A Review of
Arts Education in Malta
up to School-leaving Age

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Executive Summary

The value of the arts and creativity in education is often promoted in national policies and curricular frameworks in Malta. Arts education and creativity are considered to be important not only for students who aim to specialise in the arts later in life but form an essential part of an inclusive curriculum that can guarantee the educational entitlement of each child. In parallel, arts teachers are entitled to the provision of appropriate resources, learning spaces and professional development opportunities that support them in their work with students.

This report documents research in Malta and Gozo commissioned by the Arts Council Malta to the Malta University Consulting. Carried out during the scholastic year 2021-2022, this nationwide study researched the state of arts education, principally in the compulsory sector, and sought to understand whether official values and objectives attributed to arts education in policy documents and curricula are fulfilled in actual practices, provisions and educational infrastructure in the country. The study involved reviewing relevant literature and comparing it to data collected from students, educators, heads, and education officers through various qualitative and quantitative tools.

The main results of this study are summarised below:
Instruction time dedicated to arts education. The amount of time dedicated to arts education in Malta varies depending on the type of school and educational level. Some data indicate that the arts play a more dominant role in curricula in independent schools, non-formal settings specialised in the arts and in a secondary state school specialised in arts education. In the state sector, exposure to arts education in the primary sector is inconsistent while students in state middle schools are generally offered specific arts subjects for half a year. Most students from Year 9 to Year 11 only study the arts if they choose them as optional subjects.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic affected various aspects of teaching and learning the arts over a two-year period. Official instructions about social distancing and online modalities affected pedagogies in the arts. For example, some music lessons were carried out in students' regular classrooms instead of a specialised music room, and this meant that students were not exposed to actual instruments during this period. Peripatetic arts teachers employed in the state primary sector were often instructed to replace other teachers in the primary sector, leading to a loss of educational entitlement of affected students. In some schools, arts facilities were either not used during this period or used for other purposes.

Arts facilities in formal education. The availability of arts rooms and other resources varies a great deal. The majority of schools in compulsory education that were visited during this study were found to have adequate facilities for arts education, though some inconsistencies between different arts subjects were also noted. Problems associated with insufficient or inappropriate resources (such as old instruments in music classes) and spaces for learning were more in evidence in the performing arts (particularly dance) than the visual arts. Staff in a secondary state school specialised in arts education reported various problems related to the poor condition of spaces for learning in their school, particularly for the performing arts.

Arts facilities in non-formal education. Specialised schools in the non-formal state and independent sectors that were included in this study all offer a variety of well-maintained rooms for specific uses, resources and courses to their students. Problems associated with budgetary requirements were not very much in evidence, though one of the state non-formal schools reported problems with IT equipment for staff while a manager in a private school referred to lack of state support. In contrast with schools in compulsory education, facilities for dance students in the non-formal sector are abundant and complement the variety of dance courses available for students.

The status of arts subjects. A number of stakeholders flagged perceptions of low status for arts subjects in educational settings, particularly in formal education. Causes identified included lack of understanding of specific subject requirements by school authorities and/or policy-makers; lack of consultation; parents' and guardians' attitudes towards the arts; insufficient time allocated to the arts; and a greater importance granted to other subjects in the school curriculum.

Students' attitudes towards arts education. A good percentage of students who responded to the questionnaire stated that arts lessons make them feel creative (57.5%) and happy (46%). Students' attitudes towards online teaching and learning in the arts were mixed: 24.7% of respondents reported being dissatisfied with their experience; 20.7% felt satisfied. Notably, 27.6% stated they did not attend online lessons.

Teachers and professional development. Some stakeholders reported a shortage of teachers in some sectors (music, for example) and related difficulties in increasing the number of lessons. Continuous professional development and upskilling in all sectors of the educational system emerged as essential to ensure that teachers remain innovative in their pedagogies.

Informed by the integration of the study's findings and a review of pertinent literature, the report concludes with 50 recommendations addressed to policy makers, heads of schools, teachers, the ACM, cultural and heritage organisations, trade unions and higher educational institutions. Investment in facilities, continuous professional development, synergies and collaborative initiatives feature among key recommendations supported by the findings of this study.

Abbreviations

ACM -   Arts Council Malta
CPD -   Continuous Professional Development
EO -   Education Officer
EPRS -   European Parliamentary Research Service
ESD -   Education for Sustainable Development
FG -   Focus Group
InSEA -   International Society for Education through Art
LCM -   The London College of Music
LOF -   Learning Outcomes Framework
LSE -   Learning Support Educator
MATSEC - Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate
MAVC -   Mikiel Anton Vassalli College Network
MEA -   Malta Employers Association
MEYR -   Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation
MSA -   Malta Society of Arts
MOOC -   Massive Online Open Course
MUC -   Malta University Consulting
MUT -   Malta Union of Teachers
MVPA -   Malta Visual and Performing Arts School
NCF -   National Curriculum Framework
NCP2011 - National Cultural Policy 2011
NCP2021 - National Cultural Policy 2021
NGO -   Non-Governmental Organisation
NQT -   Newly Qualified Teacher
NSEAD -   National Society for Education in Art and Design
NSO -   National Statistics Office
OECD -   Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCO -   Public Cultural Organisation
PSHE -   Personal Social Health Education
SCDP -   Sports Career Development Programme
SDG -   Sustainable Development Goals
SEC -   Secondary Education Certificate
SOPA -   School of Performing Arts
SMT -   School Management Team
STEAM -   Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics
TiE -   Theatre-in Education
UM -   University of Malta
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VPA -   Gozo Visual & Performing Arts School

1. Introduction

This research was commissioned by Arts Council Malta (ACM) in 2021 and took around twelve months to complete. The brief agreed between Malta University Consulting (MUC), ACM and the main researchers in this report proposed to research different arts subjects that are offered as standalone subjects in the Maltese educational system (art, music, drama and dance), facilities and pedagogies adopted in state, church, independent as well as non-formal schools, and also the status of these arts subjects (Appendix A). Other related areas such as creative writing generally form part of other subjects (like Maltese and English) and were not included in the brief. The study is limited to ages up to and including secondary level education, and the research covers various educational initiatives that are available for this age-group in mainstream schools and other external, including private, venues. An analysis of the various opportunities available at post-secondary level, in higher educational institutions and other settings associated with adult education would merit a separate study and report.

This report first explores recent and current literature, international and national policy documents and statistics, curricula and websites related to arts education and culture in Malta. The research team also collected and analysed data relating to the various settings in which arts education is provided. The report describes the research methodology, explaining the advantages and limitations of selected data collection methods. Many students, teachers, heads, education officers and other stakeholders based in a range of educational contexts around the country participated in data collection strategies that made use of four research tools: focus groups, interviews, a questionnaire and observation visits.

While the literature review makes reference to specific schools and organisations, names of schools were omitted from the reporting and discussion of the findings. Instead, reference is made to generic types of schools, such as state, church, independent, non-formal, and so on in order to facilitate comparisons between different educational sectors. This also permits researchers in the field of arts education and other interested parties to recognise any positive developments as well as challenges that still tend to inhibit further developments in this field.

At the end, the report makes several recommendations based on an integration of the study's findings and literature review. These recommendations are aimed at different stakeholders, including the ministry, heads of schools, teachers, ACM, cultural and heritage organisations, trade unions and higher educational institutions like the University of Malta (UM).

2. Literature review

2.1 ARTS EDUCATION: INTRODUCTION

The goal of this literature review is to map provisions for arts education in Malta, identifying patterns as well as differences in practices, objectives, policies and the status of arts subjects in a broader curricular context, with a special emphasis on education up to school-leaving age. These aspects will later be integrated into data that emerges from surveys, interviews and other data collection strategies. By doing this, this study combines policy analysis at the macro level with research with educators, students and other stakeholders at the micro level. While research on specific pedagogies and theories in different artistic domains is regularly carried out by postgraduate students and academics, research on arts education as a whole in Malta is somewhat lacking. Therefore, this literature review aims to address this gap, bringing together analyses of different arts subjects in a single document. The challenges brought on the sector by COVID-19 and its aftermath have made such research more urgent and indeed timely (UNESCO, 2022).

This literature review first addresses arts education in Malta and in the international context and relevant national and international policies. It then explores important local issues such as the availability of arts subjects and instruction time dedicated to them in schools, perceptions about the goals of arts education, cultural and inclusive education, teachers' professional development, and partnerships with the cultural and heritage sector. It then turns to four arts education subjects (art, music, drama and dance) by addressing three specific areas for each, namely: i. The arts subjects in terms of the national syllabus and examinations; ii. The arts subjects in mainstream schooling and the status of the subjects, and iii. The arts subjects in non-formal settings.

2.2 ARTS EDUCATION: MALTA AND THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The Maltese National Cultural Policy issued in 2011 (*NCP2011*) makes several references to the value of arts and cultural education, especially in its chapter on 'Creative Education'. The contemporaneity of this document with the National Curriculum Framework (*NCF*) issued in 2012 is also important as it reflects relatively contiguous developments in arts education. While locally specific cultural, educational and social factors need to be highlighted, it is also helpful to understand documents like *NCP2011* in the broader context of international policy developments at the time and the different philosophies that such policy studies represent. The term 'arts education' refers to different applications in different contexts: for example, it might refer to the implementation of a broad education through the arts, or more domain-specific subjects in mainstream education, or even a form of cultural education located in non-formal contexts like museums and galleries. The field of arts education shifts on the basis of political, financial, cultural and other changes, and these shifts affect the terminology of the field and national variances relating to the role of cultural institutions in the mediation of culture, amongst other things.

While these variances make it difficult for researchers to make generalisations about arts education, there are also points of convergence that can help researchers to trace useful comparisons at the European and international levels. For example, the general objectives of arts education in schools across Europe have tended to overlap in many instances: many countries refer to aspects

like artistic skills, knowledge and understanding, critical appreciation, cultural heritage, and personal and emotional development among other objectives (European Commission/EACEA/ Eurydice, 2012). The next subsection will delve more deeply into the value and objectives of arts education in Malta and internationally.

2.2.1 The value of arts education

The report 'Art for Life's Sake: The Case for Arts Education' (Commission on the Arts, 2021), was published in the US to try to reverse the national decline in official support for arts education. This negative trend is especially visible in communities that cannot sustain the financing of arts education. Amongst the values of art education highlighted by the authors, the report refers to the development of well-rounded individuals, the building of empathy and reduction of intolerance and the support of students' social and emotional development through arts education. By focusing on the values of arts education, the report aims to show decision-makers the kinds of benefits that could be missed out on if the arts continue to be deprioritised in educational spheres.

A similarly-titled report, 'Art for Art's Sake? The Impact of Arts Education' (Winner, Goldstein & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013) published by OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, represents a study of empirical approaches to understanding the role that the arts play in developing skills in other subjects (such as verbal skills) as well as social and behavioural skills. However, while the OECD's agenda tends to focus on innovation that contributes to economic development, the report concludes that the "primary justification of arts education should remain the intrinsic importance of the arts and the related skills that they develop" (Winner, Goldstein & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013, p. 263).

This focus on the intrinsic value of arts education (as opposed to a strictly causal relationship between arts education and improved test scores in other areas, for instance) is evident in other important, international policy documents published around this time, such as the Seoul Agenda (UNESCO, 2010). The publication of this agenda followed UNESCO's Second World Conference on Arts Education, and underlined the importance of making arts education accessible to learners from different social backgrounds and age groups, maintaining a high quality in the delivery of arts education as well as ensuring that arts education principles and practices can be applied to cultural and social challenges. Around this time, research on the relationship between arts education and the concept of creativity were also in evidence in national studies, such as a literature review on arts education in England (Fleming, 2010), which explored the value of the arts in the English curriculum, the history of the term 'arts in education' within the country and the development of relevant theories of arts education.

Other international in-depth studies at the time include research on educational initiatives offered by various cultural institutions in different European countries, such as the Arts Education Monitoring System (2013). Studies like these are relevant for the local context too because they point to challenges in the field related to audience development, the precarity of freelance workers in cultural education and lack of resources that would be necessary to implement ambitious plans set up by cultural institutions and policy documents. More recent official documents and reports, such as the briefing on arts, culture, and cultural awareness in education produced by the European Parliamentary Research Service (2017), have continued to stress the potential benefits and challenges of arts and cultural education in multicultural societies and the role that the EU plays in making recommendations about education and exchange, but it also

underlines the fact that ultimately, "(c)ompetence for culture and education policies lies with the Member States" (p.7).

In Malta, the value of creativity in the life of every citizen is underlined by NCP2011. The NCF shares this vision by stating that students should regularly participate in arts education because the arts offer opportunities for creativity and imagination to flourish while students enjoy developing skills in visual[1] and performing arts. According to NCP2011, a vision for a cultural and creative sector in Malta and Gozo needs to be sustained by an educational process that enhances the knowledge and skills pertaining to different professions in order to stimulate creativity and innovation. The policy therefore links the value of creativity with its possible impact on the country's economy by stressing that creativity "also gives rise to further job creation in our country" (p. 5).

As indicated earlier, the particular period when the policy was published reflects a heightened local and international recognition of the need to bring creativity through education closer to the heart of society. The policy speaks of an "intellectual infrastructure" that needed investing in, implementing Article 8 of the Declaration of Principles of the Constitution of Malta that notes: "The State shall promote the development of culture and scientific and technical research" (NCP2011, p. 25). Therefore, the role of education in relation to culture and the arts is fundamental to the development of society.

NCP2011 notes that in parallel to formal education, both government and the private sector provided a range of other educational services like foundation courses in the arts. At the time, the policy underlined the fact that advancement in the various disciplines depended on "the individual institutions and on the character of the individual disciplines" and that there was "no coordinated approach to assisting students in synchronising their academic and artistic development", while "[f]ormal educational services in the practice-based arts range from the sporadic to the non-existent" (p.48).

The following National Cultural Policy (NCP2021) takes note of the achievements of recent years to improve arts and cultural education in Malta. Particular reference is made to the establishment of the Malta Visual and Performing Arts School (MVPA) in 2017 that offers secondary level students the opportunity to pursue the arts in their educational itinerary. The MVPA is a national school that offers five art forms as its primary focus of study. These are: art, dance, drama, media and music. The Gozo Visual & Performing Arts School (VPA) forms part of the Mikiel Anton Vassalli College (MAVC) and both schools are important stakeholders in arts education since they contribute to the development of professionals.

2.2.2 Availability and instruction time dedicated to arts education

References to educational and other personal and social gains associated with arts education found in policy documents like the NCF need to be compared to actual practices and available facilities in local schools. Only by doing so can one understand how positive claims for the arts in official documents translate, if at all, into instruction time dedicated to arts education, the presence of arts specialists in schools, the status of these subject areas, the availability of appropriate learning spaces, and so on.

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1   The terms 'visual art education' and 'art education' are used interchangeably throughout this research.

NCP2021 calls for a more effective use of new technologies in the teaching of cultural education and recommends that schools continue to improve their infrastructure for the arts, with a particular emphasis on children with different abilities. To address this policy objective, the policy acknowledges the need to invest in the improvement of facilities and infrastructure for the MAVC specialised schools (visual art, music, music and dance) in Malta and Gozo.

With regard to funding, *NCP2021* commits itself to establishing a dedicated fund to continue to invest in cultural facilities in schools with the objective of changing schools into cultural centres that would serve to bring in community groups, NGOs and artists. The policy emphasises the need to provide more resources to the MAVC schools to further support the delivery of arts education at a quality level in order to provide a "level of excellence in the arts educational pathway" (p. 66).

NCP2021 also refers to statistics published by the National Statistics Office (NSO) in 2014 that indicated that about 10,000 students, most under 17 years of age, had received some form of instruction in drama, dance or music from 188 schools teaching performing arts. At the time, these schools employed 400 full-time and part-time teachers. In the light of these figures, the policy noted that a process of regularisation was required to secure licensing, quality assurance and accreditation across the private sector in arts education.

However, available contemporary statistics about the arts in compulsory education showed that the amount of time dedicated to arts education in compulsory education in Malta is comparatively low, even though it is also true that economic measures have led to cuts in the fields of education and the arts in several other European countries included in these statistics (Hernández⬚ Hernández, 2019). National data sheets included in 'Recommended Annual Instruction Time in Full-time Compulsory Education in Europe' produced by European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2015) show that Malta's recommended instruction time for arts education is less, sometimes considerably less, than that in most other EU countries, including Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Cyprus, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Liechtenstein. This publication noted that the largest proportion of instruction time in the primary sector in Malta was dedicated to mathematics.

European statistics from 2021 show that the apportionment of time for Expressive Arts (Visual and Performing Arts) in the Early and Junior Years cycle accounts for two hours per week which takes only 5% of overall instruction time, and that teachers can decide to dedicate more time to particular subjects if they believe it will benefit their pupils (European Commission/EACEA/ Eurydice, 2021). Moreover, in Maltese state secondary schools, no arts lessons are offered to pupils who opt out of art or music as optional subjects (*NCP2021*). It is reported that in 2017, only 343 out of 205,029 students chose art or music as an optional subject and that only 17% of pupils continued to receive formal arts education in secondary schools in Malta and Gozo (p.90). It is further noted that in middle and secondary schools, the presence of a stronger staff complement of arts teachers is highly necessary. Such shortages could be due to the status or general perceptions about the arts, as one stakeholder commented: "To date, through my full time profession within formal secondary education, I am aware that the common perception of heads of schools and parents is that arts subjects are 'less important' than other academic subjects" (Zammit, 2020).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic posed further challenges to arts education. Recent publications show that art, drama and music lessons at primary level were treated as dispensable subjects and that peripatetic arts teachers were given replacement duties instead during the first year of the pandemic (Galea Debono, 2020). Creative non-formal schools were not allowed to reopen, which led to challenges to the art and culture sector, although protocols were in line with all requirements by the health authorities (Cilia, 2021). To address the deficiency of art education during the COVID-19 pandemic, the President of the global art education association InSEA[2] Glen Coutts penned an open letter to the minister of education in Malta, warning that the absence of a holistic, inclusive approach to art education will deprive children of invaluable creative experiences that would help them cope with the challenging circumstances they are facing (Galea Debono, 2020).

