be at the forefront of the business.

These comments show that although employers view apprenticeships positively, they are not that willing to support them. In fact, many mentioned that the government should provide more incentives, financial, fiscal or other, to those employers who choose to support such schemes.

One aspect that emerged at this point was the great need for the provision of some training in the construction industry. All employers within the sector stated that there existed the need to provide some form of practical/technical training. Their industry needs workers who are skilled in manoeuvring heavy machinery. In the current situation, they have to train their own workers on the job. This could be better done through training, not only to ensure more skilled workers, but to also attract more workers to the sector.

Recruitment of apprentices

Most employers stated that they would more probably recruit a person who did an apprenticeship scheme. However, they also pointed out that they still evaluated the candidates' individual attributes such as the type of person, attitude to work, personality etc. Those employers who usually have apprentices, in many cases, stated that they would take on the apprentices on completion of their course. There were, however, cases where apprentices who disappointed them and they did not employ them at the end of their course. Work experience during post-secondary education was much valued by employers overall.

Apprentices appear to have a good transition. This has also been reported in the OECD (2000) report which found that across a number of countries apprenticeship is associated with good transition outcomes, even if it is not always clear why this is the case. With respect to other types of work experience it was found that co-operative experience (work experience included as part of course) appears to have mixed outcomes. (OECD, 2000)

5.5 How much vocational training is available to young workers?

Practically all employers interviewed stated that it was their responsibility to provide continuous vocational training. It was only in a couple of cases that employers stated that training did not fall within the policy of their company although they still provided some training to their staff.

Different levels of continuous vocational training was mentioned by employers:

On the job training: A number of employers mentioned that they trained their workforce on the job, in most cases carried out by more experienced colleagues. Such training usually involved helping the new employee learn how to carry out the duties of the specific job or new responsibilities due to promotion. This type of training was mentioned mainly in the case of manual and unskilled types of jobs. This type of training was also common within the construction industry;

Attendance to courses: A number of employers mentioned that they organised courses for their staff. Types of courses mentioned include: health and safety; occupational health; customer care; life skills etc. Such courses are usually directed more at clerical and administrative staff. These can be either outsourced, by commissioning training institutions to deliver courses tailored to their business' needs; paying for employees to attend courses organised outside the business and open to other participants; or organised in-house by personnel responsible for training. In the latter case, one employer said that they had recruited a person with the responsibility of running courses all year round for the different categories of staff in the company. Another large employer said that they possessed a whole department within the company responsible for training and development. In another case, the company had its own training school where training was also offered to young people wanting to find employment within their sector;

Support for further studies: A number of employers stated that they offer support to those employees who want to further their studies in areas directly related to their work. The type of support provided includes: financial support by paying all or part of the course costs; flexible working hours that allow employees to leave early on days when they have to attend courses; and additional leave for study. In most cases, obtaining further qualifications is linked to career advancement and/or additional financial allowances.

There are different levels at which continuous vocational training forms part of a company's organisation:

- At a basic level, training is provided by more experienced employees. There is no administrative structure to monitor how it is managed;
- Training is provided in particular periods. Many employers mentioned that they always provide induction courses for their new recruits. September was also mentioned as a period for training provision by a couple of employers. In most cases, there are periods during which sections of the staff are trained;
- Some employers have a developed administrative structure for the provision of continuous training. This does not only mean the establishment of a department responsible for training but investment in other types of support such as: libraries; self-teaching tutorials; regular training needs analysis; and e-learning courses. One particular employer mentioned having a system of personal development plans with yearly appraisals for all its employees. One common feature of such employers is their large size. The large size of these companies enables them to invest in such structures.

5.6 *What role can employers and the government have in the school to work transition?*

All employers felt that they have a role in the school to work transition of young people. The levels of involvement mentioned varied widely. They can be grouped as:

- **Educational contact with training institutions:** Employers mentioned different ways in which they can keep in contact with schools. They mentioned examples such as: giving talks to secondary students about the type of work opportunities within their sector; providing feedback about schemes within post-secondary schools such that they can be improved; and identifying areas where there is need for training.
- **Provide more opportunities for work:** A number of employers stated that they could make a greater effort in offering more opportunities of work experience during the post-secondary education stage. They, however, stated that this was only possible if the government

was ready to invest more, not just by providing financial incentives, but also by investing more in the educational system.

- **Direct involvement in the educational system:** A number of employers stated that they had an important role within post-secondary education. Two levels of involvement were mentioned. They stated that representatives of their sector could be invited to sit on school boards. They also said that they could be involved more directly, even at the level of drafting courses and providing insight into the type of skills that students need to develop in order to become better trained employees.
- **Helping in the personal growth of young persons:** A few employers stated that they had a role in helping young people to adjust to working life. New recruits needed to be considered differently from other employees during the first months of work. This went beyond the usual induction phase. These employers were referring to the personal growth young people need to experience in order to become independent responsible adults.

