

Tracing the Evolution of Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship Schemes in Malta (1940s–1960s)

Therese Camilleri

University of Malta

therese.camilleri@um.edu.mt

Abstract: This paper is part of a research project that explores Malta's educational pathway of work-based learning programmes between the 1940s and 2020, particularly emphasising apprenticeship schemes as a leading model for technical education and training. The main goal of this paper is to shed light on how educational policies and legal initiatives shaped apprenticeship and work-based learning between the 1940s and the 1960s. The paper employs repository consultation and parliamentary discourse analysis as a methodological approach centred on the analyses of parliamentary debates, national legislation, and government reports. The paper sheds light on the pedagogical advancements within the work-based and apprenticeship technical education field, explaining the intricate processes that shaped the development of technical education in Malta. By contributing a nuanced understanding of the socio-economic and, at times, political factors that influenced these educational frameworks, the paper aims to provide valuable insights into the historical underpinnings of apprenticeship schemes and work-based learning initiatives in Malta. Ultimately, this research enriches vocational education and training discourse, offering valuable insights for educators and stakeholders invested in enhancing employability education strategies.

Keywords: Apprenticeship Schemes; Industrial Training Act; Technical Education

Introduction

This socio-historical review addresses the significant knowledge deficit regarding the development of technical and vocational education (TVET) in Malta, focusing on apprenticeship schemes and other forms of work-based learning. The existing academic discourse on the subject matter has been mainly studied from a social class (Sultana, 1992; 1997) and, at times, economic and political perspectives (Pirota, 1987; Clare, 1988). This historical review

contends that a knowledge gap exists regarding the development of pedagogical and learning processes within apprenticeship and work-based learning models in Malta. Therefore, this paper addresses this gap by thoroughly examining the socio-historical context of apprenticeship schemes and work-based learning models between the 1940s and 1960s.

Considering the absence of literature within the field of local work-based pedagogy and apprenticeship, this paper is composed through the application of archival research (McDowell, 2002), having consulted repositories including the National Library, National Achieves, University of Malta Melitensia Library, Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology Achieves, Chamber of Commerce Achieves, National Parliament Achieves, and General Workers Union Library.

A Definition of Apprenticeship

The apprenticeship model has a rich historical legacy dating back to medieval times, where 'prentices' underwent years of unpaid work under master craftsmen to attain competence. This model has gained traction in educational discourse in recent decades due to its efficacy in fostering occupational and competency-based adult learning in workplaces. Billett (1994a; 1994b) highlights that vocational education and training (VET) programmes, particularly those emphasising workplace learning, aim to cultivate two key forms of knowledge: propositional knowledge, which imparts factual occupational understanding, and procedural knowledge, which hones technical skills essential for the occupation.

Over time, apprenticeship and work-based learning models have been classified into three main categories: (i) the British liberal market model driven by education institutions, (ii) the French state-regulated apprenticeship model, and (iii) the German dual corporate model driven mainly by chambers of commerce. Despite conceptual disparities, all models emphasise work-based learning, facilitating what Billett (1994a) terms an 'authentic learning experience' within the workplace or vocational school workshop. As a former British colony, Malta's approach to apprenticeship mirrors that of the British liberal market model, wherein technical and vocational learning takes a dual approach, alternating between school-based and work-based learning. This alignment underscores the historical and cultural context shaping Malta's educational framework of apprenticeship and work-based learning models. Although the term apprenticeship is an umbrella term for different technical and vocational learning programmes, the basis of learning through apprenticeships follows the format of a dual system, wherein learning is centred on an alternate model between the school and the workplace (Fuller, 2006; Gamble, 2001).

Considering the diverse nature and models of apprenticeship, this paper understands apprenticeship to be as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), as a:

“systematic long-term training for a recognised occupation that takes place substantially within an undertaking or under an independent craftsman and should be governed by a written contract...and subject to established standards...” (ILO, 2012)

Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship Schemes during the First Century of British Rule in Malta (1800-1940s)

This section uses secondary sources to describe the historical evolution of apprenticeship briefly and work-based learning in Malta before the 1950s. These insights discuss the socio-economic context and educational dynamics that influenced the contemporary development of education and workforce in Malta as a fortress colony to the British Empire.