The limited literature available indicates that, despite the existence of national policies promoting the arts, official attitudes towards arts education tend to be dismissive in practice. The situation would be comparable to other contexts where the arts in schools are increasingly undervalued: for example, a large survey about art and design education conducted by the National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD) in the UK in 2015 (NSEAD, 2016) found that time allocated to the subject had decreased in previous years, while over half of the respondents reported that teachers were considering leaving their profession as a result of the reduced value of the subject. A study of the survey concluded that the decline in value reflects the neoliberalist policies of the British government at the time and the stereotypical, prejudicial and discriminatory view that art is merely a 'pretty' subject that can be taught in extracurricular activities and is more likely to attract lower ability students (Payne & Hall, 2018).

2.2.3 Arts education: Enjoyment, enrichment and entrepreneurship

The status of the arts as well as data about arts education seem to indicate that actual educational practices in Malta do not live up to expectations set out by policy documents. However, it is likely that policy documents are also rather limited in their outlook on the aims of arts education. The *NCF*, for example, includes brief references to the role of arts education, alongside other general areas such as humanities and science and technology. In the section dedicated to 'Visual and Performing Arts', the framework notes that this learning area, including art, music, drama and dance, provides opportunities for learners to be "creative and imaginative, to experience enjoyment and inspiration, and to develop skills in the visual and performing arts" (p. 36). This section refers to the transferability of skills gained in arts education to different areas of learning, but it does not expand on the social, political and civic dimensions of the arts. While the idea that students enjoy themselves whilst engaging in creative activities is certainly important, there is a risk that linking arts education exclusively to enjoyment might relegate all creative domains to mere distractions from whatever is generally perceived to be more 'serious' or crucial to children's educational development. Such conclusions about the 'peripheral' or subservient nature of arts education could be further strengthened with suggestions that the arts exist "to underpin and enrich learning in other curriculum areas" (p. 59).

It is important to note that international theories of art education at the time had moved towards a more communal or social (rather than self-expressive) understanding of the value of arts education, and reports such as the Arts Education Monitoring System (2013) outlined clear connections between political parties or lobbying groups and values relating to cultural

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2   InSEA is the International Society for Education through Art https://www.insea.org/.

education. In comparison, the *NCF* (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012) is relatively mild and focuses on the notion that the arts express mainly personal responses and feelings and contribute to the "development of one's personality" (p. 37).

The *NCF* also mentions the importance of 'Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation' as a cross-curricular theme within a whole-school approach that nurtures the possibility of change and contributes "to the economic prosperity of society in general and to the well-being of the individual in particular" (p. 38). *NCP2011* stresses the role of education by positioning it as one of the key cross-cutting priorities. The second of seven sections in the Policy framework, 'Reinventing Cultural Education', invites readers to reconsider and engage in a "rethinking of the links between the role of education and that of culture" (p. 29). While also reflecting the economically-oriented perspective found in the *NCF*'s 'Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Innovation' theme, the policy notes that cultural resources, such as knowledge, creativity and design, have been replacing natural resources as the primary raw material of economic growth, establishing themselves as the main sources of added value. The policy also directs itself beyond compulsory schooling towards "the formative and life-long learning needs of tomorrow's cultural and creative professionals" (p. 29).

2.2.4 Cultural education and inclusive education

The fourth priority of *NCP2021* recommends improving artistic and cultural education. It advocates improving the provision of artistic and cultural education in compulsory education as well as promoting an interdisciplinary approach in school curricula. It recommends representing diverse forms of cultural expression and the inclusion of arts education as a cross-curricular area that runs through the wider educational framework. Special emphasis is made on arts education acting as a pillar of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics). It also advocates for the introduction of "the role of community cultural mediators at local government level who can facilitate creative activity to reflect the more diverse cultures in our communities" (p. 66). In principle, this is in line with Article 10 of UNESCO's 2005 'Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions', which states that parties should "encourage and promote understanding of the importance of the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions, inter alia, through educational and greater public awareness programmes" (2015, p. 10).

The *NCP2021* notes that it is guided by principles featured in a number of national documents and international conventions addressing children's access to culture. For instance, the policy references the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Malta in 1990, which described the right of children to participate in cultural, artistic and other recreational activities. It is also guided by the Office of the Commissioner for Children's 'Manifesto for Children' (2008), which stressed the need to address children's issues in various sectors of Maltese society in order to promote their holistic development. The policy refers to the manifesto, which states that children should "not only learn about culture and the arts, but…enjoy it" (p. 6).

The updated 2017 manifesto makes only a very brief reference to cultural education (Commissioner for Children, 2017), while the 2022 manifesto recommends that local political parties ensure that education is inclusive and respectful towards others, regardless of their gender identity, while encouraging all children to participate in cultural events (Commissioner for Children, 2022). The findings from 2019 in the same manifesto refer to an increasingly international population in schools, which could have implications for the teaching of the arts. It notes that carers for foreign

children in Malta seem to have very limited knowledge of the many community, educational, social and health services available for children and their families in Malta (Commissioner for Children, 2019). When asked about the use of community services, such as language classes, arts and crafts, library facilities, IT courses and parental seminars, only a small percentage of parents reported that they and their children made use of these services.

The diversity of school populations is a salient point in relation to access to education. Calleja Ragonesi and Martinelli (2013) address the degrees of integration of Somali children in the Maltese educational system and argue that Malta's policies seem to be among the least favourable in Europe for migrant pupils. Contributing factors include the availability and implementation of policies which target the specific needs of newcomers, including funding and language support. Azzopardi (2008, as cited in Calleja Ragonesi & Martinelli, 2013) advocates for schools to respond to cultural differences by implementing a more inclusive discourse and understanding on multicultural issues since it could lead to educational transformation and the development of cultural sensitivity. The setting up of the Migrant Learners' Unit in 2014 has helped to overcome some barriers, particularly linguistic barriers, that impact the integration of migrants in Malta (Migrant Learner's Unit, 2016).

2.2.5 Learning Outcomes Framework

The *NCF* promotes the values of diversity, equity and decentralisation in education and suggests a Learning Outcomes Framework as a model that guarantees the equal entitlement of all learners. The introduction of the Learning Outcomes Framework (*LOF*) in 2015 aimed to lead to more curricular autonomy of colleges and schools so as to better address the learning needs of their communities. The *LOF* was designed to meet the four broad education goals outlined in the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024 (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014). In brief, these aim to reduce gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls and between students attending different schools, support the educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and from low socio-economic status, increase participation in lifelong learning and adult learning and retain students in further, vocational and tertiary education and training (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, 2015). The *LOF* includes subject-specific outcomes for art, drama and music, while some outcomes related to dance were integrated in the physical education outcomes.

2.2.6 Teacher training and higher education

The introduction of new national benchmarks such as the *LOF* should, in theory, be accompanied by additional training for teachers in the primary and secondary sectors. In many European countries, generalist teachers teach the arts in primary schools while secondary arts teachers are usually specialised in an artistic discipline (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012). While generalist primary teachers in Malta may teach the arts, this is usually the responsibility of specialist arts teachers. At the UM, pre-service teachers in the primary route receive some training in arts pedagogies, while more specialised arts education courses are also offered by the Faculty of Education. The undergraduate route into teaching previously offered at UM has been replaced by a variety of full-time and part-time Master in Teaching and Learning degrees in art, music, drama and dance. At this level, Master students are recruited after specialising in an art subject at undergraduate level and are trained to become professional educators through the delivery of both theoretical and practical study units (University of Malta, 2021). Teacher training is also offered at the Institute for Education, set up in 2015. The Institute for Education offers a Master of Education to those who wish to obtain a specialised Master teaching degree in the arts (Institute for Education, 2016).

The quality of arts teaching and learning is linked to teachers' confidence in teaching these subjects. The importance of teachers' confidence is especially true in Early Years and the Primary sector, in which generalist teachers may include some aspects of the arts in their teaching. In their comparative study on primary teachers' self-confidence in teaching arts and crafts in Malta and Finland, Gatt and Karppinen (2014) argue that prospective primary level teachers often enter universities with anxieties towards the teaching of arts and crafts as a result of poor experiences in the field. The research findings show that courses in the arts and crafts offered during teaching degrees as well as prior teaching experiences help prospective primary teachers develop more positive attitudes towards the arts. The importance of continuous professional development is therefore linked to the possibility of deepening the "artistry" of teachers (Eisner 2002; Russell-Bowie 2012, as cited in Gatt & Karppinen, 2014).

Arts students who would like to further their studies in international institutions can also apply for a scholarship through the Malta Arts Scholarships Scheme within the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR). While supporting this scheme, *NCP2021* notes that even more financial support is needed to address the capacity building of the cultural and creative sectors. It advocates for financial support to be offered to talented children, under the age of 16, who are accepted into prestigious schools abroad and whose needs cannot be met by local organisations or local tutorship.

2.2.7 Partnerships with the cultural and heritage sectors

International research conducted for the Arts Education Monitoring System (2013) in various European countries has shown that there exists an educational gap between "big players in the cultural sector" (p. 8), like major museums, and small to medium-sized institutions. Unlike their larger counterparts, small entities usually do not have the resources to invest in an education department and also face difficulties in monitoring budgets for educational initiatives. This might explain why the full potential of educational programmes in local museums and heritage sites has not been exploited, although Heritage Malta has recently invested in some educational programmes revolving around school visits and thematic activities (Times of Malta, 2019) and in-service training related to museum education. *NCP2021* calls on public cultural organisations (PCOs) and heritage institutions to engage further in the provision of cultural education. It encourages PCOs and heritage institutions to set up action programmes with colleges and schools in order to facilitate creative interactions with works in national collections.

Funding schemes introduced by ACM have helped to boost creative projects in schools and simultaneously provide employment to creative practitioners through collaborations between artists and educators. The 'Kreattiv' funds, for instance, supported artistic collaborations and residencies in both the primary and secondary sectors across various art forms, ranging from dance and other performing arts to art and crafts. In the two-year period 2019-2020, two-thirds of projects funded through Kreattiv were conducted in state schools (15 out of 22), while the rest were distributed among church and independent schools (Arts Council Malta, n.d.). On the other hand, the 'Arts Education Scheme' introduced in 2021 by ACM (Arts Council Malta, 2022) has attracted a sizable proportion of non-formal educational institutions like private dance studios (9 awarded projects out of a total of 21) and a smaller proportion of state schools in the two-year period 2021-2022. This scheme was introduced to boost the arts education sector during the pandemic while supporting cross-sectoral collaborations.

The Arts Council Malta (ACM) consultation strategy document that aims to implement the principles enshrined in the *NCP2021* similarly prioritises a collaborative approach to education. The strategy sets out to "support education, capacity building, professional development and knowledge exchange", while "empowering people to flourish in their cultural and creative practice" as one of its ten priorities (ACM, 2021, p. 7). Supporting measures include advisory skills, mentorship, training and networking opportunities while recognising cultural and artistic education at all levels.

2.3 THE ARTS SUBJECTS IN MALTA'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

This section briefly introduces individual creative subjects in Malta with regard to national syllabi, examinations and the roles of specific subjects in the broader curriculum in formal, especially secondary, education. Given that information about local syllabi and examinations is freely available online, the following information provides only a bare outline that helps to contextualise other aspects of this literature review and report.

2.3.1 Drama

The introduction of the *LOF* in Malta was intended to support the *NCF*'s recommendations about assessment in compulsory schooling. The learning outcomes for drama for Year 9 to Year 11 focus on the following areas: skills, speech, voice and research, improvisation and interpretation (Department of Curriculum Development Implementation and Review, 2020). The Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) Syllabus for Theatre (2025) is based on the curriculum principles outlined in the *NCF* and designed using the *LOF* that identifies what students should know and be able to achieve by the end of their compulsory education (MATSEC Examinations Board, 2020). The syllabus is a learning outcomes-based one, addressing the holistic development of learners and advocating a quality education that helps students to develop into active citizens. It aims at the transmission of discipline-related skills (voice work, interpretation of text, characterization, improvisation, use of space, and so on) without rescinding broader life-skills (for example, working collaboratively, confidence, discussion and writing).

Drama in education suggests an integrative approach to teaching and learning that promotes inclusion, diversity, and social awareness within a broader social spectrum of contextualised learning. Learning through educational drama encourages the exploration of various imaginative themes and topics by combining both cognitive and social domains (van de Water, 2021).

The importance of Drama in Education is also emphasised in some church schools: for example, the website of the Archbishop's seminary refers to the transferability of skills as well as other factors related to students' personality, such as positive self-concept associated with participation in drama activities at school (Debono, 2021). Consequently, drama in education focuses more on the process of education rather than the development of formal, audience-driven production work.

2.3.2 Music

Musical learning should be rooted in the reality of musical activity that the learner experiences, including informal popular music-learning practices (Green, 2005). Musical attainment targets as evidenced in the *NCF* focus on a range of learning activities: singing, playing, performing, improvising, composing and critically engaging with music. The music curriculum is inclusive, in

that it underlines the students' own preferences as well as those of others and seeks to connect school performances with the broader community. Performances can bring into play instruments of different ethnic origin, students' voices and several classroom and improvised instruments and sounds, including percussion. The resources used for performing are also applied to composition (Curriculum Department, n.d.).

Teachers influence the way students develop their goals and shape their perceptions (Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, 2015). The *LOF* for music addresses pedagogical implications and ways of assessing subject learning outcomes at different educational levels. The outcomes refer to a rich variety of aspects of music and learning: music in context, responding to music, evaluating music, performing, improvising, using one's voice, playing instruments, using technology (digital literacy), notation, communication, participation and interaction in performances and presentations, developing, widening and harnessing knowledge in music.
In 2011 music became an optional subject in all state schools. Therefore, students who opt to study music in Year 9 need to attain a *SEC* level within a span of three years in both theory and practice. According to the music prospectus, students can choose to study music without any prior knowledge of the subject.

According to Buttigieg (2016), the music syllabus does not meet required international standards, and secondary music teachers have expressed their disappointment with the structure of the syllabus to the Education Department. Moreover, there seem to be some problems with finding skilled teachers who can cater for students who intend to specialise in certain instruments. Students are now being allowed to pursue their practical studies at the Johann Strauss School of Music while continuing with their theory lessons at their respective schools. Buttigieg (2016) also notes that music examinations in Malta are mainly linked to the British system, particularly recognised institutions, such as ABRSM, Trinity and London College syllabi and argues that the secondary music syllabus requires a fair amount of upgrading.

2.3.3 Visual art
On a national level, art education is structured by the Art and Design syllabi and the *LOF*. The *LOF* for art is based on four subject foci: the promotion of learners' personal and collaborative responses to stimuli, the interpretation and evaluation of art, understanding of materials, techniques, skills, media and aesthetic qualities, and understanding art in its broader contexts. The subject foci are broadly in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Visual Competency (Schönau et al., 2021), which refers to production (generation of visual ideas, visual research, making visual images, presentation and evaluation) and response (looking at images with an open mind, researching, evaluating and reporting about images).

At the primary level, students follow a model based on aesthetic, perceptual, technical, personal and social aims (Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes, 2022). Students engage with the terminology of art and also learn a variety of skills, including practical, creative, thinking, decision-making and problem-solving skills. The pursuit of these skills and talents is therefore suggested in order to broaden pupil's perceptions and responses to real-life situations. Assessment in the primary years, wherever available, includes observation of learners' in-class performance, quality and characteristics of completed tangible artworks, and student participation in self- and peer-assessment (p. iv). In the secondary cycle, students continue building upon their art skills and talents under the same aims translated into the four strands in Art and Design, which refer to use of materials, expression, evaluation and appreciation and aesthetic awareness.

Examinations in art education are an additional form of graded assessment (Department for Curriculum Management and eLearning, 2009, p. 5). Formal examinations are half-yearly or yearly evaluations of students' work in Years 9, 10 and 11, followed by the SEC examination. The updated 2025 SEC syllabus assesses students through coursework and a practical examination, and combines a basic knowledge of the history of art with observational skills and a creative approach to themes of personal and social relevance (MATSEC Examinations Board, n.d)

2.3.4 Dance

At primary level, dance education is included in the Physical Education (PE) syllabi. Some competencies that dance students need to demonstrate are the ability to move to rhythm, awareness of space and how to perform a simple sequence (Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes, n.d.). As the attainment level increases, students are required to develop better responses to ideas, feelings or moods with increased body awareness. Improvisation to music as single or shared performance and the ability to seek for and receive feedback from peers and teachers are desired outcomes.

With regards to secondary education, dance is offered as part of the Sports Career Development Programme (SCDP). The assessment in SCDP on dance consists of practical sessions on Dance Composition (Space Awareness, Body Awareness), Dance Execution (Gymnastics, Body Awareness, Interpretation) and Dance Presentation (Ministry for Education and Employment, n.d).

The SEC syllabus identifies the teaching and learning of dance as a cross-curricular, thematic, interdisciplinary and collaborative experience of obtaining knowledge and skills in performance and choreography (MATSEC Examinations Board, n.d.). Dance studies involve techniques and skills for dance creation and performance, the experience and enjoyment derived from dance performance and participation, appreciation and understanding of dance through theory and observation, social interaction and mental stimulation. Essential skills in dance education are collaboration, leadership, communication, innovation, evaluation, organisation, and resilience. These talents and skills are nurtured through the local performing arts scene, including the Żfin *Malta,* the National Dance Company, *Teatru Malta*, the National Theatre, and several theatres and festivals across Malta, including Dance Festival Malta.