Government input

Employers were also asked to suggest ways in which the government can assist more in helping young persons go through the school to work transition. Suggestions made were aimed at different players:

- **Educational Institutions:** Employers said that government could remove the emphasis on examinations and focus more on personal development. This means that emphasis is to be placed on developing communication skills, a respect for discipline and character formation of students during their compulsory education. They also mentioned the possibility of introducing work-related studies as part of the curriculum. There was no suggestion, however, as to what this would involve. Schools could also be equipped with better machinery such that young people can be given the best possible up to date training.
- **Employment and Training Corporation:** A few employers made reference to the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) in particular. They felt that it needed to review its system, to start intervening before the end of compulsory education. It is too late to try and help young people after 12 years of unsuccessful education. They also mentioned

that ETC could do more to recognise those employers who were contributing to the school to work transition through their support to apprenticeships and other schemes.

Recognition does not necessarily have to be monetary but awards and recognition in the media would be much appreciated. ETC could also carry out a projection exercise to be in a better position to forecast the demand for jobs in the future and consequently to promote and support training in that area.

- **Employers:** Initiatives mentioned were various, ranging from inviting employers to be more active within the educational institutions and providing financial incentives to employers who participate in training schemes. There

could also be different types of financial incentives, for examples fiscal measures for those employers who offer employment to young persons.

5.7 Conclusion

The research shows that there is much to do in improving young persons' preparation for work. Although young persons are being quite well prepared academically, there is a lot of room for improvement in the type of work experience provided. This applies both to courses where work experience is already incorporated within the curriculum and in those courses where as yet no work experience is provided.

Chapter 6

Certain groups of youth tend to experience difficulties in their school to work transition. These groups require special support measures that prevent them from becoming long-term unemployed.

Groups at Risk

There are groups of young persons who can be considered as at risk. These include the unemployed, those who drop out of school before the end of compulsory education and those young persons included in group 'others'.

6.1 Who are the young unemployed?

The young unemployed formed part of the cohort included in the survey. The survey gives an insight to the background of young unemployed who are registering for work.

A large percentage of respondents registering for work were found to have few or no qualifications. In fact, as can be shown in the table below, one quarter have no qualifications whereas another 43.8% have only SEC standard of education. The lowest percentage is the group with University qualifications. This result is in line with the international trend that the higher the level of education, the lower the probability of being unemployed.

This is further substantiated with the large percentage of respondents coming from just compulsory education. It is understandable that if one has only done up to secondary education, then s/he can only have SEC qualifications. In fact, this adds more to the validity of the data than to the results. However, it also shows that level of education received is related to whether a person is unemployed. On the other hand, there is also a significant percentage of young people from post-secondary education who do not

seem to manage to find work.

The majority of those registering for work come from Area Secondary schools. In fact these amount to 42.9% of the registering group. The lowest group come from Church and Private schools with only 23.8%. This is in a way understandable since students from this type of school tend to be more academically oriented and most of them proceed to post-secondary education. If the level of education were related to unemployment, then they would in turn have greater probability of finding work. One third (33.3%) of the unemployed respondents came from Junior Lyceum schools. The difference between these type of schools and Church and private schools, which was not that evident academically, grows in terms of employment.

Half of the unemployed young persons come from families where the father has an elementary job or are technical and associate professionals. The next group of young persons with a high percentage are those where the father is a service or market sales worker. On the other hand there are no children of professionals and senior officials who are unemployed and very few of clerical workers. It may be that these groups are more conversant with the present educational system and so are more able to guide their children better in their transition to work. The percentage is also very low for those parents working in factories. It may be that they may not be familiar with the educational system but can guide their children better with respect to finding work within the sector that they work. In fact, around 40% of those respondents working in factories have father working within the same category of work.

Table 56: Frequency of qualifications of those registering for work.

Qualification	%
No qualifications	22.9
SEC level	43.8
University Certificate	8.3
Non University Certificate	14.6

Table 57: Highest level of education of the registered unemployed.

Level of education	%
Secondary education	51.4
Finished post-secondary	31.3
Started University	4.2
Started trade school	2.2

Table 58: Frequency of secondary school type for the registered unemployed.

Type of secondary school	%
Junior Lyceum	33.3
Church & private	23.8
Area Secondary	42.9

6.2 Who are the 'other' young persons?

The group 'others' in the survey sample were particularly problematic to find. This group was not directly accessible in that no list of these persons exists and it was very difficult to identify these young people. Only 51 respondents in this category were obtained. The reasons for this were various. In a number of circumstances such types of young persons were identified within particular social centres. However, due to the Data Protection Act and the sensitive nature of the problems these young persons are going through, in many cases it was impossible to reach these young persons. This non-response, however, is in itself also a research result since a number of reasons have been identified as to why it is so difficult to gain access to such a group of young persons.

