



ŻGHAŻAGH
G H A L L - B I D L A

Meeting
REPORT

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Mosta Local Council Hall

25th September 2026

MEETING BRIEF



For the second time, Żgħażaġh għall-Bidla held a meeting on the education system. For this event, we were accompanied by the Minister of Education, Hon. Byron Camilleri, and the Shadow Minister for Education & Citizenship, Hon. Jerome Caruana Cilia. From over 40 attendees to 70+ questions from the public, our latest event on the Education System proved that the grassroots matter.

The meeting brought together students, educators, parents, and researchers from different backgrounds. Everyone had the opportunity to ask a question to the respective parliamentary representatives. Both speakers were very cordial and worked well together, despite their opposing parties, to answer as many questions as possible.

Because time was limited and there were many questions and rebuttals, we compiled and sent all comments received from the public before the event to both speakers, which will also be available in this report. The speakers are welcome to answer and send responses to the questions, which we would publicise accordingly.

Overall, the event showed that people on the ground have a lot to say and can inform education policy. Let us all work from a bottom-up approach, where students, educators, parents and researchers are at the heart of education reform - and not at its receiving end.

I would like to thank everyone involved in making this meeting possible, both before and during the event.

Luke Fenech

Founder of Żgħażaġh għall-Bidla

MEETING QUESTIONS



After introducing the speakers, we opened the floor to the audience's questions, which ranged as follows:

- Issue of speaking out in public about education - both for students and educators.
- Gifted students: (a) Is there a definition of giftedness in the education system? (b) What is being done to help gifted students?
- LSE seniority issue.
- Government's approach to policymaking, especially when it comes to including different stakeholders.
- Education on environmental issues.
- The Maltese language and its use in classrooms.
- The issue of the overloaded curriculum.
- Vocational schools.

RECEIVED QUESTIONS



These are the questions the public sent before the meeting. To preserve their authenticity, some questions remain in Maltese. No one below is identified.

On Giftedness & Gifted Children

- Does Malta currently have, or plan to develop, a national strategy specifically for gifted and high-ability students?
- How does the Ministry define a gifted or high-ability student, and what process is currently used to identify such students?
- In the absence of a specific national strategy, could gifted and high-ability students be given more personalised learning pathways so that they remain challenged and motivated?
- Could Malta establish mentoring programmes that connect gifted young people with universities, researchers, professionals, entrepreneurs, and industry experts?
- I am really looking forward to starting my final year of secondary school. Over the summer, I have been working through past papers and preparing towards the Pure Mathematics Advanced Matriculation examination. My plan is to sit for both Mathematics at Ordinary Level and Pure Mathematics at Advanced Level in the same examination session. I have heard that MATSEC may not allow a student to sit for both examinations in the same session. If this is correct, I would like to understand why this restriction exists. I have been putting a lot of time and effort into preparing because I enjoy mathematics and feel ready to take on the challenge. If a student can demonstrate the ability, motivation, and preparation required, shouldn't the education system encourage them to progress at their own pace rather than restrict them because of the normal sequence of examinations? More generally, do you think Malta's education system should provide greater flexibility for gifted and high-ability students who may be ready to progress faster in particular subjects?
- Could there also be financial assistance, scholarships or other support to allow talented young people to participate in international competitions, summer schools, research programmes, innovation programmes and international accelerators? I believe that by giving young people the right opportunities and mentoring, Malta can help develop the next generation of innovators, scientists, entrepreneurs and leaders who will help shape the world in the years to come.
- Can we allow high-achieving students to start their O-Levels from Year 10 (Form 4)? There are no logistical issues, and it will help many students.

RECEIVED QUESTIONS



- One of my dreams is to become an airline pilot. Aviation is an important sector and a strategic national pillar for Malta, so what opportunities or Government-supported pathways are available for young people who would like to pursue a career as a pilot? For example, are there, or could there be in the future, scholarships or financial-support schemes covering training from a Private Pilot Licence (PPL) through to Commercial Pilot Licence level (CPL)? Pilot training can be very expensive, even though the industry now offers increasingly flexible and part-time training routes. Could Malta consider supporting talented young people who have demonstrated a strong interest and commitment to aviation but for whom the cost of professional pilot training could otherwise be a barrier?
- How does the current education system actively incentivise students to always strive to improve? Should there be as many initiatives for gifted and overachieving students as for struggling and underachieving students? What can the ministry do to ensure meaningful student participation in decision-making at all levels, whether in a secondary school student council or the KSU at the university?