2.4 THE STATUS OF ARTS EDUCATION IN COMPULSORY EDUCATION

A memorandum published by the Malta Employers Association (MEA) in 2022 encouraged political parties to channel "students into career oriented disciplines - e.g. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects" and to wean "students away from what are considered to be 'soft options' in their studies" (MEA, 2022, p. 21). The term 'soft options' was largely interpreted as a reference to the arts and humanities and was met with disapproval by many academics at the University of Malta (Vella, 2022). Academics have also argued that a profit-oriented educational system that is geared merely towards careers is likely to dismiss the arts as useless, and that trying to lobby for more arts and humanities in the Maltese educational system is not likely to be an easy task, given that any curricular shift also affects other subjects (The Malta Independent, 2022).

MEA's call for a move away from 'soft options' came at a time when arts education was at an all-time low due to the effects of the pandemic and government measures (Vella, 2021). Despite such limited perceptions about the value of arts education, teachers and education officers EOs involved in arts education work to promote their subjects in schools on a regular basis. However, some constraints such as teacher shortages persist. The problem of teacher shortage in arts education, primarily in the primary sector, could be partly addressed by implementing a proposal in *NCP2021*, which recommends the establishment of a network of teachers to serve as Creative Arts Coordinators across all local colleges to support the creative development of schools, students and teaching staff. Creative arts coordinators would support regular teachers by providing expertise and promoting creative wellbeing in schools.

This section looks at some challenges and opportunities that teachers and other stakeholders experience in relation to arts education in Malta. References are also made to the status of the arts subjects, programmes offered by specific institutions and creative initiatives by external entities involving students in mainstream schools.

2.4.1 Drama
While prospective primary teachers receive some training in the creative arts at the UM, most drama lessons in schools in Malta are conducted by specialist drama teachers. Some research shows that exposure to the subject helps generalist teachers gain confidence in teaching drama. For example, a 3-year project carried out in a primary school led to changes in perceptions about the subject amongst teachers (Gatt, 2009). Research shows that exposure to the subject helps regular teachers gain confidence in using dramatic practices and techniques (for example, role-playing, hot seating, group games) in the teaching of the curriculum.

From recent research carried out at postgraduate level at the UM (Caruana, 2019), church schools and independent schools also employ specialist teachers to teach drama as a subject. While no drama sessions are held in some state schools, it is usually the peripatetic drama teachers from the Drama Unit who visit the school for a number of sessions, while primary teachers may or may not be involved in drama education. In state schools, the availability of the subject in class often depends on the interest a class teacher or a particular headmaster might show in drama. The shortage of drama teachers also means that students in state schools are not likely to receive their entitlement in drama education. The problem of teacher shortage has existed for many years. In 2008, the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) complained to authorities that the Drama Unit was "bereft of staff and resources", which left "the system impaired vis-à-vis quality control" (Barbara, 2008, para. 4). Such omissions also impact the subject's status.

The situation in other educational sectors is varied. Within a number of church and independent schools, drama is included in the weekly time-table and taught by full-time or part-time teachers, who teach drama throughout the scholastic year (Caruana, 2019). At times, the drama teacher is employed to teach drama and another curricular subject.

2.4.2 Music
Constraints are present both in the music syllabus and in the teaching sector, particularly due to issues related to human resources (Buttigieg, 2016). Unfortunately, the role of music teachers is often restricted to supporting activities for the school's annual events, like concerts. There is also a lack of classroom resources, teaching materials and specialised equipment for use by music teachers and students in class, and deficiencies might also be present in the provision of training

in music technology education (Cucciardi, 2020), despite the fact that the use of technology in music education is addressed in the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes (2018).

Some good practices within music education also need to be highlighted. Before pandemic restrictions came into place, music teachers used to meet for 90 minutes per week to work together on interdisciplinary projects (Cassar-Cordina & Attard, 2021). However, Cassar-Cordina & Attard (2021) also state that *NCP2021*'s proposal for an increase in the number of lessons for the arts in schools would, unfortunately, be impossible to implement, given the relatively small number of music teachers who graduate every year. An assessment of the extent to which the curricula of other subjects would be affected by this proposal was called for.

2.4.3 Visual art

Comparatively, the number of art teachers outnumber those in other individual arts subjects in Malta. However, the time available for art education in schools, especially state schools, is also relatively low, and this has been the case for many years. Research on this topic shows that in 2006, primary students used to be exposed to substantially fewer art lessons than students in several other European countries, while the majority of middle school students were exposed to relatively few hours of art education too (Vella, 2006). Recent reports show that the situation is still quite problematic (European Commission, 2021; *NCP2021*).

Occasionally, creative art initiatives developed by external entities help to create partnerships or nationwide projects and also promote the subject beyond the parameters of mainstream schooling. In 2021, a multicultural art exhibition created to promote cultural relationships between China and Malta helped to increase youth participation in the arts (China Cultural Center in Malta, 2021). Also in 2021, MUŻA, the National Community Art Museum, organised an exhibition initiative on the themes of prehistoric temples, traditional confections, and pose for art, where children aged sixteen and under submitted artworks as part of "Be the Artist" initiative (Heritage Malta, n.d.). The Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes also invited children from all state and non-state schools to participate in a Digital Art Exhibition on the themes of Infinity, Emotions and Colours (St. Nicholas College, 2021). At a time when arts education was very low-key due to the effects of the pandemic, initiatives such as these were felt to be very important.

2.4.4 Dance

Dance education in compulsory education is still in its infancy in Malta. However, studies show that there exists an interest in social dancing locally, particularly because forms like Argentine Tango support community formation (Baldacchino, 2018). Dance education in the private sector has quite a rich history, especially ballet schools (Farrugia-Kriel, 2020). There are currently many social dance groups in Malta that represent Tango, Salsa, Swing Dancing, and so on, as well as cultural dance groups that do Greek, Scottish and other cultural dance.

Somatic knowledge (Green, 2002)—the use of the body for expressive purposes—and movement education are crucial in fostering students', including pre-school learners', understanding that movement has meaning, purpose and expression (Lorenzo-Lasa et al., 2007). However, opportunities for advancement in the field are still limited. In Malta, the perception that one cannot make a career out of dance studies, combined with the small size of the island and the relatively short span of a dancer's career (Times of Malta, 2022) may influence students' (and parents') choices and interest in the subject in schools.

In the private sector, a few schools offer dance education. Dance studies are available at St Michael's Foundation for Education School, for example. Students learn dance and music together as part of the school's curriculum, and continue their study of dance and movement as part of the school's Physical Education curriculum. The school also participates in various local and international events (St. Michael School, n.d.).

2.5 ARTS EDUCATION IN NON-FORMAL SETTINGS

This section briefly describes provisions for the arts subjects under study in state and other non-formal settings. Apart from compulsory education, visual and performing arts training is also offered in specialised schools with a different curriculum (European Commission, 2021). There are many service providers in this sector, from relatively small establishments focusing on a specific artistic medium like pottery to much larger schools incorporating various art forms. Some of these schools also offer cultural programmes for the general public.

2.5.1 Drama

One of the available providers in this sector is the Malta School of Drama and Dance (Mikel Anton Vassalli College, 2021), which supports students in their creative needs and abilities related to drama and dance. The school offers courses in various areas, including musical theatre, flamenco, ballet and freestyle dance.

Other forms of tuition in drama are available in different schools. The Malta Society of Arts in Valletta offers 'Drama for Fun' courses to 10-15 year olds. The Helen O'Grady Drama Academy offers drama classes to different ages, from very young children to adults. Private tuition, including that provided by private schools Masquerade and Stagecoach and Hoi Polloi use Trinity syllabi and examination methods (Trinity College London, 2020). A number of other schools similarly cater for international syllabi.

Other events for children, schools and families contribute to the local cultural calendar. For instance, Stagecoach Theatre Arts School organises a Summer Short Play Festival while ŻiguŻajg, which is a member of ASSITEJ International Association of Theatre for Children & Young People, organises an annual programme of international events aimed primarily at children.

2.5.2 Music

In Malta, there are various options for students looking for music education in non-formal settings. The best-known school is the Malta School of Music, which offers music programmes and opportunities for individual learners and aims to help students achieve high standards in playing proficiency, performance, creativity, and musicianship. The school was established in 1975 and employs established musicians as teachers. Each year, the school accepts around 200 new students and also offers external students the possibility of forming part of the school's Children Choir or Community Choir (The Malta Independent, 2021). The school is now part of the MAVC and forms part of the Visual and Performing Arts Schools under the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Innovation, offering courses for beginners up to advanced level. Another state-owned institution is the Villabianca Centre for Music and the Arts in Birkirkara, which offers music lessons and music therapy to children and young people with disabilities. A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Malta Trust Foundation and the

MAVC Malta School of Music within the Education Ministry to address this need. The two sides cooperate on initiatives to support children who lack access to music and the arts and engage local musicians and international music therapists (Times of Malta, 2021).

Another important category in the field of non-formal music education is associated with the role of band clubs in local communities. This is a sector whose value is also referenced in *NCP2021*, while Arts Council Malta (ACM, 2021) regularly launches funds focusing on strengthening the work carried out by band clubs. There is also a Fund for Musical Tuition for Young People in Band Clubs, managed by Aġenzija Żgħażagħ (2021) within the Ministry for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Recreation, Sport and Voluntary Organisations, with the collaboration of the Għaqda Każini tal-Banda. These clubs offer music lessons and loan musical instruments to children in various towns and villages. Recent research notes that there are deep and strong links between local band clubs and primary schools, with scope to strengthen them further. They compare well as inclusive entities dedicated to the training of young musicians (Azzopardi & Cassar, 2018). However, the number of students in local band clubs has been decreasing when compared to the relatively large numbers that existed in the post-Second World War period. At the time of the NSO Band Club Participation Study (2014), there were slightly more than 2,000 students in the 86 band clubs across Malta and Gozo.

Other schools and organisations include the George Vella School of Music (2022), which forms part of the Għaqda Mużikali Marija Bambina, Banda Vittorja of Naxxar, the Malta National Children's Choir (2018), the choir Schola Cantorum Jubilate (n.d), the Malta Society of Arts, the School of Performing Arts (SOPA, 2021), Piano Academy (2022) and Sally Sounds (2020). Some of these organisations team up with other organisations at times; for example, Sally Sounds teamed up with the community theatre Teatru Salesjan during the pandemic to provide arts education (Grima, 2021).

2.5.3 Visual art

Visual art education is offered by a number of non-formal institutions, such as the Malta School of Art, the Malta Society of Arts, and private schooling institutions (amongst others, Art Classes Malta, Kidzart). The best-known of these venues is the Malta School of Art, which was established in 1925 to cater for a lack of serious artistic education in the country at the time (Spiteri, 2020). The Mikiel Anton Vassalli College Network (MAVC) was established in 2018 with art facilities in Malta (The Malta School of Art) and Gozo (Gozo Visual and Performing Arts School). It offers courses in the visual and performing arts to students of different ages and aptitudes. The MAVC school prospectus includes different levels of skill attainment in different techniques and media (MAVC - Gozo Visual & Performing Arts School, 2022/2023; MAVC - Malta School of Art, 2022/2023).

The Malta Society of Arts (MSA) is another creative space focused on the promotion of the arts in Malta (Malta Society of Arts, n.d.). Whilst encouraging arts education, MSA offers winter and summer courses in a variety of media available for young and older children, and has also been transformed into a popular exhibition space.

2.5.4 Dance

The Malta Visual and Performing Arts School takes an essential role in the development of the performing arts sector in Malta (MVPA, 2020). The MVPA Dance Curriculum consists of various dance modules, offering training in dance theory, ballet, Spanish dance, hip-hop and other dance styles. The Malta School of Drama and Dance is another creative establishment which trains student-actors and dancers in both formal and experimental forms (Mikiel Anton Vassalli College, 2020/21).

The non-formal private sector is quite rich in its provision of music education for young learners, with schools and academies offering a range of possibilities, from movement classes, to junior and senior ballet, flamenco, jazz, hip hop, Latin, ballroom and contemporary.

3. Methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As explained earlier in this report, the mixed method case study at the heart of this project combined data retrieved using focus groups, semi-structured interviews, observations and questionnaires to collect data pertinent to answering the following research questions:

RQ 1. What kind of arts education is being provided to children up to school-leaving age in Malta?

RQ 2. What facilities exist for art, music, drama and dance education in different sectors of formal and non-formal education?

RQ 3. How do these facilities affect arts pedagogies?

RQ 4. What is the status of arts education and how were the arts in schools affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ 5. What relationships exist between different stakeholders in arts education?

This chapter discusses the research methods used in this study to explore these research questions. Specifically, it discusses the type of study, tools, procedures and ethical considerations used to direct, sample and analyse quantitative and qualitative data relevant to investigating the research questions guiding this study. This chapter's discussion also explains why a mixed-methods design was considered appropriate for the purpose of this research, and reflects on the limitations, potential shortcomings and mitigating measures deployed.

3.2 TYPE OF STUDY: MIXED METHODS CASE STUDY

As one of the major "research paradigms" (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007, p.112), mixed methods is recognised as a principal provider of a wider and deeper understanding of research practice, a method which approaches both complex research issues and smaller cases from a logical and methodologically flexible ground by integrating both post-positivism and interpretivism (Fetters, 2016). Mixed methods research is valued for being cognisant, appreciative, and inclusive of local and broader socio political realities by combining two different research methods in an informative, complete, balanced and powerful paradigm (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). When it comes to addressing a specific case study from multiple perspectives and complexities, mixed methods may successfully support and lead the research endeavour in a fluid and permeable manner (Carolan, Forbat & Smith, 2016).

Research using case studies is a holistic, context-based method of exploring a particular subject from multiple perspectives by implementing either qualitative, quantitative or a combination of both methodologies (Starman, 2013). In its true essence, case study research focuses on investigating a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context.

3.2.1 Limitations of mixed methods study

Along with its strengths, mixing quantitative and qualitative methods in a mixed methods case study may pose certain limitations. In their research on the challenges associated with mixed methods, Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri (2021) list length, complexity and recruitment as potential

drawbacks. The different epistemological and philosophical frameworks integrated in mixed methods may lead to an extended period of data collection and analysis, especially in terms of compatibility and prioritising research findings. Data integration may be negatively affected by the conflicting results from the qualitative and quantitative analysis which may pose problems in relating different kinds of information and drawing a conclusion. As a result, such complications may question the reliability and quality of the research findings.

Another point of concern is dependency; restricted to a single case, the possibilities of generalisation or comparison beyond its specific domain in case study research are diminished (Yin, 1984 as cited in Zainal, 2007).

The combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods in a case study research design supported the research team in its engagement with the research questions in this study, as follows:

- The research team designed and piloted the student questionnaire to obtain data on type, frequency and facilities/resources concerning arts education provision in compulsory education in Malta (RQs 1, 2) and related experiences and engagement of minors, with special interest in the (post-) pandemic context (RQs 3, 4, 5);
- The research team targeted RQ4 using focus-groups and semi-structured interviews to gather impressions on the status of arts education through collective discussions or one-to-one conversations with art educators and stakeholders. The format of these interviews allowed the sharing of one's professional experience, observations and suggestions on the status of arts education before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in the light of cross-sectoral collaboration and colleagueship (RQs 4, 5);
- Observations generated valid empirical records of type, extent and condition of facilities considered (by research participants, at the time of the study) as required for impactful arts education in the compulsory sector; as well as data on the impact of (not) having access to such facilities on art pedagogies (RQs 2, 3).

3.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

For the purposes of this study, the research team collected qualitative data using semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observations. Observations were carried out in many different schools which represent a broad range of institutions offering different kinds of services for arts education.

Table 1 - Participants, qualitative data collection

Head of School	Head of Department	Head of College Network	Education Officers	Individuals interviews arts teacher	Focus Group state school arts teachers	Focus Group independent school arts teachers
7	1	2	5	6	7	6

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

The research team conducted a total of 21 semi-structured interviews with 7 heads of schools, 1 head of department, 2 heads of college networks, 5 education officers, and an additional 6 individual interviews with arts teachers [3] (Table 1).

Semi-structured interviews (Appendix B) comprised in-depth conversations on themes related to arts education such as the use of resources including skills, infrastructure and time; methodology and approaches; attitudes, perceptions of status of educators and subjects; practices in class. Semi-structured interviews invited high-level stakeholders to engage in elite conversations related to one's specific expertise with the purpose of collecting specialised knowledge in a particular area (Bogner, Littig & Menz, 2018). Key topics of discussion included the use of facilities and pedagogies in the pre- and post-pandemic context and cross-sectoral exchange and collaboration (RQs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

The research team held all interviews online and recorded these to facilitate logistics and boost participation. It can be argued that a face-to-face encounter with high-level stakeholders could have inspired more spontaneity and interaction between the researcher and the participant, thus resulting in more personal and quality conversations. Notwithstanding, the use of different types of questions, such as closed and open questions, mitigated this limitation: they facilitated a variety of personal recommendations and feedback including unpopular or less discussed viewpoints.

3.3.2 Focus groups

Focus groups are used to obtain data from a group with particular interest where participants contributed to a topic they felt proficient and skilled.