Apprenticeship and work-based learning are no new phenomena in Malta’s educational system. Historically, in Malta, different forms of work-based learning date back to the 14th century, with local artisans training young male apprentices in crafts such as woodcutting and carpentry, agricultural, construction, and maritime industries (Cassar, 1993; Caruana Galizia, 2017).ⁱ Despite Malta’s status as a Crown colony of the British Empire, educational development remained relatively with no significant changes until the 1880s (Zammit Mangion, 1992; Sultana, 1997), with educational provision being primarily ‘utilitarian’ in its purpose (Sultana, 1992), designed to equip the local populace with skills aligned with fortress colony Imperial requirements (Lee, 1972). British Imperialistic educational policies for its colonies and dependencies typically advocated for practical instruction to optimise the efficiency of imperial subjects (Keenan 1887, as quoted by Camilleri, 1978). Like other colonies, Malta experienced educational development tailored to align with the interests of the Imperial administration (Fenech, 2005). Consequently, technical education in the form of work-based learning and apprenticeship in Malta remained mainly informal and often confined within the auspice of the context of the craftsman’s workshop (Fiorini, 1993), with pedagogy centred on the interaction between the master craftsman and apprentice (Zammit, 1984; Zammit Mangion, 1992).

The escalating industrial revolution and the increasing demand for entrepot trade and mooring facilities heightened Malta’s demand for skilled and unskilled labourers to work at the docks and other auxiliary services such as carpentry, black-smithery and tailoring (Clare, 1988; Sultana, 1992; Caruana Galizia, 2017). Consequently, by the 1880s, Malta witnessed the introduction of the first formal technical schools geared to suit the needs of the island fortress

at HM (Their Majesty) Dockyard and the Malta Railway Company. Apprenticeship training was provided in navigation, architecture, engineering, and commercial skills in shorthand and typing (Sultana, 1992). The selected candidates who succeeded in passing the competitive entrance examination would then attend a four-year programme designed to provide both general and technical education. Dockyard apprentices benefitted from being taught by qualified naval officers and having access to well-equipped facilities, which ensured that the Dockyard School apprentices were technically rounded in their trade of choice (Sultana, 1992; Sultana, 2017; Cassar et al., 2024).

Regulating Apprenticeship and Work-based Learning in Malta’s Post-War Era (1949-1950)

This section delves into the findings derived from parliamentary debates, official records, and contemporary reports from the 1940s and 1950s. It aims to contextualise the contemporary educational methodologies adopted for apprenticeship and work-based learning in the 1950s.

The outcome of two consecutive World Wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945) hit Malta’s fortress-centred economy hard, forcing the then-responsible government to seek quick-actioned solutions to financially restructure the national economy aimed at curbing the increasing unemployment and high levels of pauperism (Schuster, 1950; Dobie, 1967). In a reactionary solution, by 1947, the Responsible government’s strategy was to promote compulsory school attendance and improve technical training quality (Schuster, 1950; Pirota, 1987).ⁱⁱ According to the Industrial Training Committee Report for 1949-50, as presented in Table 1, the total working population comprised approximately 80,000 males and 11,000 females, and only 1,730 were receiving apprenticeship or other forms of work-based training (Industrial Training Committee Report, 22 November 1950, pp. 3-4). Compared to the overall working population and considering the growing demand for skilled labour, the Committee highlighted that the number of apprentices and learners was relatively low, recommending several measures to meet the existing shortfall in training skilled labour.

Fully skilled				Semi-skilled	Apprentices & Learners	Total
Services	Government	Industry	Total			
3510	520	2530	6560	1140	1730	9730

Table 1: Basic skills trades for 1949-1950 (Adapted from the Industrial Training Committee Report, 22 November 1950, pp. 3-4)

The Industrial Training Committee also identified significant shortcomings in training apprentices and learners in private industries. The Committee highlighted “the lack of a written agreement ...[and] the period of training for each calling is not fixed, and no methods of training applicable uniformly to a calling throughout industry...with the result that standardisation of ability,

skill, knowledge and experience is unattainable” (22 November 1950, p. 16). To address these deficiencies, the Committee recommended that “apprentices and learners have practical training supplemented by theoretical and other training in centres. Moreover, it is essential that training for the primary and secondary trades should be of standard duration, 6 and 4 years, respectively...” (22 November 1950, p. 18).

Simultaneously, two other expert reports on Malta's economic and social development were issued. The Schuster Interim Report on the Financial and Economic Structure of the Maltese Islands (18 May 1950, p. XX) recommended that “if there is to be any substantial industrial development in Malta, is to increase the proportion of skilled craftsmen... [the Government] had to study the question of how arrangements for apprenticeship, training and technical education can best be improved.” While the Deakin Report presented to the Trade Union Council (UK) and the General Workers Union advocated the urgent implementation of the proposed “plan for the expansion of technical training facilities ...and legislation [which although proposed in November 1950] unfortunately... the Malta government had still been unable to put into effect because of lack of funds...” (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, 17-19 March 1952, p. 12). The recommendations from the two expert reports influenced the establishment of three foundational principles for developing technical education in Malta. These principles included creating a dedicated Department for Technical Education in 1955, constructing new technical schools, and enacting the Industrial Training Act.