The types of respondents caught within the survey do not necessarily represent all the different types of young persons that make up this sample. As just explained, responses were not obtained from all young persons within this group. The analysis here will therefore include only those who were accessible. The groups identified in this case included: young persons who are at home studying on their own; those who as yet have not decided what to do with themselves; and those at home taking care of their family or not bothering to register for work since they are comfortable living with their family.

The majority of those who are technically idle have little or no qualifications. In fact over half of them (58.3%) have no qualifications and another third (33.3%) have up to SEC standard. Only 8.3% have some form of qualification. This means that qualifications are also related to the educational background of the respondents. In fact, the majority (82.4%) have up to secondary education. The other main group include those who have started but not finished post-secondary education. In a way, these respondents represent those young persons who are stuck at

Table 59: Father's employment of the unemployed.

Father's employment	%
Senior managers and professionals	-
Technician and associate professionals	27.0
Clerks	5.4
Service workers and market sales workers	24.3
Craft and related trades workers	10.8
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	5.4
Elementary occupations	27.0

points within the education system. Those with secondary education may not wish to start working but do not have the qualifications to proceed to a post-secondary institution. Or else, in the case of single mothers, they cannot attend school due to their added responsibilities. In the case of the post-secondary respondents the same argument may apply. Anyway, what is evident about this group is that many appear undecided about their school/work future or else that they have had to take a break from the labour market due to family commitments.

Half of this group (52.4%) have never had a job. This further explains the situation where young persons continue with their studies at home. On the other hand, one must not conclude that half the idle persons represent such a situation. The large percentage may have been obtained due to this group of young persons having been more accessible for completing the questionnaire than other types of young persons.

When considering the father's employment of this group of young people about half of them come from the professional, senior managers and clerical staff who tend to be more academically oriented whereas the other half come from elementary occupations. It appears that one finds 'idle' young persons with fathers at extreme levels of employment. It is understandable that professionals and senior managers would be ready to support their children such that they can catch up with their studies and get more qualifications. In the case of children of people having elementary jobs, the reason may not be so evident. From the data, one cannot say whether it is simply that these parents do not follow their children and so do not bother, or else do not know how to guide their children to find direction in their transition, or any other reason.

In conclusion, it appears that there are idle young persons across the different school types and family background. Further in-depth studies with such groups of people need to be carried out.

6.3 *Why do some young people opt to leave school before the end of compulsory education?*

This section tackles the issue of those young persons who do not complete their secondary education. Young persons, with the consent of their parents can apply for permission to leave school at the Welfare department within the Education Division. Permits are then issued in particular circumstances. These usually include those young persons who finish their fifth form in June but will be 16 after 17th September of that year and would like to start working. Another possibility is for young persons to ask for a temporary work permit during the summer months such that they can perform a summer job. These situations mentioned do not really allow young people to leave school before they have completed compulsory school. This means that those students who drop out usually do it unofficially through absenteeism.

A number of young persons who stated that they did not finish secondary school were encountered mainly in the group of young persons registering for work. 12 young persons were actually interviewed. They all mentioned that they had not applied officially for a permit but were just absent from school, mainly on a medical certificate for most of the time of their last few years of their secondary education. This was found to have happened even if the Welfare section usually investigates such cases.

The young persons encountered mentioned a variety of reasons for not completing their secondary education:

- **Peer influence:** One young person said that his friends never went to school and so he followed them. He used to spend most of the time playing pool in bars instead of going to school. He did not bother at the time, as all he needed to do was to get a medical certificate.
- **Problems at school:** A couple of young persons mentioned that they stopped due to the great problems they experienced at school. One stated that on attending a new school half way through his secondary education, he realised that most students were taking drugs. He did not like it as he was afraid to end up like them and convinced his parents to let him stay at home, again on a medical certificate. Another young female person said that she could not bear it at school as her female friends were making sexual advances that she disliked and could not face. So she opted to stop going to school.

- **Lack of interest in school:** A few young persons stated that they found the work done at school boring and irrelevant. They said that they could not understand most of it anyway and so just slowly stopped going to school in the last few years of secondary.
- **Medical reasons:** Two young persons stated that they had suffered illness during their secondary education and so lost a lot due to having been in hospital or at home on treatment. They said that they became detached from what was going on at school and by the time they had reached the age of 16 they had done only part of their secondary education.

A common feature in most of these cases is the parents' lack of interest in their children's education. Many times parents appear to have accepted their children's decision to stop going to school rather than trying to find a solution to the problem. It is important to have structures within the educational system that identify these youths at an early stage and measures taken such that they can catch up with their education. The OECD (2000) report highlights the importance of close safety nets. The report describes structures within the Nordic countries where intensive assistance is provided for those who fall through the cracks. In Sweden, it is national policy that particular attention must be given to raising standards of the weaker students. Individual programmes are provided within post-secondary education, these amounting to 10% of the students.