On Syllabus, Schools & Educators

- It-tellieqa biex jitlesta sillabu mimli żżejjed qed toħloq krizi doppja fl-iskejjel tagħna. L-għalliema qed jiffaċċjaw burnout minħabba l-ammont ta' xogħol li miegħu jridu jlaħħqu, filwaqt li l-istudenti li għandhom bżonn pass aktar bil-mod qed jithallew lura għax m'għandhomx ħin biżżejjed għall-konsolidazzjoni, speċjalment dawk li, kif stqarr il-Prof. Carmel Borg f'dawn l-aħħar jiem, li huma ġejjin minn ċerti sfondi soċjoekonomiċi. Meta nqisu li 56% biss tal-istudenti jilħqu l-livell minimu fil-matematika fil-PISA, il-Ministeru huwa miftuħ għal reviżjoni strutturali tal-ħinijiet tal-iskola u tnaqqis fil-volum tas-sillabu?
- Jekk l-għalliema fl-iskejjel mainstream diġà m'għandhomx ħin biżżejjed biex ikopru s-suġġetti akkadeimiċi, kif se jiġu integrati l-moduli prattiċi l-ġodda mingħajr ma nżidu l-istress fuq l-istudenti u l-għalliema?
- Il-kritiċi jargumentaw li l-kontroll intensiv top-down miċ-ċentru qed ineħhi l-awtonomija mill-iskejjel. Miftuħin li tiggwidaw l-iskejjel individwali biex jieħdu deċiżjonijiet skont il-bżonnijiet tal-istudenti tagħhom?
- Fil-passat, tkellimt ħafna (Hon. Jerome) kontra l-kontroll soffokanti tal-gvern ċentrali. Kif se tagħti s-setgħa legali u finanzjarja lill-kapijiet tal-iskejjel biex jieħdu deċiżjonijiet awtonomi mingħajr ma tħalli skejjel differenti jaqgħu lura?

RECEIVED QUESTIONS



- In 2013, in its Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, the European Commission explicitly invited Member countries to offer all young learners the chance to undergo at least one practical entrepreneurial experience (such as running a student mini company) before completing compulsory schooling. What is your position on this? If you agree, what approach would you propose to achieve this?
- Għala l-eżamijiet tal-mużika tal-Board tat-Trinity College London ma jiġux aċċettati l- Università ta' Malta? U jekk tkun trid tistudja eżempju l-mużika, irid ikollom il-MATSEC jew trid toqgħod tagħmel interview u audition biex tidhol, meta int għandek ċertu grades diġa ? U ma jingħatawx punti ekkwivalenti biex tkun tista tuża lilu biex tidhol l-Università'?
- What key educational metrics/transformations are planned to be achieved within the next 5 years (covering primary, secondary, and post-secondary education)?
- Malta has a fertility problem and an IVF epidemic - How is the education system catering for this? Where is the education system to educate women that after the age of thirty your chances to become pregnant reduce by half? Where is education about reproductive rights? - nowhere to be seen.
- Financial independence - Malta will have a pension problem in a few years' time. The government is trying to entice private pension plans without any success. Property is seen as the golden financial independence plan, without any education on how to invest, how the economy works, etc., unless it's a relevant subject. How is the education system catering for this?
- Ġieli nisimgħu fuq inizzjattivi jew deċiżjonijiet f'xi sistemi barra minn xtutna li jkunu qed juru frott. Imma Malta nibqgħu lura u nġhidu li l-kuntest lokali huwa differenti u dan aktarx li veru. Imma madankollu ir-riżultati tar-riċerka PISA xorta indikaw li Malta qed ftit l-isfel mill-medja Ewropea. Qisu dik il-kawtela sfat fix-xejn. Allura 2 mistoqsijiet li jiġu huma 1) jekk hemmx fatturi esterni mis-sistema li jikkontribwixxu għal dawn ir-riżultati fqar, bhal pereżempju l-istill ta' hajja sfrenat ta' hafna Maltin biex ilahqu ma' kollox u 2) għaliex minflok nitgħallmu mill-iżbalji ta' haddiehor, ahna nikkuppjawhom ftit snin wara? pereżempju l-Ingilterra qed inehhu l-laptops mill-klassijiet wara ghaxar snin, u ahna qed nintroduċuhom; jew l-użu tal-AI: stati fl- Amerika qed jibbannjawh mill-iskejjel, u ahna qed nipromwovuh." X'taħsbu? Too much?
- A solid way forward for the education system should analyse whether SBAs are really making a difference in our children's learning. Are they making learning more fun or more stressful?