Political Perceptions Towards Adopting a Legislative, Regulatory Framework for Apprenticeship and Work-based Learning (1952)ⁱⁱⁱ

The recommendations of the Industrial Training Committee and subsequent expert reports prompted the Legislative Assembly to enact the Industrial Training Act.^{iv} Mr Cole, the Minister for Industry and Commerce from the Malta Workers Party, justified the government’s need to enact legislation to standardise “l-kondizzjonijiet li fihom jutghallmu l-apprendisti, jigifieri, dawk it-tfal li sejin jitghallmu s-snajja fost l-industriji privati...”.^v He continued to argue that, unfortunately, “anqas tezisti...jaraw illi jkollhom il-physical fitness u l-edukazzjoni li hemm bzonn”^{vi} Mr. Cole (Legislative Assembly, Sitting No. 30, 28 February 1952. p. 1341) further added that upon completion of the apprenticeship, these youths “imbaghad johorgu rigiel tas-sengha bic-certifikati taghhom regolari u b’certifikati li jistghu jipprezentaw ruhhom kullimkien”.^{vii} Mr Cole justified the government’s need to introduce legislation to standardise the conditions under which youth apprentices learned trades in private industries. Mr Cole also advocated for regulating and standardising apprenticeship and work-based learning certification to ensure quality training and the emergence of skilled professionals in Malta.

During the same sitting at the Legislative Assembly, Dr Ganado, the shadow Minister of Labour and Migration from the Malta Workers' Party, emphasised the necessity of legislative regulations and apprenticeship schemes to structure apprenticeship training. He asserted that without such measures, Malta's technical education would continue producing youths who are "Jack of all trades, master of none" who lack the necessary trade skills crucial for the country's industrial development (Legislative Assembly, Sitting No. 30, 28 February 1952, p. 1342). Dr Ganado also discussed the necessity of standardising the level of competence provided to apprentices. He clarified that both the level of ability and assessment should escalate as the apprentice advances in training, which is equally reflected in both physical and academic assessments: "jrid ikun ezaminat kemm fizikament u kemm f' dik li hi kwistjoni ta'skola." ^{viii} In his address to the Assembly, Dr Ganado (Legislative Assembly, Sitting No. 30, 28 February 1952, p. 1343) argued that the absence of a formal apprenticeship agreement, regulated conditions, schemes, and controlled assessments resulted in a situation where an apprentice "jkollu biss smattering ghaliex a little knowledge is dangerous ...f'dawk is-snajja fejn hemm involut makkinarju li jgib accidents ghas-semplici raguni li ma jkunx trained bizzatejded..." ^{ix}

Dr Ganado added the necessity for legislative regulations and structured apprenticeship schemes to govern the apprenticeship training process, adding that proper measures are necessary for the system to provide youths with the essential trade skills crucial for the country's industrial development. Moreover, he strongly emphasised the standardisation of competence levels among apprentices, advocating for an apprenticeship system where both the level of ability and assessments would progressively increase, ensuring a well-rounded evaluation of the apprentices' skills and knowledge. Finally, Dr Ganado highlighted that the absence of a formal apprenticeship agreement, regulated conditions, schemes, and controlled assessments could result in apprentices having only a superficial understanding of their trades.

The enactment of the Industrial Training Act of 1952 (from hereon referred to as ACT X of 1952) set out the conditions for the training of apprentices within private industry, providing technical schools, employers and apprentices with a structure and specific guidelines associated with apprenticeship training. Act X of 1952 initiated the national outlook of apprenticeship and work-based learning, transforming it from a predominantly informal and unregulated practice under the auspice of craft guilds into a legally recognised learning mode. This legislation introduced various provisions related to apprenticeship agreements, conditions of engagement, duration, and schemes outlining competencies and assessment criteria.

Comprehensive Overview of Industrial Training Act X of 1952: Definitions, Apprenticeship Schemes, Occupations, Trade Testing, and Certification

As of 1952, under the enactment of ACT X, the schemes were placed under the joint authority Department of Education and the Department of Labour, with the former responsible for the delivery of theory and academic subjects and the latter responsible for achieving competency in technical skills (Mr Cole, Legislative Assembly, Sitting No. 30, 28 February 1952, p. 1343). Moreover, the ACT X of 1952 also established the Youth Advisory Committee as the responsible authority for administering the apprenticeship Schemes according to the trade *calling* (Mr Cole, Legislative Assembly, Sitting No. 30, 28 February 1952, p. 1343). Act X of 1952 provided a set of definitions aimed at standardising the national system for apprenticeship and work-based learning.