The research team carried out 3 focus groups with subject teachers of art, music, drama and dance engaged in the primary and secondary sector, either in state, independent or church, compulsory and/or non-formal education (Table 1). The focus groups questions (Appendix C) targeted an interactive discussion between subject teachers about their individual and classroom experience as art educators through a series of questions including resources, facilities, methodology, pedagogy and perceptions on art teaching and learning. The research team guided focus group participants through a series of close and open-ended questions directed to art pedagogies, status of the art at schools, facilities, and cross-sectoral relationships (RQs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5); the research team also encouraged participants to share their recommendations on future practices. Selective focus group audiences could lead to biased or highly limited data (Schutt, 2012). Recruitment and securing representation challenged the research team. Acceptance to participate was highly dependent on access to the internet, time schedule, and the period when focus groups were recruited. The research team found recruiting participants from the private sector particularly challenging.

Ultimately the research team succeeded in carrying out the three focus groups with a total number of 13 participants; of which 7 hailed from state schools, and 6 from independent schools (Table 1).

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3 Individual interviews with art teachers followed the focus groups interview structure. More information is presented in section 3.3.2 Focus groups.

In line with good research ethics practice and to compensate for the limited number of focus groups participants, the research team scheduled individual online interviews with invited individuals who accepted to participate (but could not attend the focus group when scheduled to fit the timetable of most who accepted) to answer the focus group questions (Appendix C). Such participants comprised 6 participants; of which 3 hailed from state schools and 3 from church schools.

3.3.3 Observations

The research team gathered further qualitative data through observations of school resources and facilities. Subject specialists conducted a total of 24 observation visits to state/independent/ church schools providing compulsory or non-formal arts education. These schools were selected on the basis of the academics' experience in visiting schools during pre-service teachers' teaching practice and other circumstances. Table 2 shows the distribution of these visits.

The subject specialists were four university lecturers specialised in art, music, drama and dance education. These education professionals also assisted as researchers in the process of data collection and data analysis, and contributed to the reviews of the Literature review and Findings chapters. Involving subject specialists with expert knowledge to carry out observations was helpful for generating quality data following their active involvement in Maltese arts education.

Visits carried out by the subject specialists followed an observation template (Appendix D) divided in general sections such as availability and dimensions of art facilities; accessibility and health and safety issues; lighting, learning technologies and specialised equipment and furniture; general observations related to availability of arts education, organisational issues and resourcing of space. Specialists could also include other comments not specified in the observation schedule and sometimes spoke to stakeholders within schools about specific resources and related issues. Such information helped to gain a broader perspective of the situation in specific sectors. Thus, observations allowed the research team to gain valuable insights on the provision and quality of arts education in different educational organisations of formal and non-formal education (RQ 2).

Table 2 - Types of schools visited

Typology	Number of schools	Number of visits
state, primary	2	2
independent, early years	1	1
independent, primary	1	1
state, middle school	2	3
independent, secondary	1	2
church, secondary	3	3
church, all levels	1	1
state, secondary, specialised, compulsory	1	4
state, all levels, specialised, non-formal	4	5
independent, all levels, specialised, non-formal	2	2

In line with good research practice, the research team responded to the context under study and its actors by conducting observations in a flexible manner. For instance, while the majority of visits were carried out in-person, in a few cases the research team used online technologies to observe facilities. On the other hand, the in-person, physical observations guaranteed a first-hand immersion in the spaces used for the arts within schools.

3.3.4 Questionnaire

The research team developed the student online questionnaire (Appendix E) with a total of 16 questions, using a combination of styles such as open-ended and closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions included questions on type and level of school education, frequency of the provision of art, music, drama or dance education from September 2021 to the time of data collection, and similarly frequency of visits to art events and spaces. Lastly, a closed-ended question queried family support in arts education. Open-ended questions queried participant's age, choice of art subjects at secondary level as general or option subject, after school attendance to art classes, personal experience related to arts education and the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the student questionnaire aimed to investigate what type of arts education is provided to students up to school-leaving age in the pre- and post-pandemic context (RQs 1, 4). This data collection procedure allowed getting diverse responses by a specific audience in a time-saving and low-cost manner (Schutt, 2012). Heads of schools of respective educational institutions mediated the distribution of the online questionnaire link. The research team was attentive to keep the questionnaire concise and user-friendly, particularly for minors. It is understandable that online administration of questionnaires may have limited response rate; however it also boosted anonymity, ecological validity and feasibility as administering pen and paper questionnaires to all was not possible with the resources and within the timeframes available.

It was, however, challenging to ensure the equal distribution of the questionnaire link to all schools involved, due to delayed response or non-response by the school management. As a result, the participation rates of students per school type (state/church/independent) and level (primary/secondary) varied significantly (Table 3).

For instance, response rates from church school students were extremely poor compared to the state school students. Distribution of the questionnaire impacted students' lack of or delayed access to the questionnaire link. In addition, feasibility matters did not allow the research team to monitor and distinguish questionnaire responses from minors with an adult's/educator's support and those without. Thus, risks of misinterpretation of the questions and limited validity and reliability of responses could not be entirely excluded. The mixed-methods research design allowed the possibility to validate findings of the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, as discussed elsewhere in this report.

Table 3 - Questionnaire: Population and Sample

Academic Year 2021-2022	Population	% of population	Sample	% of sample	Margins of Error (95% confidence interval)	Margins of Error (90% confidence interval)
Grand Total: Yrs 6, Forms 1-3	18106	100.0	174	100.0	±7.39%	±6.22%
State schools only: Yrs 6, Forms 1-3	9933	54.9	81	46.6	±10.79%	±9.09%
Church schools only: Yrs 6, Forms 1-3	5860	32.4	25	14.4	±18.31%	±15.41%
Independent schools only (collectively): Yrs 6, Forms 1-3	2313	12.8	68	39.1	±7.82%	±6.59%
Primary only: Yr 6 only (church + state + independent collectively)	4644	25.6	69	39.7	±10.22%	±8.61%
Secondary only: Forms 1, 2 and 3 only (church + state + independent collectively)	13462	74.4	105	60.3	±8.32%	±7.00%
Church & primary only	1341	7.4	5	2.9	±22.91%	±19.29%
Church & secondary only	4519	25.0	20	11.5	±18.94%	±15.94%

3.4 SAMPLING AND RECRUITMENT

The research team designed and executed different sampling strategies to recruit participants on a voluntary basis to contribute to the diverse types of qualitative and quantitative data collection activities. However, a common denominator comprised authorisation from the respective head

of school (Appendix F), to access art, music, drama and dance educators at primary or secondary level engaged in either state, independent or church schools. This followed official approval from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee (FREC, University of Malta, Appendix G), and from the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability (DRLLE), Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR), Malta, Appendix H) to carry out research in the case of state schools, and the Secretariat for Catholic Education (SCE, Malta) in the case of church schools (Appendix I).

In the case of focus groups, an information letter (Appendix J) stating the objectives of this research was emailed in a personalised manner to prospective participants. In most cases, the research team followed-up individual information letters with a telephone call to prompt and confirm participation and follow-up invitations to arrange online meeting times. Using elite sampling (Schutt, 2012) the research team recruited most participants with the assistance of subject EOs, subject specialists, head of departments/colleges and the research team's professional network of colleagues.

Semi-structured interviews followed a similar sampling and recruiting strategy. Interviewees including heads of schools, heads of departments, college principles and EOs were recruited following an authorisation letter (Appendix F). Consequently, the research team sent personalised emails introducing the research objectives and details of participation to each participant. The research team scheduled interview slots on receiving an interviewee's written acceptance of participation. In some cases, prompting was needed to confirm participation.

Educational institutions chosen for observations comprised a mix of state, church and independent schools in formal and non-formal education. The research team included both specialised arts schools and regular schools.

Questionnaire participants comprised 174 students of the grand total of 18,106 students in Years 6-9 during the academic year 2021-2022 (9,993 in state schools, 5,860 in church schools and 2,312 in independent schools)[4]. As authorised by the DRLLE/SCE/respective heads of school (as applicable) the research team administered the link to the online questionnaire to 12 state schools, 5 church schools and 4 independent schools (Table 4).

Table 4 - Administration of online questionnaire according to school type

School type	Number of administered questionnaires
state school	12
church school	5
independent school	4

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

The research team transcribed, coded and categorised qualitative data from the focus groups and semi-structured interviews in the five themes pertinent to the RQs of this study, namely: Demographics, Facilities, Curriculum, Pedagogies and Stakeholder Dynamics. The research team

4   Email communication from DRLLE Officer dated July 14 2022.

also coded data from the observations to identify existing patterns. Quantitative questionnaire data was cleaned and coded using Excel and SPSS; and followed with descriptive and bivariate analysis using SPSS; particularly in connection to the themes Demographics, Curriculum, and Stakeholders Dynamics.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prior to data collection, the research team applied for a research ethics review and requested permission to carry out research in schools to DRLLE/SCE/heads of school (as applicable, Appendices F, H, I) by providing information on the research objectives, target audience, data collection and management, timeframes, contact details and other important information.

Confidentiality and anonymity were applied in order to ensure correct handling of the information concerning the participants/respondents personal data. Where applicable, anonymity such as participant's names or work location was respected with strictest confidence by means of coding to minimise identifiability. In addition, participants were informed in a user-friendly consent (information letters, consent and assent forms) about their rights as participants in each data collection method including the principle of voluntary participation and withdrawal from the study at any time.

3.7 LIMITATIONS, SHORTCOMINGS AND MITIGATING MEASURES

The research team encountered a number of weaknesses related to the research study design and data collection methods:

- As discussed under "Limitations of mixed-methods study" subsection (3.2.1), the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods posed challenges for determining correlations between different variables. Due to students' varied and inconsistent response rate, the quantitative data sample (student questionnaire) accessed and measured a limited section of the student population's responses. Insufficient participation by church school students became an obstacle for providing valid general statements.
- Qualitative data (focus groups, semi-structured interviews and observations), respectively, depended strongly on the number and participation activity (availability) of the interview respondents and access to school premises, so timing was a crucial factor. School's closure for summer recess affected the research team's operation negatively by prolonging both quantitative and qualitative data collection.
- Against these challenges, the research team ensured the user-friendliness, clarity and precision of the data collection tools. Ethical considerations were taken into account in all stages of data collection.
- As specified in the "Sampling and Recruitment" section (3.4), the research team was concerned with recruitment procedures of arts educators. The research team requested support by external contributors such as heads of schools or EOs to provide access to arts educators; however, due to reasons beyond the research team's control such as availability and timing, in most instances the research team's professional network gave better access to such an audience. This procedure resulted in over or under representation of educators from one subject area than another.
- Sampling of semi-structured interview participants was largely limited to representatives from Malta. At the time of recruitment, no subject EOs from Gozo participated.

- Four art standalone subjects (art, music, drama and dance) were put in the focus of the entire research. Other areas like creative writing and singing could not be represented to the extent to which they exist in relation to the four standalone subjects (e.g. the combination of song-dance-music in musical drama). These and other areas of creative expression are considered as possible areas of research interest in future studies.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on discussing the research design and methodology that was used in this study. Significant details related to the mixed methods case study design, its origins, applications and limitations were given to justify the choice of methodology in relation to the RQs (RQs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

Each data collection tool was explained in relation to its qualitative or quantitative applications including a critical overview of strengths and weaknesses encountered. Additional information was given on important aspects of recruitment and sampling procedures, data analysis methods and ethical considerations explaining the measures taken during each stage of the research process. Lastly, this chapter informed on a number of limitations and shortcomings that emerged throughout data collection, and the mitigating measures applied as a response to these themes.

The following chapters describe and analyse the data gathered using the methodologies outlined in this chapter.

4. Findings: Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents quantitative and qualitative evidence that informs on curricular, pedagogical and professional dynamics and issues pertinent to arts education in Malta's compulsory and non-compulsory sectors; informs on the range of and access to facilities supporting these sectors; and queries the impact of COVID-19 collaterals on arts education.

To this end, the chapter's discussion will first consider facilities, namely looking at teachers, infrastructure and other provisions. Secondly, it considers the role and status of the arts in the broader curriculum, including instruction time and the effects of the pandemic. Thirdly, it looks at pedagogies, and does so by taking note of the pedagogical views of teachers, EOs and school administrators. Finally, it looks at stakeholder dynamics, including students' attendance of cultural events, collaborations with external entities and relationships between teachers and school authorities.

4.2 INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

This section considers the physical infrastructure, available physical resources (such as equipment and appropriate furniture), and human resources in several schools included in the study. The data in this section emerged during interviews and focus groups, as well as observations of premises carried out by four academics specialised in the fields of arts, music, drama and dance.

4.2.1 Human Resources[5]

Human Resources (HR) are the keystone around which the whole pedagogical edifice is constructed. Many interviewees, teachers and education officials themselves, with varying levels of expertise, experience and practice in the arts, are highly aware of the fact that they themselves, and their colleagues, are what many times make or break the development of a relationship between their students and the arts subjects in terms of understanding, familiarity, exposure, confidence with materials and expression, historical and social understanding, international dimensions and local relevance.

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5   The category of teachers was the predominant one in terms of references made by the educational staff, mostly consisting of teachers, interviewed. While the research team asked about other staff members, references to other categories, like LSEs, administration officers, SMTs and support staff, were sporadic.

The stresses provoked by the pandemic can hardly be exaggerated. Many teachers felt they were already struggling with delivering arts subjects effectively before, and the pandemic limitations and extra burdens, such as rampant replacements, made their profession more challenging, and very often dissatisfactory. Certain issues with the low level of arts subjects status, and consequently arts subjects teachers standing in schools, pre-dated COVID-19, and were exacerbated by it. It was noted that generally speaking, not enough teachers were available to teach the arts subjects, in all kinds of formal education schools. Occasionally, teachers left state schools for church and independent schools especially in music and art.

Dedication and competence, including regular training and updating of pedagogical and artistic skills, particularly for those teachers that privately practise their skills in the different art forms, was flagged by many teachers as a very important element in delivering successful and effective instruction to their students. While certain students were reported to have lost touch with the arts subjects during the pandemic, some teachers noted a renewed interest, a revamped dynamism, that they were keen to exploit and build on.

Teachers and educators are arguably the most important element in nurturing competence and a deep sense of value towards the arts in students, from young ages to more mature levels, and collaboration between themselves, and with stakeholders within the general education community, was noted as being essential.

In small schools, especially primary ones across all kinds, as is the case in small villages and Gozo, it was reported that art teachers are very important as they also make up for missing resources, while the island lacks drama teachers, with very few teachers covering many schools at the time of research (September 2022). Application openings are solicited, as there are potential teachers interested, who cannot apply. One school had twenty-three students for one teacher, whereas the norm in Malta seems to be any class over seventeen gets two teachers (FG Interviewee 2, drama, state, compulsory, primary, 'we need more drama teachers in Gozo, since 1 is in 1 school, 1 other is peripatetic working in 10 schools, and 1 is retiring now').

4.2.2 Availability, Dimensions and Resources

Many of the schools that were visited as part of this study have dedicated art studios, though not necessarily for all arts subjects. However, integrated data shows that there are some evident contrasts in the provisions of different schools. Unfortunately, in several schools dedicated arts rooms were changed into regular classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a disruption in the quality of educational provision. At the start of the new academic year in October, 2022, heads in state schools were given instructions to use these classrooms again as arts rooms, so a return to normality is expected.

Table 5 provides an overview of the main findings with regard to formal educational infrastructure.

Table 5 - Formal arts education: main trends concerning facilities

	Dedicated spaces	*Equipment*	*ICT*
Visual art	*Interviewee 13 / independent, compulsory, primary/ secondary, 'It is only the basics that are taken for granted, so for e.g. not enough sinks, adequate plumbing, good lighting. It's a general trend unfortunately that may apply to other education areas as well (science, languages): the new being more attractive than the basics.'* *Interviewee 8, non-formal, specialised, primary/ secondary, 'Proper art studios and spaces are necessary. Spaces must be used wisely. There needs to be a plan to enhance the space and resources together.'*	*Interviewee 12, state, compulsory, primary, 'In a small school, with restricted space, limited resources, limited budget – the main, almost only resource, is the art teacher themselves.'* *FG Interviewee 3, Art, church, compulsory, secondary, 'Students lack experience in using different materials. In primary school they are usually exposed to materials such as crayons, pencil colours and paints. Other materials, e.g. clay, soft pastels, charcoal are all new to them and therefore they face a challenge when they come to use them during their art lessons in the senior school.*	*Interviewee 11, state, non-formal, specialised, 'All classes with Interactional Flat Panels and all-in-ones; early resistance was overcome thanks to training and familiarisation.'*

	Dedicated spaces	Equipment	ICT
Music	Interviewee 4, music, state, compulsory, specialised/ primary, 'From organisations outside school, not much support is observed. When we ask the School of music we do find cooperation. There is no structure, and this would be helpful. Resources are a problem – every school should have 1 instrument available, e.g. 1 instrument per type e.g. violin, clarinet, trumpet, one from each area of string, wind and brass.' 'Space is a problem – all schools should have a music room, only few have. The few that existed were lost during the pandemic. Qawra is a good practice instance of maintaining a music room. It is difficult to carry musical instruments across the school.'	FG2 P6, music, state, compulsory, primary, 'Resource room is a problem to encourage the teaching and learning of music. Not enough instruments, or old instruments. In the music primary syllabus teachers are told to use certain instruments, to establish cross-curriculum connections (e.g with social studies), however this is not always applicable in class.' 'In contrast to Malta, in Scotland, arts education was highly valued but one is told "Do not compare with abroad, this is Malta".' Interviewee 4, music, state, compulsory, specialised, primary, 'We lack musical instruments.'	Interviewee 4, music, state, compulsory, specialised/ primary, 'Technology is often used through the interactive screen for PPT presentation/ YouTube videos/ quizzes for assessment. Not everybody uses technology for artistic expression, to upload textbook work, to make sure everyone is following. The website for music teachers where they find all the resources available is good. Teleskola was useful during the pandemic for recorded lessons for music.'