RECEIVED QUESTIONS



- The National Curriculum is seen as rigid and overloaded with too many subjects & content that doesn't promote deep understanding and critical thinking. What are the Ministry's plans on the incessant overlaps between subjects?
- Inti (Hon. Jerome) ta' spiss tikkritika l-burnout fost l-għalliema u l-istudenti. Jekk l- Oppożizzjoni hija impenjata li tikseb sistema aktar ġusta, x'inhu l-pjan leġiżlattiv eżatt tagħkom? L-amministrazzjoni tal-PN se tbiddel il-ħinijiet tal-iskola biex toħloq ħin ta' konsolidazzjoni, jew temmnu li s-soluzzjoni hija biss li tnaqqsu b'mod aggressiv il-kontenut tas-sillabu?
- The voice that should be heard more is that of educators who see the education system day to day. What are the plans to integrate more educators into decision-making, beyond occasional consultations? Will the DG DES 14/2024 circular, which the Education Ombudsman even criticised for creating a 'chilling effect' on educators, be removed, especially if we are actually serious in acknowledging our educators' voices?
- Il-Ministeru ħa jieħu responsabbiltà u jitkellem fuq ir-riżultati riċenti ta' PISA, kif hu fid-dover li jagħmel? Hija ingusta fuq uliedna jekk ma nisimgħu xejn, u aħna l-ġenituri ilkoll qed nistennew way forward.
- Syllabi are doing more harm than good. What are the plans to reduce syllabi so that they serve the students and educators, instead of educators and students serving the syllabi?
- Will there be anything done to prevent the rising discrimination faced in schools?
- Malta's National Education Strategy 2024–2030 and the National Skills Strategy promise to shift Malta toward a dynamic, skill-based economy; however, as parents, we see the day-to-day reality in secondary classrooms, which remains heavily anchored in content-heavy syllabi and high-stakes SEC written exams. Is there a plan to shift secondary education away from high-stakes final-exam memorisation toward continuous, skill-based assessments, and a concrete plan to upskill educators so that current 15-year-olds graduate with the AI literacy, cross-disciplinary problem-solving, and adaptive human capabilities required to thrive in the 2030s workforce?
- What is your view on AI-made corrections or AI-generated exam papers? What training and controls are in place for this practice?
- The average cost of books for a secondary student is EUR 350. Why don't students in church/private schools benefit from free books as a necessary tool for education? At least a voucher to spend at a bookshop, equal to the book spending per student in a government school.

RECEIVED QUESTIONS



- Ahna l-LSEs li ghaddejjin mill-ingustizzja tas-seniority minhabba dawk li qed jaghmlu d-degree, x'ser isir mill-haga? Tafu li kollox huwa kontra l-ligi izda xorta bqajna kif konna apparti li min jidhol gdid ma jistax jaqlana. Hemm min ilu toetin sens go skola u ser ikollu jimxi go skola ohra ghax jinqalghu minn persuni li ghadhom deklin lse s ghax ghamlu d-degree. What is the way forward pls? Ma nistghux nibqghu sejrin hekk.
- What is wrong with the education system when students need to attend private lessons to pass final examinations? Examinations also test whether schools cover the topics well. How can this be fixed?
- Hon. Minister, the Office of the Ombudsman recently confirmed that the long-standing seniority system for LSEs was discriminatory and lacked any legal basis, creating an unfair reality where decades of hands-on experience could be instantly bypassed by a newer qualification. While Circular DGPM 11/2026 takes a step forward for new recruits, serving LSEs still face massive uncertainty regarding their school placements and redeployments. Given that teachers and KGEs have always had their seniority protected strictly by their date of appointment, what concrete guarantees and timelines can the Ministry provide to ensure serving LSEs finally receive the same equal treatment, stability, and respect for their years of service?
- What issues are affecting the development of reading skills and the understanding of mathematics and science?
- What changes, if any, will the Maltese education system undergo as Artificial Intelligence rapidly evolves?
- A question to both: when are we going to start looking at education NOT from a political angle? Is it that difficult to do? Are there more private interests involved than treating education as a public good?
- Continuous changes drain teachers and aren't even healthy for our students. When will teachers, students, and parents be at the decision-making table?
- Jista' l-pubbliku jkun jaf fiex wasal il-proċess li jinbidel il-kurrikulu? L-aħħar NCF inħareġ f'2012. Possibli, għadna nikkonsultaw?
- Will the government acknowledge the latest PISA results? As there has been no official statement yet. This lack of a statement shows we are not taking education seriously, let alone showing the public that we have acknowledged shortcomings that will be tackled.