- **An apprentice and apprenticeship as a mode of learning within the industry:** “male person over the age of fourteen years who is bound by a written agreement... to serve an employer for a determined period with a view of acquiring knowledge, including theory and practice, of a calling in which the employer is reciprocally bound to instruct... [the apprentice].”
- **A learner:** “learner means a person, other than an apprentice, who is over the age of fourteen years and under the age of nineteen years and who is receiving training in a calling otherwise than in a school or institution maintained wholly or partly from public funds.”
- **A Calling:** “means a trade, craft, or occupation in which the employer would train the apprentice per the prescribed conditions of the ‘Scheme’, as established by the Youth Advisory Committee.” The Scheme was conditioned and regulated by a written agreement that set the terms of the apprenticeship period, given that the apprentice acquired knowledge, including theory and practice, in the respective *calling*.

(Legislative Assembly, ACT X of 1952, Article 2)

The enactment of ACT X of 1952 demonstrated the government’s commitment to structure apprenticeship as an industry-based learning model. It also acknowledged the formative years of individuals by setting an age range for learners (14 to 19 years old), indicating a targeted strategy for skill development in line with the vision of the Coalition Government to increase Malta’s skilled labour force as recommended in the expert reports by Schuster (1950), the Industrial Training Committee (1950) and Deakin (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, 17-19 March 1952, p. 12).

The development of apprenticeship schemes under the justification of ACT X of 1952 provided the framework for the Youth Advisory Committee to distinguish between the quality and size of the hosting industry while also categorising the available machinery and quality of training that can be offered for a specific calling by the hosting industry. This framework intended for apprentices to be well trained in machinery and technical know-how so that

Malta's workforce (Dr Ganado, Legislative Assembly, Sitting No. 30, 28 February 1952, p. 1345).

The Schemes defined the overarching conditions of each apprenticeship calling: eligibility and entry qualifications; probation; working hours and vacation leave; wages; define the roles and responsibilities of both apprentice and employer; duration of apprenticeship; establishment of Trade Testing Boards and assessment requirements of a *calling* relevant to the trade, craft or occupation (Legislative Assembly, ACT X of 1952, Article 130).

The first two apprenticeship schemes were published in the Government Gazette of May 1952. Scheme No.1 for the provision of apprenticeship training concerning the woodwork industry for the callings of joiner and cabinetmaker (The Malta Government Gazette, 2 May 1952, pp. 548-549); and Scheme No. 2 for the provision of apprenticeship training concerning the bespoke tailoring industry for the calling of tailor for male garments (The Malta Government Gazette, 2 May 1952, pp. 550-552).

The design of an apprenticeship scheme was within the remit of the Youth Advisory Committee, which ensured that every apprenticeship scheme was published in the Malta Government Gazette and included: (a) the age and educational standard required for the calling, (b) the duration of apprenticeship; (c) timetabling and the number of hours of part-time classes to be attended by apprentices; (d) the provision of practical training provided by employers; (e) proficiency testing; and (f) and several other criteria related to the employment conditions, such as payment, working hours and time-off of the apprentices following the apprenticeship within the respective calling (Legislative Assembly, Malta, ACT X of 1952, Article 14).

Additionally, as illustrated in the example of Scheme No. 2, each scheme provided a detailed sub-divided list of tailoring skills and competencies which apprentices are required to know:

“General; Pressing; Sewing machine; Making of trousers; Making of waistcoats; Making coats; Measurement of the figure; Design and cutting of garments and garment making”
(Scheme No 2, Article 4, The Malta Government Gazette, 2 May 1952, p. 550).

Each of the sub-divisions was further divided into a list of categorised skills listed as General provided a list of specific skills:

“use of the needle, thimble, and shears; identification of parts of various garments; stitching, including back stitch, basting, rose stitch, padding stitch, tacking stitch... marking of the sleeve, lining, pockets ...”
(Scheme No 2, Article 4, The Malta Government Gazette, 2 May 1952, p. 550)

Apprenticeship Schemes provided essential information to both apprentices and employers: the core skills necessary for mastering the respective 'calling' and a detailed syllabus of the learning to achieve within the workplace. An apprentice joined an apprenticeship knowing what technical skills he would gain through training at the workplace. Employers seeking to engage apprentices for a specific calling were also provided with the details of the skills and machinery required for mastery of the respective trade (Legislative Assembly, Malta, ACT X of 1952, Article 14).