	Dedicated spaces	**Equipment**	**ICT**
Dance	*Interviewee 6, dance, church, non-formal, primary/ secondary, 'For dance, in church schools, facilities and premises that are intended and used for PE are made use of, so either the school gym and at times also the school hall (without sprung flooring); only one church school as what may be called a dance room, meaning including mirror and other facilities.'*	*FG Interviewee 1, dance, state, compulsory, primary, 'Resources over the past 25 years have become thinner at times, especially where the new schools made spaces for PE, sport and dance smaller or shared on non-existent. The problem lies in little importance being given to non-academic subjects, where academic subjects always take priority in use of space. Spaces tend to be planned to be multi-purpose, which provides poorly for the arts as not every space can be adapted and is right.'*	*FG Interviewee 1, dance, state, compulsory, primary, 'dance option students are encouraged to film themselves in preparation and building of their portfolio and technology is integrated into the approach; in a way it's making up for the pandemic shock to the system and the seizure of too much activity.'*
Drama	*FG Interviewee 2, drama, state, compulsory, primary, 'Resources are minimal, some Gozo schools do not cater for peripatetic teachers while not in class; arts subjects rooms and spaces are lacking, e.g. performance hall does not exist.'*		

While many schools in the state compulsory sector have arts studios, provisions for the arts vary from one school to another, especially in the primary sector. One interviewee spoke of huge investments made in tablets for Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 students, as well as interactive whiteboards, which turned out to be an important investment during the pandemic (Interviewee 2, visual art, state, compulsory, specialised, primary, 'In the state schools, tablets are distributed to all Year 4, 5 and 6 students. From next year (2023), all these students will benefit from the introduction of digital design, installed on each tablet. There is also a plan for VRs'). Others mentioned the fact that budgets in their schools provide them with new resources on a regular basis. Arts rooms in some schools are spacious and well-equipped; for example, the dance lessons in one of the visited state secondary schools are held in a studio with a sprung floor, a dance carpet and mirrors.

However, various interviewees referred to a lower status for arts education in the primary sector or indicated that not all primary schools in the state sector have dedicated arts rooms, while few schools invest in music educational technologies. Students of dance in some schools sometimes use multi-purpose rooms rather than specialised dance studios. An interviewee based in a primary state school in Gozo referred to an almost total lack of arts resources, with the school garden and grounds being the only real 'resource' other than the arts teachers themselves (Interviewee 12, state, compulsory, primary, 'Small school, restricted space, limited resources, limited budget – the main, almost only resource, is the art teachers themselves; other schools had art rooms, currently no; external resources are used, like garden and grounds, but no art room and related resources').

Having heads of school who are supportive of the arts is obviously an asset. In one of the primary state schools that was visited, the assistant head is a music specialist and promotes the subject; in fact, there is a digital piano in the music room and an acoustic piano in the school hall. The dedicated music room also has choral risers and storage facilities for instruments, sheet music, and other equipment. However, digital tools used during music lessons are the teacher's personal materials.

There is significant evidence that problems related to arts facilities intensified during the pandemic in some schools. For example, an interviewee said that all music lessons were shifted to students' regular classes during the pandemic in a primary state school while the music room was changed into a kindergarten class. Given that the school does not possess a mobile classroom and storage cart, no instruments could be used during lessons during this period. A new art room in another primary state school was virtually unused during the pandemic because, as the art teacher stated, more than half of their lessons were spent replacing absent teachers over a two-year period.

The situation in state middle and secondary schools seems to be somewhat better. The arts in some schools are well-provided for and also benefit from dedicated staff. One middle school included in the study has two available art rooms, with a third being planned for the coming scholastic year. In this school, a mini-gallery was recently introduced in the main building to showcase students' artworks, while a community garden with murals that was initiated by one of the art teachers helps to make the school grounds more colourful. The same school has two dedicated music rooms that are used by four music teachers during lessons and extracurricular activities delivered during breaks.

Other schools included in this study showed evidence of limitations. In one middle school, for instance, there is a dedicated dance studio that is used by a single full-time dance teacher, but its storage facilities are limited and it cannot be used with larger groups.

The state sector also offers a specialised secondary school which caters for both artistic and other academic requirements of students. Students studying music in the school benefit from the services of another music school in the vicinity. The school's facilities for music are good on the whole, with music stands and four digital pianos in the music lab. However, there are no facilities for the students to audio record their own compositions. In the same specialised school, there are also two art rooms, two spaces used by dance students, and two drama studios. Available rooms for the visual arts are equipped for the teaching of different artistic media and also have storage spaces, easels, display walls and lockers for students. One of the dance studios in the school is a dedicated space that has been created thoughtfully, with plenty of natural light and good ventilation. There are barres, a sprung floor and a dance carpet, as well as mirrors along one wall. The auditorium is also used for dance but is not an appropriate space for the subject. Teaching staff stated that a second fully equipped studio for dance is needed to support the growing programme. No showers are available, nor does the timetable allow for showering. Teachers are concerned that the needs of dance are not really understood.

While the available rooms for arts education in this specialised school are generally quite large, teachers indicated that some of these spaces, including the school stage, are in a poor state, with virtually no place for students to store their personal things. The drama room lacks curtains and has some challenges related to available lighting fixtures. Staff members indicated that some basic requirements cannot be purchased because there are no budgets to work with. The school would benefit from another purpose-built drama studio, a modern hall and the services of a light technician. Amongst the reasons given to explain problems related to arts education and facilities in this school are the fact that the head of school was changed three times in three years, lack of consultation with specialist teachers during initial planning stages, noise levels disrupting classes, lack of official funding, and constant construction works.

The situation in church schools is quite varied, and some schools showed a similar pattern during the pandemic. For example, in one school that was observed during the study, the use of the drama room was discontinued during the COVID-19 pandemic and drama lessons were shifted to the assembly hall. All four church schools included in the observations for the study have some arts facilities, with some limitations. For example, the drama room in one of these schools has a sound system, storage areas, costumes, props, drapes and wigs but no air conditioning or specific drama books in the school's library. Another school has an Orff instrumentarium for music lessons, two digital pianos, choral risers as well as a teaching storage cabinet for the subject but no conductor's platform, music stands or mobile classroom teaching, storage cart or music technologies. The room used for dance in another church school included in this study is actually the school gymnasium, which creates acoustic problems. Another church school lacked specific resources: for example, a sink in the art room (placing limitations on the use of certain artistic media, particularly due to the short duration of lessons in the arts). Another school rents out its auditorium for private performances, reducing the potential for school rehearsals.

Arts subjects in the independent compulsory sector are generally well-served, with some limitations. Some schools were affected negatively by pandemic restrictions too, but managed to find temporary solutions. For example, the use of a drama studio for early years was discontinued during the pandemic in an independent school but drama lessons were shifted to a large, external tent to make sure that students' educational entitlement was not curtailed. However, the lack of air conditioning and the bare environment in the tent are not ideal spaces for learning. The school also has a multi-purpose hall which is used for concerts, but it has poor acoustics. Similar issues, including a lack of air conditioning, were observed in another independent secondary school's ballet studio.

Other independent schools observed by the research team show evidence of support for arts education. For instance, a primary, independent school that was visited has two dedicated music rooms and a performance stage in the school hall. Another independent school has two dedicated dance studios, one of which is shared with drama classes. This school shares three dance teachers amongst its primary and secondary classes (one for contemporary/jazz, and two for ballet) and also offers students the use of two art studios, both of which have storage rooms connected to them.

Table 6 gives a summary of the main trends concerning facilities in non-formal educational environments.

Table 6 - Non-formal arts education: main trends concerning facilities

	Dedicated spaces	*Equipment*	*ICT*
Visual art	*Interviewee 11, state, non-formal, specialised, 'Fully equipped classrooms and dedicated budget to update and increment capital … dark room and multimedia room for drama upcoming after July 2022.'*	*Interviewee 8, state, non-formal, specialised, primary, secondary, 'Improvements are not as I would desire. Master plan with architects for the specialised schools to identify and justify the spaces needed (made 3 years ago). This plan has not been implemented due to political priority and vote catching.'* *Interviewee 9, state, non-formal, specialised, 'Two kilns in place (2 metres +) but instalments issues make them unusable for moment: Foundation for Tomorrow Schools a bit slow in processing instalment Lithograph press ordered but not delivered yet.'* *'Positive e.g. old printing press restored plus aquatint and fume boxes and chemical boxes and clay wheel.'*	*Interviewee 9, state, non-formal, specialised, 'Tech tools? Difficult to say – on paper there's acknowledgement and integration, but in practice due to state procurement rules most classes have inadequate tools (e.g. tower PCs for teachers that don't interact with touchscreen monitors used by students).'* *'The order for all-in-one PCs was only delivered at 50% of classes; also part time teachers, unlike full time ones, don't get a laptop or ipad, and out of 31 only 5 are full time – some bring their own, others rely on class PC and it being unreliable software tools were only made available to 1 teacher on the basis of a school guarantee that programmes were used for school.'* *'These are only a few examples which disheartened students and teachers, so the overall effect is demoralising.'*

	Dedicated spaces	Equipment	ICT
Music			Interviewee 5, music, state, compulsory, secondary/specialised, 'One of the Learning Outcomes Framework is on use of technology. There is free software to use whilst singing or for compositions. I hope technology will be used more, sometimes I feel teachers are not sufficiently acquainted with technology.' Interviewee 8, state, non-formal, specialised, primary, secondary, 'In the last years huge investments have been made in interactive whiteboards. Especially in the music sector there is more need of technology (e.g. techno music). It was very recently that we introduced the contemporary department of music. I believe there is space for more resources.'
Dance			

	Dedicated spaces	Equipment	ICT
Drama	Interviewee 14, drama/dance/music, independent, non-formal, specialised, 'Fully-equipped for performing arts, sprung floors, mirrors, theatre set up including seating in the round, air conditioning, four floors regularly maintained and spruced up every 2 years. Mostly privately funded, through main occupation. No particular support from state or European funds. Many times meetings, application processes etc. take too much time and do not offer return, it's not worth the candle. Private banks offer no special conditions, cultural sector loans are at the same rates of big business and private sector.'	Interviewee 15, drama/music/dance, independent, non-formal, specialised (written reply), 'Facilities are satisfactory at the moment for the simple reason that a big loss was suffered during COVID so the school has not managed to buy as many resources and make the necessary renovations it would have liked to over the past two years.'	

Many non-formal schools, particularly private dance studios, are available for young learners and offer a variety of different courses. Many schools offering evening classes in the arts are relatively well-resourced. All state, specialised, non-formal schools visited in this exercise were found to have good spaces for their subject specialisation or were recently restored. Dedicated rooms on their premises range from kiln rooms, printmaking rooms, painting and sculpture studios and life drawing classes to dance studios with sprung floors, large rooms for chamber music, concert halls, ballet studios and black box theatres. The dimensions of the observed

rooms range from relatively large spaces of around 100-150 square metres for theatre, dance or other performances to much smaller rooms for the teaching of specific subjects or artistic media.

The four visited state schools in this category were found to be in a good state of maintenance. In one dance and drama school under study in this category, more studios are needed even though its present studios are sizable. The school also does not have appropriate spaces for changing and showering before and after class. An art school included in this study has various air-conditioned rooms with amenities like easels, display walls, first aid kits and appropriate lighting for the teaching of art up to school-leaving age, though one interviewee based at this school stated that computer equipment is not available for all teachers. A school specialising in the teaching of music at different levels has digital pianos in every room, storage cabinets, a conductor's podium, music stands, a channel mixer, a good collection of Orff instruments and other appropriate teaching equipment.

Two independent, specialised non-formal schools were observed in the study and both were found to have very good spaces and equipment for their respective disciplines. One of them, specialising in drama and musical theatre, has been completely converted to cater for the needs of a modern school, with several studios, office spaces, storage rooms, and vinyl and lino flooring. The school does not have a separate stage because it is a training facility rather than a performance space. The second school is an independent dance school with five studios. The quality, size and varieties of spaces in this school allow for the development of small to very large classes.

Data collected from a stakeholder in a managerial position in another independent specialised school shows that establishments like these—though fully-equipped, air-conditioned and regularly maintained—tend to be privately funded and do not receive special financial support from official bodies.

4.2.3 Accessibility and Health and Safety Issues
Table 7 provides a snapshot of trends about accessibility and health and safety issues in formal education set-ups.

Table 7 - Accessibility and Health and Safety Issues in formal education

Majority / minority of schools	*Item*	*Quality*
Majority	*Ventilation & Light*	*Good*
Majority	*Health Standards*	*Good*
Minority	*Refurbishment & Relocation*	*Not Good*
Minority	*Works Dangers (e.g. Slipping)*	*Not Good*
Majority	*Wheelchair access (no lift, ramp)*	*Mixed results*
In comparable amounts	*LSEs for PE & dance*	*Mixed results*

The majority of compulsory schools included in the research team's visits were found to have good ventilation and no visible health and safety issues. The few exceptions would benefit from some refurbishment or relocation of spaces for physical activities. Among the areas that some interviewees highlighted, problems like slippery floors due to ongoing works near dance facilities were referred to. In a church compulsory school, the gym is two floors below ground level and is not air-conditioned, so the students in the dance classes cope with poor ventilation, heat and lack of natural light.

A state school specialised in the teaching of the arts has some accessibility issues: one of its art rooms and its music lab are inaccessible to wheelchair users due to the absence of a lift. Arts facilities in two state primary schools included in the study were also found to be inaccessible due to their location.

Awareness of special requirements also varies from one school to another. For example, interviewees in a church school said that it is up to the teachers to adapt the curricular needs to students with learning or physical disabilities. Learning Support Educators (LSEs) are not always available during Physical Education (PE) and dance lessons. On the other hand, in an independent school included in this study, a portable ramp was fitted to help students enter the space used for dance if needed.

The table below (Table 8) provides a glimpse at on-formal education accessibility and health and safety issues in non-formal education structures.

Table 8 - Accessibility and Health and Safety Issues in non-formal education

Majority	Health Standards	Good
In comparable amounts	Wheelchair access	Mixed results

No serious health and safety issues were in evidence in any of the observed service providers in the non-formal arts sector. However, half the schools (three out of six observed schools) are not fully accessible to wheelchair users. Three of the schools do not have a lift so rooms on upper floors are inaccessible to persons using wheelchairs. In one of the state schools in this category, only one room downstairs was found to be fully accessible. On the other hand, three other schools that were visited are fully accessible to all students.

4.3 ARTS IN THE CURRICULUM

In this section, the role and status of the arts in the broader curriculum will be investigated. Various factors indicate a subject's status, including its integration into other core areas and instruction time. Instruction time in the arts in compulsory education varies considerably in Malta, depending on the school one attends and level of education. The COVID-19 pandemic clearly affected instruction time in the arts negatively, especially in some sectors. Data collected in a questionnaire in this research study indicate that significant percentages of students in Years 6-9 never had lessons in specific arts subjects during the academic year 2021-22 (visual art - 10.9%; music - 29.3%; drama - 45.4%; dance - 78.2%). Figures are shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9 - Frequency of art subject lessons during 2021-2022

frequency of visual art lessons during 2021-2022		
	N	*%*
never	19	10.9%

frequency of music lessons during 2021-2022		
	N	*%*
never	51	29.3%

frequency of drama lessons during 2021-2022		
	N	*%*
never	79	45.4%

frequency of dance lessons during 2021-2022		
	N	*%*
never	136	78.2%

Missed lessons in the arts disrupted the achievement of curricular goals. It was also noted that the curriculum may be over-ambitious, too bureaucratically-oriented, theoretical and/or distant from real-life applications in class. Some teachers and other stakeholders suggested that the implementation of arts curricula could benefit from more travel, group work, recognition of diversity, renewed pride in being Maltese, international engagements, media productions and cross-curricular strategies.

4.3.1 Formal education - Provision

In the primary sector, lessons in the arts tend to be short (45 minutes) and students occasionally miss their arts lessons. As noted earlier, during the pandemic students in some schools missed out on many of their arts lessons because their teachers were replacing other generalist primary teachers. These random replacements were very demotivating and sometimes lasted a full week at a time; one primary art teacher described the situation as 'dirty work' (FG2 Participant 1, Art, compulsory, secondary, 'In primary sector COVID aggravated gradual lack of collegial consistency since meetings built on the concept of team teaching led to arts teachers acting as replacements'). Teaching music at primary to Y1-Y6 confirmed feelings of arts being neglected during COVID-19 (FG3 Participant 2, music, compulsory, primary, 'Arts were neglected in favour of other subjects and arts teachers spent a great deal of time on replacements. PE, while important in itself, was always given more importance especially in primary schools').

In some middle schools, students in Years 7 and 8 have one double lesson in specific arts subjects every week for only half a year. Dance, in particular, seems to be under-valued and is either integrated into the physical education curriculum or only offered to those students who choose it as an optional subject. In one of the middle schools under study, for instance, there were relatively few students studying dance during the scholastic year 2021-22: a total of 10 students in two Year 8 classes. An interviewee pointed out that this tendency to overlook the value of dance perpetuates the general perception that the subject is elitist and is quite restricted and dependent on factors such as the parents' or guardians' level of financial wellbeing, educational background and social aspirations (Interviewee 6, non-formal, primary, secondary, 'For dance, the mentality is still very elitist; those who do not feel part of the group, remain outside; the group, even in other arts areas, is restricted on the levels of financial affordability, also linked with educational background and social aspirations of parents: affording and wanting to invest in these fields').