RECEIVED QUESTIONS



- Can we have a plan for educators' continuous learning, for instance, by helping educators take more courses?
- Can the students get their annual papers back so that they can see the feedback?
- Tracks need to be revised, as they are too generalising; e.g., if you find some subjects easy, it would be difficult to change tracks. Will this be considered?
- Will we revise students' timetables?
- Can we have educators travel and learn from different countries' education systems?
- 16-year-olds are not prepared to vote. We need to teach politics. What do you both think?
- At lower levels, the system doesn't promote thought and logic; it rewards memory and recall. General knowledge is severely undervalued. Are there plans for this?
- To the Shadow Minister: can you (and your party) ensure that, when you are elected, you do not follow the same route as the incumbent government and compartmentalise education only for economic ends? The overt focus on STEM (again, for the sake of the economy) reduces education to a means, not an end in itself.
- Could the government and the opposition (both of you included, of course) host a meeting on education? This would show the public that both parties are serious about improving our education system, especially given how precarious the situation is.

On Health

- Why has the collective agreement for psychotherapists remained unresolved for three years? What concrete steps are being taken to address this situation, and what is the expected timeframe for reaching a new agreement? Why do significant differences continue to exist between the conditions of psychotherapists in education and those of psychotherapists in other government sectors? How does the Ministry intend to ensure psychotherapists receive the professional recognition, support, and working conditions that reflect the complexity and responsibility of their role? Does the Ministry recognise that the continued lack of progress and perceived inequity can directly affect staff morale, retention, and ultimately the quality of psychological services available to students?

RECEIVED QUESTIONS



- Psychotherapists are not asking to be placed above other professions. We ask to be recognised as professionals whose work, responsibilities, and contributions deserve fairness, dignity, and appropriate conditions. After three years without a renewed agreement, it is reasonable for psychotherapists to ask when our profession will finally receive the recognition and attention it deserves. When will psychotherapists in schools stop being treated as an afterthought and start being treated as an essential and valued profession within the education system?
- Nitkellmu ħafna fuq is-saħħa mentali; bħalissa fis-sistema edukattiva tagħna hemm numru kbir ta' terapisti bid-direttivi (li bilkemm qed tissemma dil-ħaġa għax bħal donnu mhux settur importanti). Dawn id-direttivi qed jolqtu s-sistema edukattiva u s-saħħa mentali tat-tfal. Ilna niġru wara MUT minħabba collective agreement li huwa skadut minn 2023 - Kif ħa nibqgħu?
- As a counsellor working in mental health with school children, I am wondering what the collective agreement entails and when it will be agreed upon so that directives will be lifted and normal work can continue.
- I am writing to enquire whether there have been any developments regarding the Collective Agreement for Therapists and Counsellors. We had been informed that discussions had reached OPM level; however, we were subsequently given the impression that no further developments were expected for the time being.
- I am a dyslexia specialist, and I am here as a representative for the Malta Dyslexia Association. I have 2 questions. 1. What is the plan of action to address the decline in literacy levels as evidenced by PISA 2025? 2. Have you read the recommendations in the MDA Experts' Report on improving education provision throughout the compulsory school years, including; the need for enhanced early intervention, evidence informed literacy provision, educator training & adequate specialized resources, among others: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KMGpY7b-YDnenpmmWjktP36kP7bIRU1W/view?usp=drive_link?
- It-tfal u zghazagh fl-iskejjel tagħna jisthoqqilhom l-aqwa servizz ta' counsellors u terapisti fl-iskejjel. Madankollu il-collective agreement għadu ma giex imgedded minn Dicembru 2023. Counsellors u terspusti f'entitajiet ohra igawdu kundizzjonijiet ferm ahjar. Bir-riskju li l-iskejjel tagħna jtilfu terapisti u counsellors validissimi. Minkejja li l-MUT ilha fi trattattivi mad-Dipartiment u giet dikjarata tilwima industrijali, ma ntlahaqx ftehim. Bdiet sena skolastika ohra . Terapisti u counsellors mhux ha jaraw studenti godda taht dawn id-direttivi, fost azzjonijiet ohra . Ghaliex? M'ghadhiex projorita is-saħha mentali tat-tfal u zghazagh tagħna?
- Classrooms in Malta are becoming increasingly international, and language can be a big barrier. How is the Ministry helping non-Maltese children/students learn Maltese and English quickly without slowing down the rest of the class? Especially where there are financial difficulties.