6.4 *Why do some young persons decide to work on completion of compulsory education?*

Various reasons were given for deciding to start working straight away on completing compulsory education. These reasons vary from a personal level to being fed up with studying and with the educational system.

A common reason with young women is that they decide to work instead of continuing their studies due to them having a fiance and so consider their future to lie in marriage. In such a situation, money takes precedence over study and so young women prefer to start working and earn money rather than further their education.

'My situation is that I was engaged at that time and I was forced to go out to work, otherwise I would have stayed at school'.

(Work after secondary education)

Such comments show how there still exists the culture that a woman's future lies in the home. In such circumstances it is not considered as necessary for a young girl to take her education seriously and to think of having a career.

Some said that the school environment at secondary put them off and so preferred to start working once they were sixteen.

'At 14 I was fed up, I was at a Trade school and was always in trouble with the other girls.'
(Trade school student)

One student even mentioned being bullied at school.

'Had not my friends bullied me, I would have stayed on.'
(Area Secondary school)

These two comments provide insight into the type of school environment that some students experience during their secondary education. These environments are definitely not healthy and do not promote learning. It is important for educators to be aware of such problems and to tackle them as otherwise a percentage of students would not be willing to continue with their studies at post-secondary level.

Some were discouraged by the educational failure that they continually experienced.

'I got discouraged of studying, I am discouraged of everything.'
(Area Secondary student)

'It's not that I do not want to study, I study but I do not have the brains.'
(Area Secondary student)

'I went to sixth form, spent half a year and realised that it was not for me, and went out to work.'
(Former post-secondary student)

One would question whether it is worth providing all students with the same type of education. It is very difficult to help students build their self-confidence and grow in preparation for the world of work if they experience failure during their secondary education.

Others simply wanted to start earning money. Young people tend to have a lot of material needs due to media and peer pressure. Many thus may be attracted by the monetary reward that work

provides. Such reasoning is short-sighted as investment in post-secondary education will in most cases lead to better and more stable employment.

'I would like to work to have money to spend.'
(Work after secondary education)

Others wanted to gain experience of life through work. A number of young people still hold the belief that a person matures through work. It also shows that young people feel that they lack experience and need work to grow up.

'To mix with people, gain experience.'
(Work after secondary education)

All the reasons put forward for starting work on completion of compulsory education have one feature in common. Many times young persons do not think of their long-term future. They often view things within a very short time span, whether because they want to get out of the school environment, have money to spend or simply because they have a boyfriend. If young persons think more about their long-term future, they would most probably make much wiser choices at the age of 16.

At this point it is worth referring to the way these young persons view training. Among those who wanted to work on completion of compulsory education, stated that although they were not willing to stay on at school, they would be interested to follow courses such as those organised by the E.T.C. The main reason given was their realisation that with no qualifications or training it was very difficult to find a job or to be promoted at work.

'I do not want school anymore, maybe courses.'
(Person registering for work)

'Courses like those by ETC yes, but school no.'
(Person registering for work)

When asked why they were adamant against school but willing to follow courses, these interviewees could not come up with a reason why. They just stated that courses were different from school, possibly because one does not need to attend everyday and follow a different system from secondary school. This response raises concern about the type of secondary education being provided to students. If young people are so eager to leave school we need to reconsider our educational system and to ask whether we are really addressing our students' needs.

6.5 Who are the young self-employed?

Although they are not a group at risk, self-employed young persons form a particular group of young persons. Self-employed have been included in the survey and some information about this group was obtained.

Only 4.2% of the respondents in the survey were self-employed. A number of items in the questionnaire targeted this group specifically. Respondents needed to indicate what type of work they did, why they have chosen to be self-employed and if they encountered difficulties in their business start up to indicate what these were.

Most of the self-employed young persons were in the retail business, this being half of the respondents. The rest were in the services sector, these being mainly in the beauty industry such as hairdressers and beauticians. Other types of services included insurance services and a singer. In stating the reasons for wanting to be self-employed, two thirds of them stated that their families were in business and so they wanted to be like them. This is a case where the family teaches the young persons knowledge about work, particularly in being entrepreneurial. In most cases, they also probably provide financial support in starting up a new venture. Other reasons given were that they did not wish to work under the direction of others (8.5%), that they wanted to earn more money (12.5%) and that because this is what people working in their sector usually did. This last comment was made by a few respondents from the hair and beauty care business. None of the respondents stated that they were self-employed because they did not manage to find any other work. The tendency observed is that these individuals show a certain degree of initiative.

The majority of the respondents said that they did not find major problems in starting up their business. If one considers that half of the respondents came from families who run a business, such a high response is understandable. One then also needs to take into consideration that the sample of respondents in this case was low and so one must be careful in drawing conclusions.

The respondents identified three main difficulties in setting up a new business. These were in order of most frequent:

- to know what permits are needed;
- to come up with the money needed; and
- to know how the taxation system works.