Of central importance was that the schemes established a structure for the development of a 'work-based syllabus' wherein the Youth Advisory Council appointed Trade Testing Boards for each of the respective 'calling', tasked with conducting assessments and awarding the Journeymen Certification (Mr Cole, Legislative Assembly, Sitting No. 30, 28 February 1952, p. 1343; Legislative Assembly, Malta, ACT X of 1952, Article 16). The implementation of schemes was considered to hold promising benefits, first to attract more youths to join apprenticeship schemes and complete their technical training, and secondly, to encourage private employers other than H.M. Dockyard to engage in the training of apprentices for Malta's future workforce (Sultana, 1992).

Once accepted into the Scheme, the employer and apprentice were formally committed through a binding agreement, which conditioned the former to train the apprentice and the latter to complete the apprenticeship in the chosen trade (Minister for Industry & Commerce between 1951-1953, Legislative Assembly, Sitting No. 30, 28 February 1952, p. 1342; Legislative Assembly, Malta, ACT X of 1952). More importantly, the Industrial Training Act (1952), for the first time in the history of apprenticeship in Malta, recognised the *Journeyman* as a standard certification for apprentices or learners who demonstrated proficiency through Trade Testing Board examinations, signalling the national commitment to ensuring the provision of quality technical education.

Overall, the ACT X of 1952 provided technical schools, employers and apprentices with a structure and specific guidelines associated with apprenticeship training. In addition, ACT X of 1952 formally authorised the Director to award the 'Journeyman certification' to those who fully served the duration of the apprenticeship and satisfied the Trade Testing examinations for the respective 'calling' as prescribed by the Scheme (Legislative Assembly, Malta, ACT X of 1952, p. II). Finally, for the first time in the history of Malta, apprenticeship and work-based learning models held in private industry were regulated by a written agreement establishing the terms of the apprenticeship period, given that the apprentice acquired knowledge, including theory and practice in the respective calling (Mr Cole, Legislative Assembly, Sitting No. 30, 28 February 1952, p. 1341).

Steering the National Apprenticeship Scheme: The Role of the Youth Advisory Committee

Establishing national formalised apprenticeship schemes required the formation of an overarching authority to ensure the desired quality of technical education. ACT X of 1952 set the parameters for the newly established Youth Advisory Committee and replaced its predecessor, the Juvenile Advisory Committee (operated during the 1940s), which held the main functions of providing advice to the Director in the field of juvenile employment, offering advice guidance to youths seeking training within the industry, assisting employers in the recruitment of juvenile labour; and develop training schemes (Mr Cole Minister of Emigration and Labour, 10 May 1948).

Contrary to its predecessor, the terms of reference for the Youth Advisory Committee were stipulated within the ACT X of 1952, thus holding the state's authority and commitment towards improving the overall quality of apprenticeship training.^x The Youth Advisory Committee held the critical role of ensuring the effective collaboration between technical schools and industry and ensuring the smooth link between school-based learning and work-based learning (Mr Cole, Legislative Assembly, Sitting No. 31, 3 March 1952, p. 1359). Moreover, the Youth Advisory Committee identified the technical skills required to develop local industry and design the schemes (Mr Cole, Legislative Assembly, Sitting No. 31, 3 March 1952, p. 1359). The Committee membership was set up to include at least two persons to represent the interests of employers and the same for representatives of the employees (Legislative Assembly, Malta, ACT X of 1952, Article 2). Overall, the Youth Advisory Committee was influential in conducting skills needs analysis and developing the apprenticeship schemes to suit the respective 'calling' essential for Malta's industrial development. In addition to the overarching administrative role held by the Youth Advisory Committee, the Director of Emigration and Labour held the power to lead all necessary enquiries to ascertain where an apprentice or learner was receiving adequate training within the industry. When the training did not satisfy the scheme's requirements, the Director could order the employer to take the necessary measures to improve the apprenticeship quality (Legislative Assembly, Malta, ACT X of 1952, Article 16).

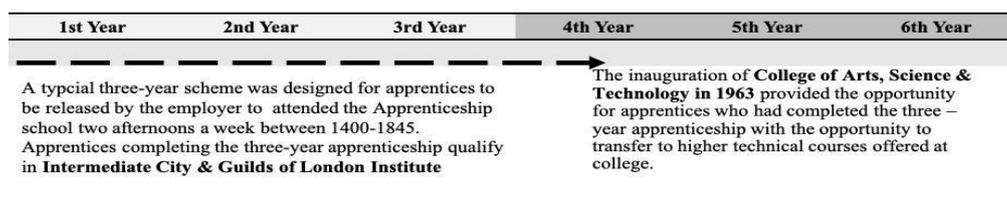
The Youth Advisory Committee was established to regulate the quality of apprenticeships and facilitate collaboration between technical schools and industry. It aimed to provide apprentices with practical, hands-on experience aligned with industry needs. Additionally, its oversight was intended to maintain high standards in apprenticeship training, guaranteeing that apprentices receive adequate education and preparation for their chosen trade, craft or occupation. Overall, the committee's involvement created a regulatory

structure that apprenticeship schemes were well-designed, relevant, and beneficial for both apprentices and the industries they served.