RECEIVED QUESTIONS



- I know (from post-interviews) that many educators who left the profession claim mental health or wellbeing as one of their main reasons. What is the Ministry's response to this?
- Jista' isir xi forma ta' audit fuq in-nies li jaħdmu ġewwa d-department? Hemm ħafna nies li qed jagħmlu xogħol impekkabli. Iżda hemm ħafna nies, u dan ma niċħdux jien biss, li ma għandhomx l-interess komuni u edukattiv. Sfortunatament, dawn in-nies għandhom pożizzjonijiet ta' poter u decision-making. Inutli jkollok ħafna ideat u nies ta' rieda tajba biex nieħdu l-edukazzjoni l'quddiem, meta jkollok min iwaqqaf dan il-potenzjal milli jsir. Naf x'qiegħed ngħid. Ħabba li kollox 'domino-effect', din qed tħalli effett ukoll fuq l-istat mentali tal-edukaturi.
- Rigid hours, especially for young people who may need rest; lack of physical exercise; lack of access to healthy food; lack of fresh air in some schools; large class-to-teacher ratio; too much focus on rote learning and memorisation; not enough opportunity for hands-on learning; little to no attention paid to life skills; pressure on parents to keep up with calendars and emails, etc. Do we have some serious for these?
- Studies show that community involvement (parents, local organisations, volunteers, community projects, talks by professionals, and charity events) improves mental health issues. How can we strengthen this in our schools?
- Minister, we educators are not taken seriously, and this is proven in different ways. This sentiment is collectively felt, especially when it comes to policymaking and wellbeing. We have such potential here, and we are throwing it away because of a lack of direction and genuine care. How many more educators can we afford to lose? Roles are already becoming vacant in different schools.
- A teacher who feels trusted teaches better. A teacher who feels constantly monitored teaches to survive. Tistgħu żżommu din f'moħħkom meta tkunu qed tfasslu l-politiki?
- Finland's administrators and parents trust the nation's teachers because they respect their professionalism. Are there any plans to increase the public's awareness of education and educators? As a parent, I feel that educators are very undervalued and underappreciated.
- Bħala LSE, inħoss li l-kwistjoni pendent (fuq is-seniority) trid tissolva mill-aktar fis. Dewmien f'dan il-qasam juri nuqqas ta' serjeta' lejn il-mistier tagħna. Kif ha nibqgħu jekk jgħoġbok?

RECEIVED QUESTIONS



On Vocational Schools

- Riċentement habbart (Hon. Byron) li l-gvern qed iħares lejn il-ftuħ mill-ġdid ta' skejjel tas-snajja sekondarji. Fil-passat dawn ġew magħalqin għax saru 'dumping ground' għal studenti li mhumie x akkademiċi. X'se tagħmel differenti din id-darba biex dawn l-istituzzjonijiet il-ġodda ma jiġux stigmatizzati?
- L-Oppożizzjoni storikament iffavorixxiet li s-suġġetti vokazzjonali jissahhu fl-iskejjel mainstream minflok jinbnew skejjel separati. Kif se tirristrutturaw l-iskeda attwali biex jidhlu?
- How will we ensure that vocational schools are part of the long-term education strategy and not a separate initiative?
- The system is curated for specific types of people to succeed, such as those who can handle a large workload by working things out very quickly and those with a very good memory. Thus, it leaves behind those who struggle because they might be good at other things or have certain learning disabilities. Will vocational schools address this?
- Can we consider sending some students to continue their secondary school in MCAST? Some students finish school without any O-Levels, only to restart at a foundation level at MCAST (and thus repeat similar material). It would make sense that such students (who are less academically oriented) might be placed in MCAST from the outset, benefiting from its equipment and resources that mainstream schools lack.