Two of these aspects can be catered for through courses that can be offered, even by ETC, to prospective self-employed persons. Help with respect to the money aspect can be provided if young persons can be shown how the loan system with banks works and what their possibilities are due to their young age and probably lack of assets.

However, one can look at other aspects of self-employed young persons. These aspects include:

- their educational background;
- their work experience; and
- their father's occupation.

One must keep in mind that due to the small number involved it was not possible to run χ^2 tests and so one must be careful in not reading too much in the data provided. However, none the less, it can also serve to shed some light on the type of young persons within this group.

Self-employed young persons came from different educational backgrounds. They ranged between those who had just done compulsory education to others who had finished post-secondary education or even started University. This, in a way indicates that the educational background does not seem to be a factor that determines one's inclination to be self-employed. In fact the respondents attended all types of secondary school.

It also appears that young persons who decided to become self-employed did not have a history of many different jobs. Although few, most of the respondents stated that they had only one job before they became self-employed. In most cases, this was with an employer. Since many of these youngsters came from families with businesses, they probably first worked with their family. However, even if they did not, it seems that they eventually wanted to follow the family's tradition. However, even those who did not come from a business-oriented family had a history of few jobs. This shows that young persons do not become self-employed because they do not manage to settle into a job as an employee.

The self-employed came mainly from families where the father was a senior executive or manager. This group included those who ran their own business and so it makes sense that a number of respondents had stated that they had followed in their father's footsteps. However, there were others whose fathers were employees and who even had elementary jobs.

In summing up, the main trend for this group appears to be that the family has a great influence in setting up

a business. However, this is not necessary in the service sector, probably because the start up investment needed is less.

Is the fair gender at risk?

The research identifies a number of gender differences. More girls than boys decide to stay on at school at post-secondary level. Reasons provided by females during the focus group intervals showed that up to some time ago, young girls who had boyfriends viewed their future in terms of the role of a housewife and therefore did not see the need to invest in their education but rather to earn money to prepare for marriage. This trend, however, appears to be on the decline as more girls see the need to stay on at school. This has been an achievement as the percentage for

girls was less than that for boys up to some years ago. However, as has been outlined, more females still tend to have clerical jobs than boys. They were also found to have lower wages. However, one must keep in mind that the study was not designed to probe gender differences in particular. The differences obtained, in fact, are not unexpected.

6.7 Conclusion

Some insight into those groups that are most at risk has been obtained within this study. It is important to provide support to these groups in ensuring that young persons in Malta have a smooth transition from school to work.

Chapter 7

This study has highlighted a number of issues in the school to work transition of young people in Malta. This chapter provides a number of conclusions and recommendations of how to improve the services that are in place at the moment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The diverse analyses and methodologies used to study the transition of young persons from school to work make it possible to identify the main trends that emerge. The individual results have been tackled in the separate chapters. At this point it is possible to have an overview of the main issues involved in the transition from school to work.

7.1 What are the main conclusions of the study?

The study has shed light on both the school and work aspect of this transition. The following section thus considers the main findings of the research project and the main issues that were raised.

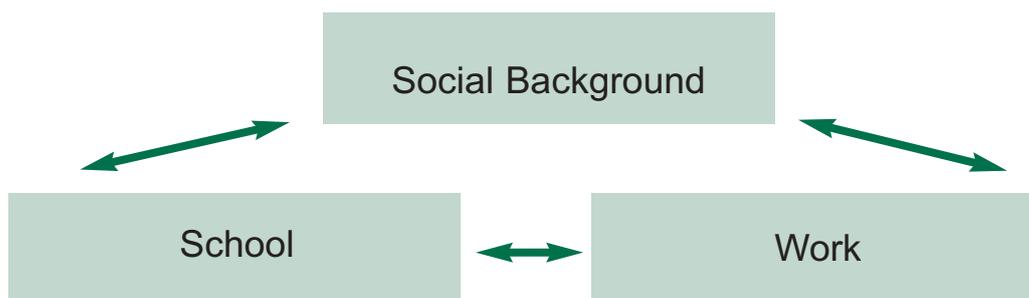
Type of secondary school attended: Starting with the first part of the transition, that is the school, it was evident throughout the research that the type of secondary school that a young person attends will determine to a great degree the type of path followed. Both from the tracer studies and the questionnaire it was found that those students in Area Secondary schools tend to stop at compulsory education, moving to factory or elementary type of jobs. Many of them end their education without any qualifications. It is difficult to determine whether this is

the effect of the school on the students or else that the school ends up with students from certain backgrounds and aspirations. In fact, the secondary school attended was also related to the father's occupation. At this point in time one would question the type of education given to such students. Students in area secondary schools follow the same syllabus as that of Junior Lyceum students. If they end up with no qualifications, the five years spent at secondary school would have been a waste of time. If one persists to group students according to their ability, then the education provided should at least be tailored to their needs. But segregating the lower achievers and then providing them with the same education appears to be only a question of social control;

School attended, social background and path followed: Building on the previous point, one can identify the educational institution and the social background of the young persons as determinants in the transition process. This relationship can be considered to be similar to the conceptual framework for the transition described by Raffae *et al* (2001) (refer to page 16).