On the other hand, instruction time devoted to the arts in a state secondary school specialising in arts education was much more substantial. In this school, students who opt and are selected for a specific art subject have eight lessons a week in Years 7 and 8, and continue with the same amount of lessons if they also select a particular subject in Year 9. Even though arts teachers in this school work with a very limited budget, the quality of students' work in the arts has improved as a result of the increased instruction time.

Church schools that participated in this study tend to dedicate relatively little time to the arts in their timetables. Drama and visual art lessons in Years 7 and 8 in two of the visited secondary schools were 40 minutes long, once a week for half a year. This increases to four lessons a week in Years 9, 10 and 11 if students select an art subject as an option. In some primary schools, students are exposed to a limited range of arts media, such as crayons, pencil colours and paint; this leads to various challenges in the secondary sector when students are faced with other materials like clay or charcoal (FG Interviewee 3, church, visual art, compulsory, secondary, 'Students lack experience in using different materials. In primary school they are usually exposed to materials such as crayons, pencil colours and paints. Other materials, e.g. clay, soft pastels, charcoal are all new to them and therefore they face a challenge when they come to use them during their art lessons in the senior school').

Similarly to state schools, dance in some church secondary schools is either part of the physical education curriculum or included as informal activities during the break. Some interviewees acknowledged that the curriculum could not provide students with the necessary training in dance and it is hoped that the situation will improve in the near future to benefit students whose families cannot afford private dance lessons (Interviewee 6, non-formal, primary/secondary, 'Dance festivals in schools today act more as showcases, but doesn't really get students who don't afford to get into private dance schools to participate – sometimes the festivals allow this introduction to be made, but occasionally').

The independent schools visited during this study include the arts at both primary and secondary levels as an integral part of students' timetables. In one of the schools, for instance, students in the primary sector have one lesson of drama a week. In another independent school, dance and drama are stand-alone subjects that all students participate in. In Years 7 and 8, the subjects are scheduled within the timetable, and students have lessons in both subjects once a week. In this school, art is also offered to students at both primary and secondary levels, while exhibitions and concerts are regularly organised. However, timetables tend to limit the availability of specific subjects: one

interviewee based in an independent school stated that the arts and PE are timetabled at the same time from Year 9 onwards, meaning that students may have to choose between the two areas (Interviewee 13, independent, compulsory, primary/ secondary, 'Once art subjects and PE become optional, they are timetabled at the same time, so students are really being told to choose, at that stage, between extra PE or art option for O Level. Visual art & design anyone can choose to pick O Level studies further on. There is also the normal art slot, which can be kept or dropped in favour of more PE').

4.3.2 Formal education - Value

Often, however, arts teachers and their subjects are valued only as mere curricular 'decorations' in school concerts during Prize Day and so on (FG2 Participant 3, visual art, compulsory, primary). Dance, in particular, fails to feature in many school curricula and, according to some interviewees, students are often told they will not find a career if they choose to study music or other arts subjects (Interviewee 6, non-formal, primary, secondary, 'Teaching seems to be the only career path with the arts and sports, and some students don't want that'; Interviewee 15, independent, specialised, selective, 'Before COVID, Malta had reached a point where parents were actually accepting that studying and investing in the arts could lead to a career. Unfortunately the pandemic has taken us a couple of years back again'). One stakeholder stated that all arts subjects are on the 'same low level' in state schools - the least important subjects in the curriculum (Interviewee 4, music, state, compulsory, specialised, primary, 'Arts subjects are in the same low level, least important subjects. Throughout all grades but it is felt more in the primary level'). The status of the arts subjects in many schools is inferior to that of core subjects like Mathematics, English and Maltese. Alternatively, students are encouraged to choose the arts because they are perceived to be 'soft' options.

In the light of the qualitative data analysis findings above, the research team queried select correlations using the quantitative data to further discern engagement with the visual arts subjects in formal education. The tables below (Table 10-Table 11) illustrate these findings.

Table 10 - Study the arts as an optional subject

		Art as an optional subject		Total
		yes	unticked	
type of school	state	9	72	81
	church	1	24	25
	independent	6	62	68
Total		16	158	174

X^2 (2[6], N = 174[7]) = 1.175, p = .556[8][9]

6 This number indicates the degrees of freedom.
7 This number indicates the total number of responses collided. When this exceeds the sample size (174 participants) it would be because each participant could choose more than one response (multiple response questions). When this number is smaller than the sample size (174 participants) it means that not all sampling units would have provided responses to 1 or both questions being collided.
8 This number is the Pearson Chi-Square. When this is lower than 0.05 (level of significance) there is a statistically significant difference between the responses.
9 However, this needs to be interpreted with caution due to the very low number of total cases actively responding to this question (below 20 cases)# - it needs to be considered that those who did not actively state 'yes' could include those who decided not to answer this specific question (i.e., besides those who do not study this subject at an optional level).

When looking at the type of school attended and the take-up of an art subject as an optional subject, no statistically significant difference, p-value .556.

Notably, a total of 40 out of the 174 participants study at least one of the four arts subjects at optional level.

Some interviewed teachers stated that arts education supports students' wellbeing and inclusion, and help to develop the skills and confidence that are the requisites of a holistic education. While some authorities and schools in Malta, particularly in the private sector, promote the benefits of arts education, tensions were also noted, with art, dance, drama and music jostling for timetabling prioritisation. Moreover, some interviewees noted that the engagement of students in out-of-school arts activities or tuition was discouraged by some parents who feel anxious about the perceived lack of viable career paths in the arts.

Table 11 - Study any 1 or more of the arts subjects as optional subject/s

		One or more of the Arts subjects as optional subject/s		Total
		yes	unticked	
type of school	state	16	308	324
	church	5	95	100
	independent	19	253	272
Total		40	656	696

X^2 (2, N = 696[10]) = 1.264, p = .531[11]

Perceptions about the benefits of creative education also depend on the support of heads of school. While some heads (especially those with a background in an arts subject) understand the value of a high-quality arts education, several interviewees referred to negative perceptions of heads of school and parents vis-à-vis the 'non-academic' arts subjects. During the pandemic, several heads used peripatetic arts teachers in the primary state sector for replacement duties. There is some indication that this alienated some teachers; more than one interviewee stated that s/he considered resigning from the job during the pandemic (FG1 Participant 3, visual art, compulsory, primary: 'changing career is a real prospect: shifting from art primary to secondary or private, or outside of education altogether').

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10 This number indicates the total number of responses collided. When this exceeds the sample size (174 participants) it would be because each participant could choose more than one response (multiple response questions). When this number is smaller than the sample size (174 participants) it means that not all sampling units would have provided responses to 1 or both questions being collided.

11 No statistically significant difference, p-value .531. However, this needs to be worded with caution due to the very low number of cases hailing from church schools (below 20 cases). It also needs to be considered that those who did not actively state 'yes' could include those who decided not to answer this specific question (i.e., even though they do study one or more of the Arts subjects at optional level, besides those who do not study this subject at optional level).

Interviewees referred to beneficial effects that could be acquired through more cross-curricular work, with themes like sustainability. Besides, some interviewees argued that the level of enthusiasm, creativity and commitment of arts teachers can make a difference in attracting more students to their subjects.

4.3.3 Non-Formal Education

In the quantitative research carried out with students, 23 respondents attended drama lessons after school (13.2%) while 151 did not (86.8%). Another 33 attended music lessons after school (19%) while 141 did not (81.0%). Another 34 attended art lessons after school (19.5%) while 140 did not (80.5%). And finally, 36 attended dance lessons after school (20.7%) while 138 did not (79.3%).

Table 12 - Students attending arts lessons after school

attend visual art lessons regularly after school		
	N	%
yes	34	19.5%
no	140	80.5%

attend Art lessons regularly after school

A REVIEW OF ARTS EDUCATION IN MALTA UP TO SCHOOL-LEAVING AGE
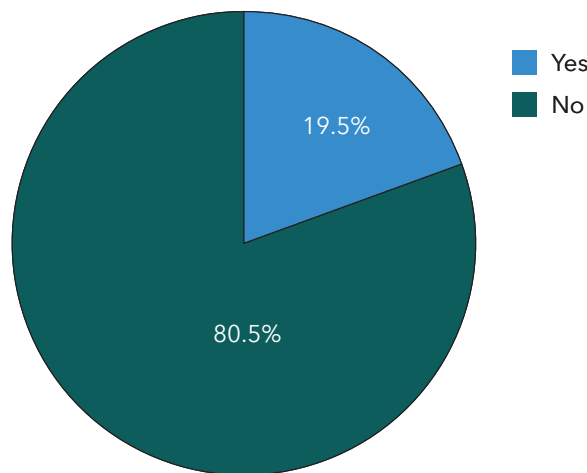
attend music lessons regularly after school		
	N	%
yes	33	19.0%
no	141	81.0%

attend music lesons regularly after school
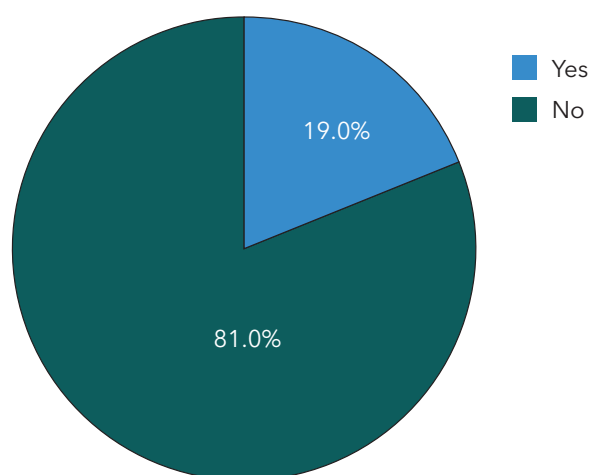
attend dance lessons regularly after school		
	N	%
yes	36	20.7%
no	138	79.3%

attend dance lessons regularly after school
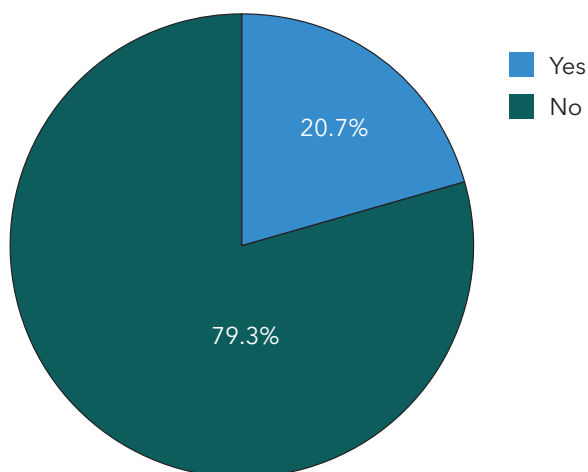
attend drama lessons regularly after school		
	N	%
yes	23	13.2%
no	151	86.8%

attend drama lessons regularly after school
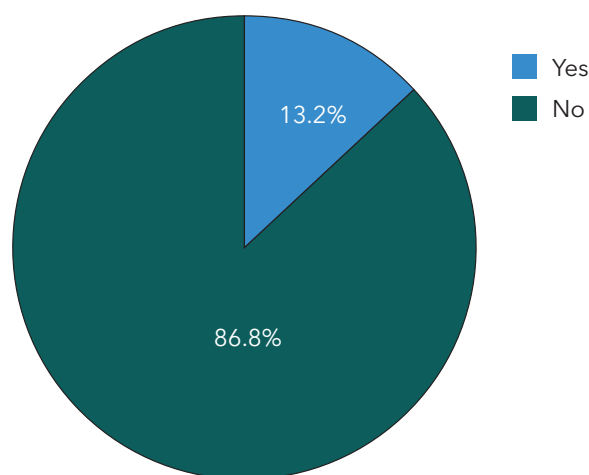
In terms of age cohorts, with regard to 9-10 year-olds, therefore generally in Year 6 and Year 7, there were 7 students who attended visual arts, 6 music, 15 dance, 2 drama and 136 none for a total of 167. With regard to 11-14 year-olds, therefore Years 8, 9, 10 and 11, 27 attended visual arts, 27 music, 21 dance, 20 drama.

The tables below (Table 13-Table 15) illustrate findings about after school lessons according to age cohort, type and level of school.

In terms of type of school, state school students attending lessons of one or more art subject/s after school comprised: 19 art, 14 music, 14 dance, 7 drama. For church schools, 7 art, 5 music, 8 dance, 5 drama. For independent schools, 8 art, 14 music, 14 dance, 11 drama.

In terms of level of school, for primary, students attending lessons of one or more art subject/s after school comprised: 11 art, 10 music, 18 dance, 7 drama, 229 none for a total of 275. For secondary, 23 art, 23 music, 18 dance, 16 drama, 340 none, for a total of 420.

Table 13 - Age cohort and attendance to after-school arts lessons

		Attend visual art/music/dance/drama lessons regularly after school					Total[12]
		visual art	music	dance	drama	don't attend any[13]	
age cohort	9-10 years	7	6	15	3	136	167
	11-14 years	27	27	21	20	433	528
Total		34	33	36	23	569	695

$X2$ $(4^{[14]}, N = 695^{[15]}) = 8.499, p = .075^{[16]}$
No statistically significant difference, p-value .075

Table 14 - Type of school and attendance to after-school arts lessons

		Attend visual art/music/dance/drama lessons regularly after school					Total
		visual art	music	dance	drama	don't attend any	
type of school	state	19	14	14	7	269	323
	church	7	5	8	5	75	100
	independent	8	14	14	11	225	272
Total		34	33	36	23	569	695

$X2$ $(8, N = 695) = 9.134, p = .331$
No statistically significant difference, p-value .331

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12   Numbers in this column are higher than 174 participants because correlation analysis of multiple response questions in SPSS requires replicating and stacking of cases for each possible response to obtain a situation where all responses available can be collided.

13   Numbers in this column are higher than 174 participants because correlation analysis of multiple response questions in SPSS requires replicating and stacking of cases for each possible response to obtain a situation where all responses available can be collided.

14   This number indicates the degrees of freedom.

15   This number indicates the total number of responses collided. When this exceeds the sample size (174 participants) it would be because each participant could choose more than one response (multiple response questions). When this number is smaller than the sample size (174 participants) it means that not all sampling units would have provided responses to 1 or both questions being collided.

16   This number is the Pearson Chi-Square. When this is lower than 0.05 (level of significance) there is a statistically significant difference between the responses.

Table 15 - Level of school and attendance to after-school arts lessons

		Attend visual art/music/dance/drama lessons regularly after school					Total
		visual art	music	dance	drama	don't attend any	
level of school	primary	11	10	18	7	229	275
	secondary	23	23	18	16	340	420
Total		34	33	36	23	569	695

$X2$ (4, N = 695) = 4.475, p = .346
No statistically significant difference, p-value .346

Table 16 - Age cohort and attendance to after-school arts lessons

		Attend visual art/music/dance/drama lessons regularly after school					Total[17]
		visual art	music	dance	drama	don't attend any[18]	
age cohort	9-10 years	7	6	15	3	136	167
	11-14 years	27	27	21	20	433	528
Total		34	33	36	23	569	695

$X2$ (4[19], N = 695[20]) = 8.499, p = .075[21]
No statistically significant difference, p-value .075

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17 Numbers in this column are higher than 174 participants because correlation analysis of multiple response questions in SPSS requires replicating and stacking of cases for each possible response to obtain a situation where all responses available can be collided.
18 Numbers in this column are higher than 174 participants because correlation analysis of multiple response questions in SPSS requires replicating and stacking of cases for each possible response to obtain a situation where all responses available can be collided.
19 This number indicates the degrees of freedom.
20 This number indicates the total number of responses collided. When this exceeds the sample size (174 participants) it would be because each participant could choose more than one response (multiple response questions). When this number is smaller than the sample size (174 participants) it means that not all sampling units would have provided responses to 1 or both questions being collided.
21 This number is the Pearson Chi-Square. When this is lower than 0.05 (level of significance) there is a statistically significant difference between the responses.

Table 17 - Level of school and attendance to after-school arts lessons

		attend visual art/music/drama/dance lessons regularly after school					Total
		visual art	music	dance	drama	don't attend any	
level of school	primary	11	10	18	7	229	275
	secondary	23	23	18	16	340	420
Total		34	33	36	23	569	695

X2 (4, N = 695) = 4.475, p = .346
No statistically significant difference, p-value .346

4.3.4 Curricular matters

A state school specialising in the teaching of drama and dance offers classes in ballet, flamenco, Middle-Eastern and oriental dance, freestyle, street dance and drama to over 400 students. All drama classes are MQF-accredited (levels 1-5) and the school has several part-time teachers of dance. Despite receiving limited official support according to a stakeholder, the school teaches many children and teens from 3-16 years in individual classes and groups and is run in a well-organised way.

Another school included in the study attracts many adult students to its different classes in sculpture, painting, printmaking and so on, and also offers young children and teens various courses that develop artistic skills and encourage experimentation with creative techniques. Though the school does collaborate with other entities, its curriculum is administered internally (Interviewee 9, state, non-formal, specialised, 'Not much input from external stakeholders in curriculum, but extra curricular in terms of projects yes: Design Cluster, *Spazju Kreattiv* and other organisations too (e.g. Transport Malta)'.

Yet another observed non-formal state school welcomes children from 4 years of age to its various classes in different arts. Around 1,000 students (including adults) attend classes at this school every day of the week in the afternoon and again on Saturday mornings. The school offers various introductory courses in basic drawing techniques, music and ballet to primary level students as well as more specialised courses in various areas, including the refinement of performance skills in the playing of specific instruments. Similarly, another state school included in the study specialising in music education offers introductory courses to young children (6-7 years old) and also auditions and teaches older students how to play an instrument.