The Outcomes of the Industrial Training Act: A Decade of Progress (1960s)

Shortly after the enactment of ACT X of 1952, by January 1953, the government inaugurated the Apprenticeship School (Hamrun) to offer schemes. The first fifty apprentices joined one of the six schemes in mechanical and electrical engineering, woodworking, boot and shoe manufacturing, printing, plumbing and agriculture, or tailoring at the Tailoring School (Pirota, 2018). For the first time in educational history, these apprenticeship schemes were under the joint administration of the Department of Education and the Department of Labour, which for the first time brought the two departments working together on the provision of technical training (Vella, 1954; Sultana, 1992), and which by 1956 were reorganised to create a new Department of Technical Education (Pirota, 2018). By 1954, an average of 160 apprentices were enrolled at the Apprenticeship School, with the number doubling by 1964.

Apprentices who attended the three-year programme, illustrated in Figure 1, at the Apprenticeship School, were released from the workplace twice weekly to attend evening classes to learn English, Mathematics, Engineering Science, Drawing and Theory of the Trades, leading to the City & Guilds of London Institute certification (Vella, 1954). Once the College of Arts, Science and Technology was inaugurated in 1963, graduate apprentices with a City & Guilds of London Institute certification could progress into higher technical education for another three years (Sultana, 1992).



(Collated from Malta Yearbook, Vella, 1954)

Figure 1: Apprenticeship Progression Model 1954

By 1956, politically, Malta was preparing for national independence, with a run-down of British military services and a national agenda of equipping the island with a viable, self-sustaining economy (Pirota, 1987). The persisting high population compared to employment availabilities meant that the emigration safety valve continued to drain Malta’s skilled workers, hitting hardest the Dockyard, which lost a high percentage of its skilled employees (Attard, 1989, 1997; Balogh & Seers, 1955).^{xi} As part of the economic plan, the Balogh Report (Balogh & Seers, 1955) recommended intensification rather than broadening education. The report observed that although an effort had been

made to intensify the level and quality of technical education, and more essentially, apprenticeship in Malta, there were still limitations that needed to be urgently addressed if Malta's workforce was to attain the levels required for Malta's economic independence and sustainability (Balogh & Seers, 1955; Barrington, 1956).