The relationship between these three factors is not simple. For example the study has shown that it is par-

Figure 8: Relationship between school, work and social background.



ticularly unusual for students who attend Area Secondary schools to change the course leading directly to work and to switch to the general or vocational post-secondary education path. The schools' influence together with the family background direct young persons to work straight after compulsory education. On the other hand, young persons who attend Church and private schools tend to have more probability of following general post-secondary and tertiary education;

Career guidance for young persons: The provision of guidance in secondary schools tends to be biased towards the academic path. The different sources of data collected show that often guidance teachers are concerned with the subjects that the students choose and often assume that all the students intend to follow the general education path. It was found that secondary students get very little information about the opportunities within the vocational post-secondary system and how the different apprenticeship schemes work. In addition, the preparation for the actual world of work is very little. This state was found across all types of schools. Young persons have little knowledge of legislation, rights, obligations, and the role of the union at work. This appears to be also a problem, even if to a lesser extent, in the case of post-secondary institutions. This does not mean that guidance teachers lack initiative or commitment. The overall view is that there appears to be a willingness to provide support throughout all systems of guidance and counselling within the different institutions with the aim of helping young persons prepare for the world of work. However, the effort tends to be fragmented with some young persons receiving good quality service while others a very poor one. There is a big lack of co-ordination between the institutions to try and provide as wide a choice to students as possible and to try and give the same quality of support to students across all types of schools and different levels. In short, it lacks structure;

School-work link: Schools are still detached from the world of work. The school environment is totally different from the working environment. Whereas the former is a sheltered one where students are protected from certain realities as much as possible, this is not the case for the work environment. Consequently, young persons are not learning how to deal with situations that may arise when at work and how to face them. Bullying, abuse, the ability to say no, social relationships, how to be diplomatic, in what circumstances does one need to take legal action, where to report etc. are not dealt with at school and so young persons feel vulnerable when they start working, ending up either being too aggressive or else allowing their employers and/or colleagues to take advantage;

Preparation of young persons for the world of work: One of the schools' big shortcomings in the preparation of young persons for work refers to the type of training that they are providing. Whereas academically it appears that young persons are of quite a good quality, there is much to be desired with respect to soft skills. Communication skills have fared high both among employers as well as with the young persons themselves. It appears that schools are not helping young persons mature holistically such that they are able to express themselves without any difficulty, to be independent learners, to have a sense of respect and be self-disciplined. These are all skills that have been identified as being essential for the workplace and unfortunately most of the young people have to develop them when they are at work;

Identifying 'idle' young people: Limited insight was obtained with respect to those young persons who can be considered to be 'idle'. Access was obtained to those young persons who are either at home studying on their own with the intention of improving their qualifications for entry into some post-secondary institution, single mothers who have had to stop their education or work due to having a child, married young women, often also mothers who stay at home to take care of the family, and a few young persons who seem disoriented in that they cannot decide what to do with themselves and so stay at home not doing anything while they try to figure out what they would like to do. However, other groups could be identified but not accessed. This was the case of those young persons who currently have social and/or psychological problems. This group includes young persons with a drug problem, who are homeless, battered women, prison inmates etc. These young persons are often in the care of welfare institutions or support groups. Due to the Data Protection Act and the sensitive nature of their problem it was not possible to do the questionnaire. In addition, the institutions tend to deal with the persons' problems and do not have details about the employment state or history of these individuals. Although access could not be obtained for this present research, it has been possible to identify where some of these idle persons are and how they can be accessed in order to be provided with help, particularly by ETC. It was not possible to access young persons in the black economy;

Work opportunities for 16-18 year olds: From the work aspect point of view, it was found that there are few work opportunities for 16-18 year olds. The reasons for this situation are various. They are too young and so are immature, lack work experience and have little or no qualifications. In addition, there is also more

bureaucracy involved for employers when they employ young persons under 18 years old. This means that it does not make sense for young persons to look for work on completion of compulsory education as prospects are few and the jobs available limited. It would make more sense for them to attend post-secondary education. However, their lack of qualifications may pose problems of possible openings within the present post-secondary system;

Transition from school to stable work: Young persons appear to make the transition from school to work smoothly. In fact, about half of the young people in the survey just moved from school to the workplace and stayed there. The amount of job mobility of young persons during their transition is overall low. It gets higher with young persons having more training and consequently higher qualifications. This may be due to them either having summer jobs during their studies or their ability to look for and identify better work opportunities. A period of unemployment within the transition is not common and often is short, this often being only a matter of months;