An independent school focusing on drama and musical theatre included in this study offers winter sessions three days a week as well as a summer school in the performing arts. It teaches children and teens from 3-16 years, in individual classes and groups. Another private dance studio that was visited teaches many different styles such as ballet, tap, Spanish, and contemporary dance. Several part-time and full-time teachers are employed by this studio and their employment ranges from part-time to full-time.

4.4 PEDAGOGIES OF THE ARTS

The table below (Table 18) provides a picture of what students liked about the arts subjects.

Table 18 - Student preferences about arts subjects

like about arts subjects: I feel creative		N	%
ticked		100	57.5%
Missing	System	74	42.5%

like about arts subjects: I feel happy		N	%
ticked		80	46.0%
Missing	System	94	54.0%

like about arts subjects: I feel calm and safe		N	%
ticked		49	28.2%
Missing	System	125	71.8%

like about arts subjects: I can express my feelings		N	%
ticked		90	51.7%
Missing	System	84	48.3%

like about arts subjects: other reason		N	%
ticked		17	9.8%
Missing	System	157	90.2%

The table below (Table 19) provides data about the experience of online teaching and learning during COVID-19.

Table 19 - Age cohort and experience of online teaching & learning: arts subjects/COVID-19

		age cohort		Total
		9-10 years	11-14 years	
experience of online teaching & learning: arts / COVID-19	attended, satisfied	7	29	36
	attended, dissatisfied	10	33	43
	did not attend	10	38	48
	entitlement curtailed	3	3	6
	other	3	10	13
Total		33	113	146

The table below (Table 20) illustrates the type of school and experience of online teaching and learning in relation to arts subjects and COVID-19.

Table 20 - Type of school and experience of online teaching & learning: arts subjects/ COVID-19

		type of school			Total
		state	church	independent	
experience of online teaching & learning: arts / COVID-19	attended, satisfied	15	8	13	36
	attended, dissatisfied	12	5	26	43
	did not attend	26	5	17	48
	entitlement curtailed	3	2	1	6
	other	8	0	5	13
Total		64	20	62	146

The table below (Table 21), provides data about the type of school and experience of online teaching and learning in relation to arts subjects and COVID-19.

Table 21 - Type of school and experience of online teaching & learning: arts subjects / COVID-19 (with other response removed)

		type of school			Total
		state	church	independent	
experience of online teaching & learning: arts / COVID-19	attended, satisfied	15	8	13	36
	attended, dissatisfied	12	5	26	43
	did not attend	26	5	17	48
	entitlement curtailed	3	2	1	6
Total		56	20	57	133

The table below (Table 22) illustrates the level of school and experience of online teaching and learning in terms of arts subjects and COVID-19.

Table 22 - Level of school and experience of online teaching & learning: arts subjects/COVID-19

		level of school		Total
		primary	secondary	
experience of online teaching & learning: Arts / COVID-19	attended, satisfied	12	24	36
	attended, dissatisfied	14	29	43
	did not attend	23	25	48
	entitlement curtailed	3	3	6
	other	3	10	13
Total		55	91	146

This section presents findings related to students' views on the value of creative arts pedagogies and online learning as well as the views of teachers, EOs, administrators and other stakeholders about pedagogical issues and challenges in arts education.

The questionnaire used in this study collected information about students' interests in arts education. When asked what they like about the arts subjects, 57.5% of students in Years 6-9 stated that the arts make them feel creative, 46% said that the arts make them feel happy,

28.2% noted they felt calm and safe during arts lessons, 51.7% noted they could express their feelings (51.7%), and 9.8% noted other reasons. Students also had the opportunity to express what motivated their responses. Some students reported never missing lessons, especially after-school arts lessons. Many reported attending both formal and non-formal online lessons while some respondents noted they preferred developing their skills on their own.

When asked about their experiences of online teaching and learning in the arts, a slightly larger percentage of students in Years 6-9 stated that they were dissatisfied with online lessons (24.7% were dissatisfied and 20.7% were satisfied) while 27.6% reported that they did not attend online lessons ('Online classes are very boring. I don't want to go back online again'). Reasons given were varied. While some respondents felt that online lessons were just as good or 'fun' as face-to-face arts lessons, others stated that they are boring, tiring or challenging due to internet issues or lack of space at home ('Dance is very difficult to follow online but my teacher did her best and it kept me very active almost daily. Art I did online and managed quite well. I missed the interaction with friends though'). Others reported missing the enjoyment of real performances and interactions with friends as well as the possibility of learning new techniques ('Yes, I did attend online drama, music and singing lessons as well as dance and arts, however I did not enjoy them, as much as I am doing it now in dance school, drama school and the School of Arts').

4.4.1 Teachers and other stakeholders' views on online teaching and learning

In state, church and independent schools and particularly at primary level, teachers, administrators and other stakeholders reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on arts pedagogies, mainly for the following reasons:

1. Social distancing between teachers and students and among students themselves (FG3 Participant 3, music, drama, non-formal, specialised / drama, compulsory, independent, 'Teaching drama at primary and musical drama at independent school Year 1-Year 6 during school day hours and performing arts at specialised school in afternoon hours did expose limitations during COVID because of the social distance and lack of classrooms and spaces. However, in the first year post-COVID (2022), an increase of interest in drama was registered. Parents seem to have caught on to the importance of drama and music, and trust the field more. The arts are the first to go in the curriculum').

2. Limited engagement through online means (FG1 Participant 1, visual art, non-formal, secondary, 'In private schools, no great pandemic impact on art options as exemption was applied, however limited due to social interaction for non-optional lessons; avoided one-size-fits-all model; 'Pandemic effect observed on younger as well as Sixth Formers: students not driving themselves, settling for the minimum'; FG3 Participant 3, music, drama, non-formal, specialised/drama, compulsory, independent, 'Teaching drama at primary and musical drama at independent school Year 1-Year 6 during school day hours and performing arts at specialised school in afternoon hours did expose limitations during COVID because of the social distance and lack of classrooms and spaces').

3. Peripatetic arts teachers often replacing generalist teachers in the primary sector (FG Interviewee 2, drama, compulsory, primary, 'More understanding of peripatetic dynamics and relations with other teachers and students would really help: ironically their supporting role is not acknowledged, and teachers might still behave with a sense of superiority/disrespect towards them'; Interviewee 12, visual art, state, compulsory, specialised, primary, 'Because of COVID measures, mostly all peripatetic teachers, including those teaching Art, had to replace class teachers; Interviewee 7, compulsory, primary/secondary, 'Pre-COVID levels of

teaching were not optimal, but better, and honestly, one is aiming to attain them again mostly because during pandemic primary teachers acting peripatetically were deployed to teach other subjects – drama and art were available at primary, and art at secondary (only art) which was still not enough, but better than during and since pandemic'; Interviewee 10, state, compulsory, primary, 'Hopefully peripatetic teachers stop being used as replacements with easing of pandemic'; FG1 Participant 3, visual art, compulsory, primary, 'If pandemic is anything to go by, in primary arts subjects are not a priority – arts peripatetic were basically acting as replacements teachers with rare moments when to teach arts, disrupting plans and undermining confidence in teachers and relations with students: message all around was that arts are expendable', 'effect of pandemic: young students have become rather passive/lazy/comfortable').

The use of arts rooms in schools for other educational purposes during the pandemic contributed to a disruption in the quality of educational provision and transmitted a poor image of the value of arts education to parents, students and others. Speaking about this disruption, an interviewee based in an independent specialised school affirmed this state of affairs (Interviewee 15, independent, specialised, selective, 'Arts education within the mainstream schools took a step backwards. Arts teachers found themselves without rooms, equipment, sometimes even teaching other subjects. This clearly did not send the right message to both parents and students. In fact the message was: you can do without them, they are not important').

In a state primary school included in this study, the contexts and quality of music pedagogy changed during the pandemic; measures introduced during the pandemic limited all performances to classrooms. The pandemic also affected teaching in the secondary sector. All group work during lessons was prohibited, even though some art teachers indicated that this was actually impossible to implement in practice.

The references below provide a direct glimpse into the views shared by some of the interviewees: FG1 Participant 3, visual art, compulsory, primary, 'Need lessons longer than 40 mins in primary art; without art room in pandemic made things worse in terms of settling down: effectively lesson becomes 20 mins';

FG1 Participant 2, visual art, non-formal, secondary, 'In private school, Year 7 and Year 8 couldn't access art room, but Year 9 upwards could, with limitations (no collaborative work, sculptures, and close contact with teacher)', 'One impact of pandemic has been lack of keenness/motivation/drive in students, getting comfortable/appeased rather quickly – big challenge to recover motivation levels'.

However, other responses showed that in the immediate post-pandemic period, a positive feeling and upturn in interest of some students in arts subjects (particularly drama and music) was noticeable. An interviewee referred to a greater awareness of personal wellbeing and the benefits of learning certain skills through the arts:

FG3 Participant 3, music, drama, non-formal, specialised/drama, compulsory, independent, 'However, in the first year post-COVID (2022), an increase of interest in drama was registered. Parents seem to have caught on to the importance of drama and music, and trust the field more'.

4.4.2 Technology

Interviewees mentioned the importance of integrating the use of educational technologies in specific pedagogical requirements and training teachers in the use of digital media. In both the primary and secondary sectors, an unintended positive side-effect of the pandemic was a more efficient integration of technology in teaching methods in Art and drama. The regular upgrading of equipment was referred to as an integral aspect of school planning, management and up-to-date teaching strategies. While some schools support teachers with new software or equipment like interactive whiteboards, various music teachers reported having to obtain their own audio editing and recording software, piano mats, and so on. The long extracts below provide an insight into these views:

Interviewee 9, state, non-formal, specialised, 'Difficult to say – on paper there's acknowledgment and integration, but in practice due to state procurement rules most classes have inadequate tools (e.g. tower PCs for teachers that don't interact with touchscreen monitors used by students); the order for all-in-one PCs was only delivered at 50% of classes; school of art is not compulsory and teachers ar part time, so teachers are allowed by state to teach beyond 65 yrs (e.g. 81 yrs): computer literacy sometimes becomes problematic, undoing the expertise and experience that may be shared – distance learning during pandemic was not possible for the 70 yrs+ cohort; also part time teachers, unlike full time ones, don't get a laptop or ipad, and out of 31 only 5 are full time – some bring their own, others rely on class PC and it being unreliable. Software tools were only made available to 1 teacher on the basis of a school guarantee that programmes were used for school';

Interviewee 8, non-formal, specialised, primary, secondary, 'In the last few years huge investments have been made in interactive whiteboards. Important to have this in place before the pandemic. While all schools were in lockdown and discussions on how to proceed during COVID, our college started off with online teachers because our schools were equipped, and we made best use of it. More IT involvement is required – the digital department caters mostly for compulsory education. It is a struggle to instil interest in digital technology in our schools. On a general note, arts subjects were hardly taught during the pandemic. Mostly priority is given over compulsory education and less on specialised schools. Especially in the music sector there is more need of technology (e.g. techno music). It was very recently that we introduced the contemporary department of music. I believe there is space for more resources';

FG Interviewee 1, dance, compulsory, primary, 'dance option students are encouraged to film themselves in preparation and building of their portfolio and technology is integrated into the approach; in a way it's making up for the pandemic shock to the system and the seizure of too much activity'.

4.4.3 Continuous professional development

While policy has increasingly encouraged professional approaches to teaching in the arts and EOs provide regular support through their assessment of strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers, the importance of continuous professional development in all sectors of the educational system was also underlined (Interviewee 4, music, state, compulsory, specialised, primary, 'Some teachers have proper qualifications, others are supply teachers. Half of them are not pedagogically trained. Only few teachers graduate, some go to private/church schools or take artistic road. After school hours might be difficult to balance with part time teaching with the school of music').

Furthermore, keeping up training while teaching in the primary sector was described as being particularly challenging due to factors like the teacher-student ratio (FG Interviewee 1, dance, compulsory, primary, 'Not enough arts education teachers in schools is leading to fuller schedules, full loads, little time for extra-timetable activities, and higher stress and burnout levels').

Continuous training and upskilling through further studies was noted as necessary for teaching staff. Up-to-date pedagogies are key to the translation of arts expertise into teaching, especially with supply and newly qualified teachers (NQTs). Class visits by EOs help to assess and provide feedback to teachers, especially NQTs, about teaching methods (Interviewee 1, visual art, state, compulsory, specialised, middle, secondary, post-secondary, 'Some teachers and supply teachers are good artists but not proficient in pedagogy. Teachers attend and enjoy sharing ideas and difficulties by attending CoPE training sessions. Occasional professional development opportunities such as InSEA are important for teacher development').

Teachers need to remain innovative, but it was also noted that compulsory education is still geared towards and thwarted by the examination system, as set by MATSEC (FG1 Participant 2, visual art, non-formal, secondary, 'It is important to be involved in LOF redesign, prioritising student perspective/approach rather than resource priority/limitations; however, assessment and examination criteria are traditional since MATSEC considers resources provided, wages for invigilators, and a one-size-fits-all approach to all subjects, including art: contradictory and self-defeating'). Other arts teachers confirmed the contradictory and demotivating approach (FG1 Participant 2, visual art, non-formal, secondary, 'Art assessment innovations weren't and couldn't be considered by MATSEC; from 3 hours in pencil the exam became 2 hours in colour, making the assessment more facile').

An administrator connected to a specialised arts school argued that while some teachers may possess expertise in a particular discipline, their way of transmitting this knowledge to students may be outdated (Interviewee 8, non-formal, specialised, primary, secondary, 'It's worrying that some people's last training was years ago, for example in the music sector. It is important that students are exposed to different pedagogical approaches'). This interviewee continued by saying that professional development needs to be self-driven and that school authorities should grant leave for the further educational development of their staff.

A stakeholder based in a non-formal arts school also noted that available teaching degrees (such as the Master in Teaching and Learning degree) do not prepare teachers for the teaching of specialised disciplines in specialised arts schools. Unlike mainstream schools, these specialised schools are 'on their own', with the result that the professional development of teachers depends very much on whoever is in charge of running the school management. Recent developments have been positive and the training of both part-time and full-time teaching staff is becoming increasingly important (Interviewee 8, non-formal, specialised, primary, secondary, 'Now the school is undergoing a college plan and professional development is part and partial of this. Promotion of individual training is also important – since our schools employ a number of full time and part time educators, both types of education may benefit from abroad studies. It is still a challenge to enhance professional development – on pedagogy. Trying to create collaborative education practices collectively with other institutions for organising training and collaboration on a national level e.g. mobility or Erasmus projects'; Interviewee 9, state, non-formal, specialised, 'Training helps in team building, so during pandemic the long-distance contact helped maintain that to a certain level'; Interviewee 12, state, compulsory, primary, 'Art teachers are keen to

develop, engage and have their students do same; 'Resources will not increase realistically, but better use and collaboration should be a way forward – the online connectivity development over pandemic period helped open up the local to the global, supported by as many collaborations and site visits as possible').

4.5 STAKEHOLDER DYNAMICS

Part of the research looked at existing relations between schools and external stakeholders and community members, including international contacts, as well as relations between teachers and administrators, and the role of parents and guardians. Particularly, in state schools, it was noted that liaising between Education Officers and teachers needs to be stepped up, while authorities' lack of consultation of arts teachers in schools typically leads to bad planning. Collaborations between schools and cultural organisations can also benefit students' education in the arts.

4.5.1 Participation in cultural events

The online questionnaire used with students in Years 6-9 collected information about students' attendance or participation in cultural activities. Table 23 presents the data related to this topic. It is quite worrying that large percentages of respondents have never attended events in specific arts disciplines. More than half the respondents - 55.2% - stated that they never attended a dance show. 51.1% had never attended exhibitions in art galleries. 37.9% had never been to a show in a theatre, while 29.3% had never attended a music concert. When these figures are added to the percentages of those who stated that they attended such events less than once a year, it becomes clear that a relatively large percentage of respondents are not exposed to cultural events, particularly dance and visual art.

Table 23 - Frequency of visits to art events, spaces and activities

frequency of visits to art galleries		
	N	%
never	89	51.1%
once a week	3	1.7%
once a month	4	2.3%
once every few months	19	10.9%
once a year	33	19.0%
less often than once a year	26	14.9%

frequency of attendance to music events		
	N	%
never	51	29.3%
once a week	2	1.1%
once a month	3	1.7%
once every few months	51	29.3%
once a year	44	25.3%
less often than once a year	23	13.2%

frequency of attendance to dance shows		
	N	%
never	96	55.2%
once a week	1	0.6%
once a month	3	1.7%
once every few months	18	10.3%
once a year	25	14.4%
less often than once a year	31	17.8%

frequency of attendance to theatre shows		
	N	%
never	66	37.9%
once a week	2	1.1%
once a month	4	2.3%
once every few months	35	20.1%
once a year	40	23.0%
less often than once a year	27	15.5%

The number of respondents who, at the time of the study, stated they never attended any of the cultural events suggested in the responses (i.e., visits to art galleries/attendance to music events/dance/theatre shows) is significantly higher than those who stated they attended at any interval of time (i.e., once a week/month/every few months/year and less than once a year); and more than double than those who stated they attended once a year (who comprise the next biggest portion of respondents, Table 24).

Table 24 - Type of school and attendance to cultural events

attendance to cultural events	state	church	independent	Total
never	157	34	111	302
once a week	4	1	3	8
once a month	10	1	3	14
once every few months	47	26	50	123
once a year	53	19	70	142
less often than once a year	53	19	35	107
Total	324	100	272	696

X^2 (10, N = 696) = 22.394, p = .013

The number of respondents who, at the time of the study, stated they attended any of the cultural events suggested in the responses (i.e., visits to art galleries / attendance to music events / dance / theatre shows) once a week or once a month is significantly much lower than those who stated they attended every few months, once a year or less than once a year – even when those who stated attending once a week and once are collapsed into one category (total 22

respondents, as opposed to the next biggest portion of respondents, i.e., the 107 respondents who stated they attended any of the cultural events suggested less than once a year, Table 22). The research team carried out further analysis to investigate differences between the type of school attended and responses to this question. Table 23 shows those who at the time of the study attended church schools comprised a minority in every case. In view of limitations in recruiting questionnaire respondents from church schools, as explained in the Methodology, the research team queried for significant differences among respondents hailing from state and independent schools (Table 25).