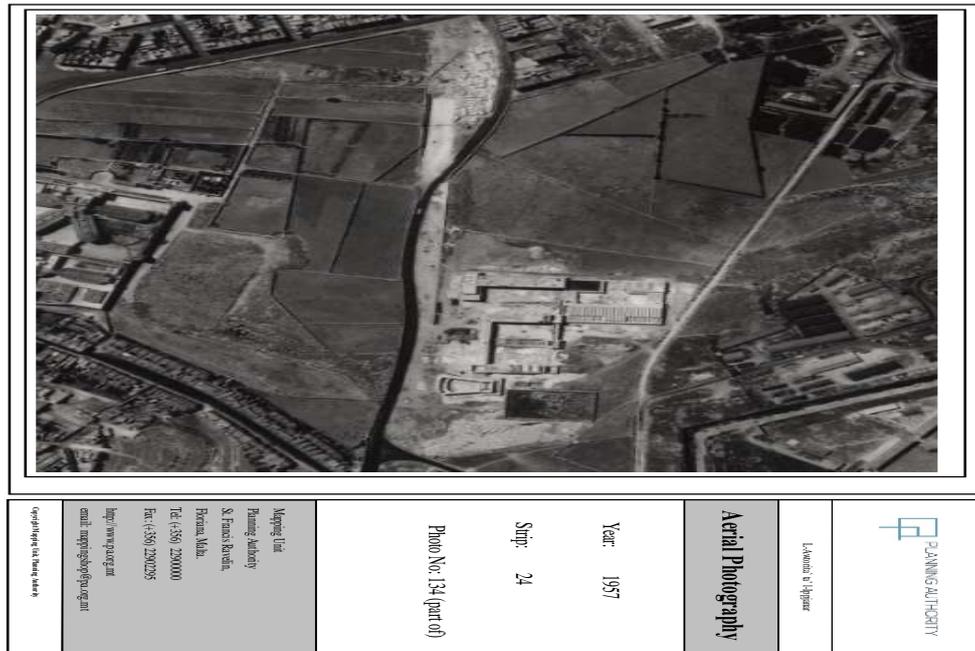


Figure 2: Technical Institute and Technical School for Boys in Corradino 1956

Consequently, between 1954 and 1958, the government initiated intense reform for technical education in Malta, introducing the concept of secondary technical schools (Zammit Mangion, 1992). By 1954, the government had also established a new Government Industrial Training Centres offering 10-week courses for adults and 3-month courses for primary school leavers over the age of 14 years (Zammit Mangion, 1992). On a similar line, the administration established two new secondary technical schools: St. Joseph the Worker Secondary Technical School for Boys in Corradino, the original site is illustrated in Figure 2, to deliver courses in Art, Technical Drawing, Woodwork and Metalwork; and Maria Regina Secondary Technical School for Girls in Hamrun, delivering courses in Art, Home Economics, Needlework, Book-Keeping, and Typewriting (Zammit Mangion, 1992).

The national need to diversify and intensify industrial development and increase gross domestic production saw the government establish the Technical Institute and two Secondary Technical Schools, one for boys in Corradino (1956) and another for girls in Hamrun (1959). The new Corradino Technical Institute grouped all pre-existing technical schools dispersed in

various localities, thus housing all students within one educational centre equipped with modern facilities and trained teaching staff (Sultana, 1992).

Despite the efforts of different political administrations to enhance the quality and participation in technical programmes, the number of youths enrolling in apprenticeship training programmes offered by the Admiralty Dockyard Technical College, the War Department, and the Government Department continued to decline. For example, in 1961, only 137 apprentices joined the apprenticeship running at the Apprenticeship School or the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), with most apprentices employed at the Bailey Dockyard (Board for Education & Training for Industry, 1963). During the early 1960s, there were 14 government-sponsored apprenticeship schemes for training apprentices in private industries, equating to less than 10 in each scheme. This roughly equated to 2 apprentices per scheme over five years, a far cry from the amount required to supply local industry with the technical workforce required for economic independence (Board for Education & Training for Industry, 1963).

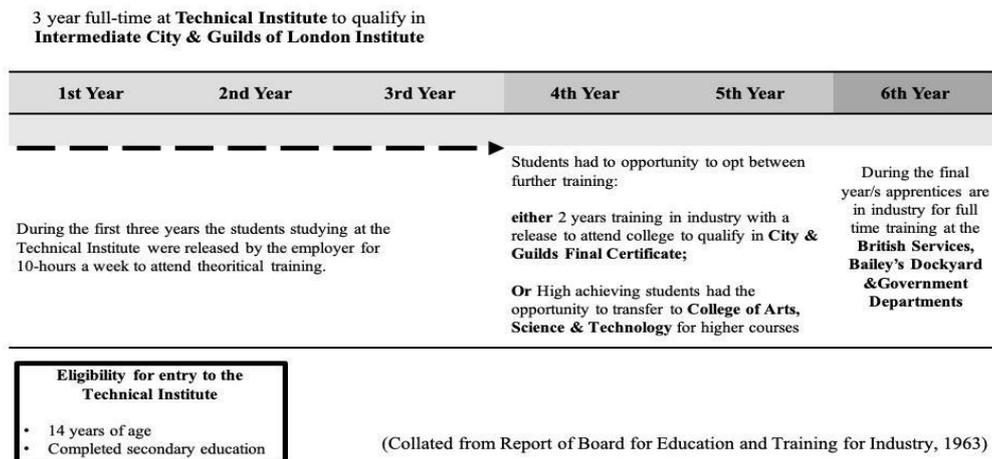


Figure 3: The technical training model followed at the Technical Institute (1963)

If Malta were to improve the quality of its apprenticeship schemes and attract more youths and industries to engage in apprenticeship training, the Board for Education & Training for Industry (1963) recommended that apprenticeship schemes be redesigned on a three-year-plus two-year model, as illustrated in Figure 3. The apprenticeship model would provide youths first with three years of theory and practice at the technical school, followed by two years of training based within the industry, with a day release to attend the technical college. Furthermore, the Board for Education & Training for Industry (1963) recommended that the government use ACT X of 1952, which enabled suitable firms to organise their apprenticeship schemes. The recommended apprenticeship reform was envisaged to hold dual-fold benefits: enhancing the gross domestic product and generating employment (Board for Education & Training for Industry, 1963).

However, by 1969, the Technical Institute and MCAST had yet to achieve the expected positive results, with the general population not recognising the full potential of these technical institutes to award City & Guilds certification. According to the Editorial of the Technical Institute Newsletter, the central weakness of the Technical Institute was that it lacked a Board of Governors composed of various industry and trade union representatives (Technical Institute, Editorial May 1969). Despite the institute being well equipped and having trained teaching staff, technical education still seemed to attract apprentices who found it hard to transition from the classroom into the workplace, often meaning that many still needed to complete the apprenticeship training (Technical Institute, Editorial May 1969).