Young persons as lifelong learners: It appears that few young persons have endorsed the concept of lifelong learning. This is reflected through the small percentage, less than one third of the respondents in the survey who stated that they wished to have further training. There appears to be the attitude that they have had enough schooling and so would not even consider further training with the aim of developing themselves further or to improve their professional skills. On the other hand, those who expressed a wish to further their training tended to show a willingness to improve themselves in order to be able to advance both personally and within their working career;

Role of employers: Employers have a very limited role within the present system. The main way through which employers are currently involved in the school to work transition is in sponsoring workplaces to apprentices and summer jobs. Otherwise, there is very limited contact with schools. There are some employers who go to schools to talk about the work they do, or invite students to visit their workplace. However, the whole system still depends on the willingness of individual employers to be involved in such programmes. The employers' involvement is thus little and haphazard;

Self-employed young persons: The final note on the findings refers to that group of young persons who would like to be self-employed. This amounted to about one sixth of the young people interviewed and also of the survey sample. It appears that there is a number of young persons who have the initiative and

willingness to be self-employed. Schools and particularly the ETC should take note of this as it means that they will need to cater for the training of those young persons in how to run a business if they want them to succeed. In fact, this issue was highlighted in one of the group interviews where the young persons complained that in their post-secondary course they were only being prepared to work as an employee and not to be self-employed.

The above points have highlighted the major conclusions that could be drawn from the research. Although it appears that the transition is smooth for most young people in that they do not appear that they have problems settling down at work, one must also ensure that they have been well informed when making their choices. It is not only a question of getting used to work but that young persons are working within the full potential of their capabilities.

7.2 *What are the recommendations of the researcher?*

A number of recommendations can be put forward with respect to the issues raised.

Strategic objectives

The transition from school to work is an important issue and ETC needs to recognise it. This can be achieved by including actions targeting the school to work transition within its strategic objectives in its business plan. These actions serve to highlight the importance given to the issue. It is essential for these actions to be measurable, achievable, realistic and time delineated in a way that ETC's performance with respect to these objectives over a given period can be realistically and scientifically assessed.

Recommendation

To include measurable, achievable, realistic and time delineated actions targeting the school to work transition of young persons in ETC's Business Plan.

Stakeholders' involvement

It is essential to involve all the stakeholders in initiatives aimed at helping young persons in their transition from school to work. These stakeholders include educators, employers, students and parents as well as other bodies such as unions, Federation of Industry, Chamber of Commerce, and others. Participation should not be restricted to board representation, but extended to other directly related activities such as participation in drafting of documents, organising courses, and participation in projects related to the

school to work transition of young persons.

Recommendation

To have all stakeholders involved in actions related to the school to work transition.

Local educational system

This issue addresses the present educational structure. It is evident that students attending Area Secondary schools are channelled to low level type of employment. This is not the first time that the existence of such schools has been challenged. However, even if the current educational system were to be kept, it is very important to raise awareness of the importance for these young persons to get an adequate education. It is unacceptable that so many students from these schools end up with no qualifications. The introduction of the grades 6-7 in the SEC examinations does not appear to have helped. Some other type of certification in other competences and/or skills, besides academic subjects, need to be drawn up. These young persons would be then in a position to show evidence of the skills and abilities that they have developed during their compulsory schooling years.

Recommendations

To raise awareness of the questionable value of the present syllabi for Area Secondary students and to promote the introduction of tailored courses;

The ETC can identify specific basic skills e.g. literacy, communication, basic English etc. and to develop some type of certification that persons can achieve and which then can be presented when looking for work. This would avoid having persons without any qualifications;

Efforts need to be made in order to develop soft skills in students. This can be done either through courses, maybe within Personal and Social Development (PSD) or some other course. This recommendation applies to all secondary schools;

There need to be more openings for post-secondary training for those students who do not have any qualifications so that they may be attracted to stay on at school;

To ensure that students in all secondary schools are informed about all the options at post-secondary level, and particularly about apprenticeship schemes;

To ensure that the post-secondary prospectus is sent to students at the end of form 4 to give students time to

decide what they would like to do;

The ETC should run education campaigns on the opportunities that are provided through apprenticeship schemes and on the many instances these lead to good opportunities of employment. These campaigns are to target schools, local councils and the media in order to be able to reach out to young persons and their parents in different ways.

Provision of career guidance

The next issue refers to the provision of career guidance and the preparation of students for the world of work. The present system of guidance needs to be reviewed. As it stands, currently the Education Division runs the system up to secondary level while post-secondary institutions have their own guidance and counselling units. ETC then provides support to young persons once they have left school and this is probably provided mainly to those who have problems finding work. Action needs to be taken with respect to guidance services.