On Stateless Children

- What will Malta do so that children who are effectively growing up as Maltese, but remain stateless, are not left invisible within our education and social systems?
- Children who are born and raised in Malta but remain stateless often face barriers that other children do not face. What specific commitments is the government prepared to make, and what alternatives does the Opposition propose, to ensure that no child grows up without a recognised legal identity and full access to opportunities?
- Can you provide a timeframe for reviewing Malta's policies affecting stateless children, and what measurable outcomes should these children and their families expect within the next few years?
- Whatever our political differences, do we agree that a child should never suffer because of circumstances beyond his or her control? If so, what practical steps are needed to translate that principle into policy?

RECEIVED OPINIONS



The following are opinions and comments received from the public before the event:

- To incentivise enrolment in strategic areas, Malta has introduced higher stipends and scholarships. We should move beyond this.
- One-size-fits-all system- I don't think exams are a good measure of intelligence. For example, I might study 7/10 topics for the exam, but the remaining 3 I didn't study came up, and I failed. The result doesn't measure my intelligence or the effort I put in to do well on the exam, but unfortunately it could affect my schooling by making me repeat the year or dropping me to a lower class/track.
- Not tailored to students with different learning abilities; very rigid system; creates a lot of stress for students and parents.
- No time for critical thinking, just for regurgitation of facts and information. Even in Social Studies.
- The education department needs a reality check and to listen to educators. It needs to stop living behind desks and in books and start connecting to realities.
- No motivation, no ambition for growth, no mental strength, early specialisation; when education may not succeed without "private" tuition, it means the system has failed.
- Lack of critical thinking. Tgħalim bl'amment.
- MATSEC shrugs off 50% of its duties while still dictating what we teach in our schools. Too much testing, much less learning, thanks to SBAs. The college system made everyone a loser by placing students of all levels in the same school.
- They make decisions from above; they are incompetent and detached from everyday school life.
- Not autism-friendly, as unfortunately autistic students are still placed in mainstream classrooms, which aren't beneficial to them at all. Also, the syllabus is too hectic for us teachers to do more interactive lessons (I teach Maltese; therefore, we have a lot of literature to cover). Another thing that I do not agree with is that students who opt to do level 1-2 can only get grade 7 or 8, which sixth forms do not accept. At a minimum, students should be able to opt for a maximum grade of 5. SBAs should also be monitored more closely; for example, MATSEC should provide the papers, as teachers are conducting SBAs differently. This is becoming confusing and unfair for all students.

RECEIVED OPINIONS



- The education system needs to focus on tackling inequalities, making sure every student feels included and supported. It also has to prioritise professional development for teachers, particularly those with many years of experience, so they can keep growing and teach effectively. Another important issue is modernising older schools and facilities to ensure all students have access to a learning environment that meets current standards.
- Students need to learn critical thinking, daily problem-solving, and money management, while values should be practised; since there is no time for emotional development at home, the school has to teach that too. Future citizens without emotions are a danger to society.
- LOFs need to be revised; communication with educators should be improved, and recruitment should be strengthened (both how educators are employed and the timing).
- Health and wellbeing: encourage activities that go BEYOND sitting down and using tech/ pen and paper; contact with the physical environment; life skills; respectful communication.
- Take regular feedback from teachers, and don't make big changes based on the ideas of individuals who then decide for the whole country, often without proper consultation. Everybody knows this.
- Malta needs a long-term national pact involving government, opposition, educators, unions, employers, higher education institutions, students and parents. This pact should set a shared vision, clear priorities, measurable milestones and a commitment to policy continuity over the next 15 to 20 years.

SNIPPETS





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G H A L L - B I D L A