Conclusion

This paper, which is part of a research project that explores apprenticeship and work-based learning in Malta, examines the conditions leading to the enactment of the 1952 Industrial Training Act X and how it initiated an era in which the state officially recognised apprenticeship as part of the formal education system, leading to formal qualifications. From then on, respective Maltese administrations either continued to amend the existing 1952 Industrial Training ACT (Amendments of 1967; 1969) or enacted revisited legislation like the Auxiliary Workers and Training Scheme Regulations (Legal Notice 15 of 1988).

The enactment of the Industrial Training ACT (1952) and its subsequent legislation established a structure that formalised apprenticeship through callings and schemes defining details of the educational conditions for industry-based learning, such as training duration, locations, occupational competencies, mode of assessment and certification. For the first time in Malta's history, technical education apprenticeship schemes had a structured work-based curriculum for employers and apprentices to follow.

Despite these significant processes, it is noteworthy to highlight that although the government dedicated a concentrated effort to support the growth of technical training, the schemes often encountered significant social and economic challenges (Sultana, 1992). Whereas, on the one hand, many applicants were attracted to these schemes, apprenticeship positions within local firms could have been more extensive, necessitating the government and service departments to take up many apprentices for training themselves (Pirota, 1991). Finally, one must also point out that although the reforms of the 1940s and 1950s were not primarily intended to provide a fully structured work-based curriculum or pedagogic approach for apprenticeship schemes, they successfully initiated a valuation process which today sees apprenticeship programmes recognised on the National Qualifications Framework at par with traditional academic subjects (Government of Malta, ACT III of 2018; Malta Further and Higher Education Authority, 2024).

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End Notes

ⁱ In 1345, guilds and confraternities began to emerge in Malta. Membership in these groups was contingent upon adhering to a set of basic rules. One example is the confraternity of St. Joseph, which specifically catered to woodcutters and carpenters. These confraternities had a dual nature, being both religious and reflective of the shared interests of the respective guild, as indicated by Galea (1981) and Mifsud (1917, as quoted in Fiorini, 1993).

ⁱⁱ The 1946 Compulsory Education Ordinance made primary education compulsory for all Maltese children between the ages of 4 and 14, which led to infrastructural investment in education. However, access to secondary education was reserved for those passing the 11+

admission examinations or by enrolling in a private school. The educational model adopted was largely that of the British system, which in many respects is still the prevalent model today.

ⁱⁱⁱ This section used verbatim quotes as presented in the reports of the Legislative Assembly in contemporary Maltese syntax and spelling.

^{iv} Between 1951 and 1953, Malta had a Coalition Government made up of the Malta Labour Party and the Partit Nazzjonalista. The cabinet established between May 1951 and January 1953 had Mr John Cole as Minister for Emigration and Work and Dr. Fortunato Mizzi as Minister for Education.

^v Translation: “the conditions under which youth apprentices, those who are going to learn trades in private industries, should be educated.”

^{vi} Translation: “there is no regulation indicating the necessary level of education and physical fitness.”

^{vii} Translation: “then they emerge as qualified skilled craftsmen with their regular certificates and certificates that they can present anywhere.”

^{viii} Translation: “He must be examined both physically and in what is a school-related matter.”

^{ix} Translation: “has only a smattering of knowledge because a little knowledge is dangerous... in those trades where there is intricate machinery that causes accidents for simple reasons due to insufficient training...”

^x Terms of Reference for the Youth Advisory Committee (Mr Cole, Legislative Assembly, Sitting No. 31, 3 March 1952, p. 1359):

1. The primary responsibility of the Youth Advisory Committee was to enhance the overall quality of apprenticeship training. This involved ensuring that apprentices received effective training that met industry standards and prepared them adequately for their chosen career paths.
2. The Committee was tasked with fostering effective collaboration between technical schools and industry stakeholders.
3. The Committee was crucial in establishing smooth links between school-based education and work-based learning.
4. Another critical responsibility of the Committee was to identify the technical skills required to drive the development of local industries.
5. The Committee was responsible for designing and developing apprenticeship schemes tailored to the specific needs of different industries or ‘callings’. This involved creating structured Schemes that outlined the training requirements, duration, and expected outcomes for apprentices.
6. The Committee membership included representation from employers' interests, with at least two persons designated to represent their perspectives.

^{xi} Between 1953 and 1954, 11,000 skilled and semi-skilled workers migrated, draining further the local economy.