Recommendations

There needs to be a review of secondary level syllabi in order to identify elements of work education within the present secondary level syllabi;

There should also be a review of the structure of the present career guidance provided at the different levels of education;

Some sort of structure is to be worked out either through an agreement of collaboration between the different parties, but possibly also through the setting up of an independent body, maybe housed within ETC that would be responsible for providing guidance and counselling in schools and for running programmes about the world of work;

The ETC should take up a greater role in secondary schools in the preparation of young persons for work;

A formal programme on work education within secondary schools need to be developed to ensure that all young persons are informed of the choices available and made aware of other issues related to work;

The ETC could explore the opportunities that EU programmes provide, particularly under Leonardo Programme, which has one action specifically targeting guidance, in order to develop new approaches of career guidance and support to provide to young persons.

Identifying 'idle' young persons

Young persons identified as 'idle' due to social problems are of great concern. In order to be fully integrated in society they need to have stable employment. Since these persons are usually helped by specific organisations, action can be taken by ETC in order to provide support and ensuring the full re-integration of these young persons.

Recommendations

To identify the organisations that have access to 'idle' young persons with social problems (this study has already provided an indication of the type of organisations involved);

The ETC can establish links with these organisations;

The ETC can set up a system by which it provides support to the clients within these institutions. The nature of the problems of these young people requires that ETC reaches out to them rather than the other way round. ETC can develop structures for providing support, possibly with personnel who would collaborate and work with professionals within these organisations.

School-work links

The study has highlighted the degree of detachment that still exists between schools and the world of work. A greater effort must be made in order to bring these two worlds closer. Initiatives must be taken in order to give students more work experience while they are still on training. The participation of employers in the process also has to be greater.

Recommendations

Employers or their representatives need to be asked to participate in the school to work transition at various levels: by being represented on boards at high level; by having representatives in teams working on drafting course descriptions; and in playing an active role when providing work experience, that is, employers are made aware of the skills and work experiences that the students need to get;

Post-secondary schools need to draft specific work programmes to be followed by students during their work experiences. These programmes are to ensure that students experience different aspects of work and a range of skills and responsibilities. Employers must be aware of these programmes;

Post-secondary institutions need to monitor students during their work experience in order to ensure that

students get good quality experience. It is not worth giving work experience if it is not an example of good practice. It is also important to avoid situations where employers take advantage of these young persons;

Small group discussion sessions during the work phase should be organised for students. These sessions are to provide opportunities for students to share their work experience, and to discuss problems that arise;

The ETC should explore the possibility of extending the apprenticeship schemes to a wider range of training areas;

There need to be a post-secondary institution that trains young persons for work in the construction industry since there is a shortage of workers in this sector;

The ETC needs to build a stronger relationship with those employers that provide sponsorships for apprenticeships. This may be achieved by introducing systems of recognition for contribution. This can range from certification to financial incentives;

The ETC should participate further and encourage post-secondary institutions to take part in EU programmes, for example the Leonardo Programme, that enable young persons to have work experience abroad as part of their training.

Young persons in their first employment

One last issue that has been missing throughout the whole research is the support provided to young persons during their first year of employment. As the system currently stands, once young persons leave school, they are left to their own devices without any formal support services. There needs to be a system of support services that follow young people in their first years of employment. Such structure can provide advice to those who encounter problems at work and do not know how to address them. For example, ETC can send for these young persons who leave their work after a matter of months in order to follow up the reasons for such change. It can also act as intermediary when young persons have problems with their employers. The aim is to make sure that support is provided to all those who may encounter problems during the transition.

Recommendation

To set up a support structure that follows young persons in their first few years of employment until they have made the complete transition to work.

Areas for further research

In carrying out this research study, areas and issues that require further research can be identified. This study has served to give an overall view of the school to work transition and the problems that young persons encounter. In view of the research results obtained, research can target:

- further research with registering unemployed in order to identify social factors that lead to unemployment, and common patterns among young persons who end up unemployed;
- follow-up of young persons three years after the tracer studies in order to be able to trace accurately the paths being followed by young persons and a means of identifying those who are 'idle';
- in depth qualitative studies with different groups of 'idle' young persons in order to try and identify the factors that lead to such state and these young persons' attitude towards work;
- case study research of support services and guidance being provided by different types of schools and their impact on students' career choices;
- evaluation of the effectiveness of initiatives and programmes developed by ETC; and

- in depth study of young persons with greatest job mobility.

This list is not exclusive but serves to indicate possible issues that may be studied in more depth.

7.3 Conclusion

This research has shown both positive and negative aspects of Maltese young persons' career choices and paths taken in making the transition from school to work. It has shown how school choice at early an age as 11, that is the type of secondary school attended, can predetermine the future prospects of individuals. It has also highlighted the great emphasis that is generally given to the general education path at the detriment of the other opportunities available. It has also shown that despite these problems, most young persons seem to settle down in their job without great problems.

On a last note I would like to state that I have seen a lot of goodwill from most of the players involved in the transition. However, their efforts tend to be on an individual basis, leading to disjointed actions that reduce their effectiveness considerably. If young persons are to be helped to undergo a smooth transition and at the same time be able to utilise their capabilities to their maximum potential, all players need to get together and work as a group in order to provide one co-ordinated effort.

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