Table 25 - Type of school (excluding church schools) and attendance to cultural events

attendance to cultural events	state	independent	Total
never	157	111	268
once a week	4	3	7
once a month	10	3	13
once every few months	47	50	97
once a year	53	70	123
less often than once a year	53	35	88
Total	324	272	596

X^2 (5, N = 596) = 13.498, p = .019[22]

More specifically, the statistically significant prevalence of those who stated they never attended any of the suggested cultural events was reconfirmed. Among these, students hailing from state schools prevailed in a statistically significant manner. The statistically significant paucity of those who stated that they attended once a week or once a month was also reconfirmed. Students hailing from independent schools significantly prevailed among those who stated they attended once a year. Students hailing from state schools significantly prevailed among those who stated they attended less than once a year.

No statistically significant differences emerged between visits to art galleries, attendance to music and dance shows and type of school (state/church/independent):

Table 26 and Table 27 detail the significant differences between frequency of attendance to specific cultural events and type of school attended. More specifically:
• A p-value of 0.018 when factoring state/church/independent school respondents attending theatre shows (Table 26); and
• A p-value of 0.003 when factoring in only state and independent schools attending theatre shows (Table 27).

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22 The p-value of 0.019 (Table 25) confirms statistically significant differences.

Table 26 - Chi-Square testing outcomes (p-values): specific cultural event factoring in state, church and independent school students

Specific cultural events	p-value
art galleries	0.101
music events	0.643
dance shows	0.129
theatre shows	0.018

Table 27 - Chi-Square testing outcomes (p-values): specific cultural event factoring in state and independent school students

Frequency of participation in specific cultural events	p-value
art galleries	0.053
music events	0.486
dance shows	0.076
theatre shows	0.003

The pertinent differences emerging from the findings tabulated in the tables presented in this subsection are:

• None of the respondents hailing from church schools attended theatre shows once a week or once a month (Table 28)

• Respondents hailing from state schools prevailed among those never attending theatre shows (Tables 28 and 29). This significant difference increased when factoring respondents only from state and independent schools (Since the analysis of responses on frequency of attendance to specific cultural events from state and independent school only yielded an even lower p-value (0.003, Table 27), i.e., lower than when querying for statistically significant differences between responses of state, church and independent school (p-value 0.018, Table 26), and the margins of error (MoEs) for representativeness of respondents hailing from state and independent schools are acceptable, it can be concluded that lack of attendance to cultural events statistically prevailed among respondents attending state schools.

• **Table 29**).

Table 28 - Attendance to theatre shows and type of school attended: state, church, independent

Frequency of attendance to theatre shows	state	church	independent	Total
never	40	7	19	66
once a week	1	0	1	2
once a month	3	0	1	4
once every few months	11	8	16	35
once a year	10	6	24	40
less often than once a year	16	4	7	27
Total	81	25	68	174

X^2 (10, N = 174) = 21.553, p = .01

Since the analysis of responses on frequency of attendance to specific cultural events from state and independent school only yielded an even lower p-value (0.003, Table 27), i.e., lower than when querying for statistically significant differences between responses of state, church and independent school (p-value 0.018, Table 26), and the margins of error (MoEs) for representativeness of respondents hailing from state[23] and independent[24] schools are acceptable,[25] it can be concluded that lack of attendance to cultural events statistically prevailed among respondents attending state schools.

Table 29 - Attendance to theatre shows and type of school attended: state and independent only[26]

Frequency of attendance to theatre shows	state	independent	Total
never	40	19	59
once a week	1	1	2
once a month	3	1	4
once every few months	11	16	27
once a year	10	24	34
less often than once a year	16	7	23
Total	81	68	149

X^2 (5, N = 149) = 17.687, p = .003

23   State schools, MoE: ±7.39% at 95% confidence interval and ±6.22% at 90% confidence interval (see Methodology, Table 3).
24   Independent schools, MoE: ±7.82% at 95% confidence interval and ±6.59% at 90% confidence interval (see Methodology, Table 3).
25   As explained earlier, the National Statistics Office (NSO, Malta) publishes findings when the margin of error does not exceed 29%. Additionally, it does not publish any counts (i.e., responses to specific questions) that are less than 20 (Methodology Unit, National Statistics Office (Malta), email communication, April 7 2016).
26   The research team opted to query responses of students hailing from state and independent schools only due to the limitations in representation of students hailing from church schools and related high margins of error, explained elsewhere in this report.

4.5.2 Collaboration with external partners

Interviewees referred to different kinds of collaboration, leading to different educational and social benefits. For instance, arts teachers can collaborate with other teachers through cross-curricular initiatives that link a creative subject with languages or other areas of the curriculum. Such collaborations require the support of school administrators (Interviewee 1, visual art, state, compulsory, specialised, secondary, post-secondary, 'It depends how teachers are willing to collaborate with other teachers, through initiatives. Cross-curriculum relationships with language teachers e.g comics. Social and environmental issues. PSHE etc. Such collaborations need more work. It also depends on the head of school who may encourage or not encourage such collaborations').

It was noted that the general perception that arts teachers in the primary sector are glorified babysitters does not encourage collaboration, particularly because peripatetic teachers are not usually invited to important staff meetings. Some arts teachers, in fact, spoke of an implicit segregation (FG3 Participant 3, music, drama, non-formal, specialised/drama, compulsory, independent, 'The arts are the first to go in the curriculum. The fact that arts are called extra-curricular activities has a "glorified babysitting vibe"').

Collaborations between schools and external entities like the local council or local businesses are generally easier in smaller urban or village contexts. Interviewee 12, state, compulsory, primary, 'Students respond positively and mention these experiences later on, following collection of feedback purposely done; a small school leads to collaboration across villages: parish priest, local businesses, local council therefore exploiting networks').

An interviewee based in Gozo spoke of the advantage of having a sense of community in a school. Personal contacts between staff members and parents could support positive parental involvement in school affairs (Interviewee 11, state, non-formal, specialised, 'Each school adapts to its own purposes e.g. in Gozo all 4 disciplines are together so synergies are exploited; 'In case of in-house productions where resources are pooled together across areas and making use of teacher familiarity and same premises contributing to community spirit, that also applies to students and their families').

Other collaborations with cultural centres and NGOs could build on relations with individual teachers, EOs and other stakeholders, leading to activities and events that offer new experiences that fall outside the usual school curriculum. On the other hand, one interviewee explained that input from external partners is not always positive since it is almost exclusively based on competitions (Interviewee 12, state, compulsory, primary, 'Many external initiatives end up going against and therefore undoing the work plans of art teachers').

It was noted that in independent non-formal specialised schools, it was crucial to sustain international contacts, in spite of financial and logistical difficulties (Interviewee 13, independent, compulsory, primary, secondary, 'The curriculum would benefit from more inputs from renewed sociality, travel, group work, discussion work, recognition of diversity of identities, renewed pride in being Maltese, international engagements, media productions (TV, radio), across the board with further inclusion of creative and artistic skills – a way of applying the arts to general social life too; Interviewee 14, independent, non-formal, specialised, 'Internationalisation remains a key priority to push the level up').

4.5.3 Relations between arts teachers and school authorities

A number of strong relationships between school administrators and arts teachers were reported; such relationships help to build positive and creative environments in schools (Interviewee 1, visual art, state, compulsory, specialised, secondary, post-secondary, 'Role of EO is important. It is part of the EO's job to visit teachers. Supply teachers need to be visited yearly for monitoring. Same for NQTs. EO is there to help and to guide').

However, other teachers referred to various problems related to the relatively low status of arts teachers. Teachers are increasingly expected to engage in administrative rather than creative tasks while some teachers feel that their expertise is not taken into account by school and other cultural authorities (Interviewee 9, state, non-formal, specialised, 'Admin structure at school requires competence, through adequate qualification, in the various arts areas: applies to admin staff, teachers and everyone else'; 'Head teachers dynamic is complex, conducive to creativity, and environment becomes a home, in spite of admin difficulties; lack of recognition, at times, of formal status of school of art, interferes with the work, especially with higher levels of admin within state structure; unfortunately, lifelong learning in the arts is reduced to hobbies').

Teachers in a particular school reported that they are concerned that the needs of dance are not really understood by educational authorities or policymakers. Similar concerns related to the lack of funding or authorities' interest in the arts, which were voiced by teaching staff in the art department in the same school. Across all types of schools, it was noted that the role of Heads of school was crucial in sustaining healthy teaching communities and increasing respect for the professional status of arts teachers (Interviewee 1, visual art, state, compulsory, specialised, secondary, post-secondary, 'It depends how teachers are willing to collaborate with other teachers, through initiatives. Cross-curriculum relationships with language teachers e.g comics, social and environmental issues, PSHE etc. Such collaborations need more work. It also depends on the head of school who may encourage or not encourage such collaborations').

Various interviewees reported cases of lack of respect or understanding of the arts, which are often considered to be merely 'extra-curricular' activities (Interviewee 4, music, state, compulsory, specialised, primary, 'Arts subjects are in the same low level, least important subjects. Throughout all grades but it is felt more in the primary level'; 'Interestingly, in terms of rooms/resources, between music and visual art it's like the battle of the poor, where sometimes art rooms are easier to manage and hold on to than music rooms, but it's not always the case').

4.5.4 Parents and guardians

One of the key groups of stakeholders this research considered were the students' parents and guardians. The questionnaire used in this study asked students whether their parents or guardians support their interest in arts lessons. The vast majority of respondents (83.9%) indicated that they received support from their parents. Only 4.6 % noted that they received no support while 11.5% noted that they received some support from parents.

Table 30 - Support from parents/guardians

support from parents/guardians		
	N	%
yes	146	83.9%
no	8	4.6%
sometimes	20	11.5%

Some interviewees indicated that parents who are interested in the arts often send their children to private lessons because schools provide an insufficient education in the arts. Besides, more respect for arts education within schools could translate into an increase in parents' support for the arts (Interviewee 15, independent, specialised, selective, 'We also need to place a greater importance on art subjects in our mainstream schools. Before they are seen on an equal level with other subjects, parents will not start believing in their importance').

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented findings of data analysis of qualitative and quantitative data informing the mixed-methods case study on the state of arts education in Malta's compulsory sector. In response to the main RQs of this study, overall, data analyses findings show the following:

RQ 1. What kind of arts education is being provided to children up to school-leaving age in Malta?

Generally, the higher levels of compulsory education provide students with a better quality education in the arts. At the entry level, most resources are basic, sometimes non-existent, or shared in terms of all components, namely HR, spaces, facilities and time. Specialised education also offers better quality and/or more instruction time in the arts. In the formal education sector, independent schools tend to offer an appropriate standard of arts education as well, since the perception of the importance of the arts to the development of students is higher. In state schools, lack of resources tend to be made up for by committed heads, dedicated teachers and pooling and maximising of resources.

RQ 2. What facilities exist for art, music, drama and dance education in different sectors of formal and non-formal education?

There exists a shortage of teachers, but many teachers encountered in the study are experienced and dedicated. They are overburdened, sometimes sidelined due to status of arts subjects, requested to replace teachers of core subjects in primary school, taken up by administrative duties, and sometimes in need of more training particularly with regard to pedagogy and use of IT. State schools tend to take long to implement upgrading plans, while independent schools tend to implement plans more swiftly. Facilities are varied in different sectors, though state primary and church schools tend to have fewer facilities. While the majority of schools that were

visited in this study were found to have appropriate studio spaces, several problems were also in evidence.

RQ 3. How do these facilities affect art pedagogies?

Facilities influence pedagogies to a great extent. Having sufficient and adequate facilities allows for pedagogical implementation to be as successful as possible. Several interviewees referred to the relationship between existing facilities and the full implementation of curricula as well as the status of their subject. Lack of resources is negative on a number of fronts: it limits work and has a disheartening effect on teachers and students.

RQ 4. What is the status of arts education and how were the arts in schools affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on arts education. Results show the impact was mostly negative, mostly felt in primary schools across all kinds of schools (especially in the state sector), and curtailed pedagogy and use of facilities. However, some teachers indicated an upturn in how the arts have been valued, and renewed enthusiasm in learning them. Others have noted that some schools seem to have fallen behind with progress that had been made in arts education, since other priorities have taken precedence over the arts.

RQ 5. What relationships exist between different stakeholders in arts education?

The relationships between various stakeholders in arts education differ. Generally schools tend to choose which projects and collaborations to pursue, since there is a great demand for arts projects with schools. Some praise the level and encourage collaboration, others note the disruptive nature of such projects. Small primary schools tend to develop their own community level collaborations, particularly in Gozo. Some schools seek collaboration of an international level, and some teachers are keen on extending the positive experience that they have benefitted from to their students.

5. Discussion

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study sought to describe, analyse and evaluate current conditions and dynamics relevant to arts education in Malta. Insights into various aspects of arts education have been gained following a review of key literature in the field and a presentation of findings retrieved from analyses of data collected with the help of different tools.

This chapter integrates and interrogates the findings to reflect about provisions that are currently available and identify possible lacunae. It also discusses limitations and presents a number of recommendations, inferred from the findings of data analysis; with examples provided by participants, when relevant.

5.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

5.2.1 Relevance

The findings of the study suggest that many stakeholders, including teachers and administrators, as well as relevant national policies, show an awareness of the value of arts education and role in the context of broader curricular goals. This recognition of the educational value of the arts in schools and beyond has been translated into various concrete initiatives, from the opening of new educational institutions and the introduction of new artistic genres by different establishments to an increase in international connections and funding schemes for arts education. It was noted that arts education has evolved over the years and that the national curriculum and national cultural policy have encouraged more professional attitudes towards arts pedagogies and support for talented students. UM graduates are now recruited as teachers after receiving a Master degree (rather than an undergraduate degree), while after-school courses in the arts offered in a variety of venues are generally well-attended.

However, the findings of the study also indicate that the arts are often neglected by educational authorities, despite potential benefits that students and society could gain from an increased exposure to the creative arts. In comparison with other areas of the curriculum, the arts still appear to be marginalised in compulsory education, particularly in the state and church sectors. Funds for creative projects in schools help to promote the arts and create partnerships between schools and artists or cultural organisations. However, the data also suggest that attendance to cultural events is not very widespread in the age-group included in this study. The lack of attendance is significantly more prevalent amongst students who go to state schools. Such omissions may show that national policies promoting the arts are not achieving their stated goals.

5.2.2 Instruction time in the arts

There are various inconsistencies in the provision of arts education in Malta. Different types of schools in Malta do not guarantee equal access to the arts and curricular entitlement. Students who attend independent schools tend to be exposed to more lessons in the arts than students in other sectors. The situation in middle and secondary state schools seems to be somewhat better than primary state schools, but visits conducted in schools showed variations in all sectors. A

specialised arts school in the state compulsory sector offers its students more contact time than regular schools during its arts lessons, and this has positively impacted students' achievement in the arts, but the instruction time of the majority of students in the state sector is relatively low. With regard to church primary and secondary schools, some efforts to comply with requirements for an effective delivery of arts lessons were noted but problems persist. One of these problems is the brevity of arts lessons in some schools, which often does not give students sufficient time to complete their work in class. Apart from affecting classwork, the lack of sufficient time for arts education is leading to a gap between national curricular goals and the actual implementation of lessons and acquisition of educational entitlement by students of different ages. This inconsistency runs counter to UNESCO's Seoul Agenda (2010), which highlights the value of offering lifelong access to arts education to learners from different social backgrounds.

The positive impact of the arts in students' personal lives and social and emotional development is not openly advocated in every school, and a kind of 'hierarchy' exists amongst the arts, with dance and drama receiving less exposure than other arts subjects. In contrast, private initiatives like social dance groups have blossomed in recent years, countering to some extent the relative lack of exposure in compulsory education.

The COVID-19 pandemic clearly exacerbated problems related to arts education and had a negative effect on the time devoted to arts subjects both in formal and non-formal education, especially in the primary state sector. While the pandemic presented policy-makers with relatively unique challenges, it is quite evident that the arts risk being marginalised in an educational system that tends to privilege other domains of knowledge.

5.2.3 Infrastructure and resources
Facilities for arts education were found to be generally appropriate in the majority of the institutions that were visited or discussed with relevant stakeholders during this study, but a number of problems associated with lack of resources, maintenance, budget and/or consultation were also noted. Participants in the study also referred to the loss of arts studios to other curricular areas during the pandemic. The accessibility of arts facilities is also an issue in some schools.
With regard to state school education in dance and music, it was noted that poor tools and resources were the main challenge that needed to be met. Awareness of the specific requirements of dance has increased in recent years but this curricular area and its facilities require a more professional approach. Insufficient numbers of teachers, especially in music, are also problematic. A specialised arts state school in the compulsory (formal) sector was found to suffer from a number of infrastructural deficiencies, including a stage in a poor condition. The school needs to invest in at least another large studio space that can be used purposely for drama. Educators who participated in this study identified the need to address ongoing problems in this school. Specialised establishments in the non-compulsory sector, including self-funded private entities, were generally found to offer appropriate arts facilities and resources.

5.2.4 Curricular and pedagogical issues
Various courses in arts education are in evidence in non-formal state and private arts schools and are very much in demand. Many educators in all sectors who participated in the study show a sense of dedication to their subject and students and also promote skills and benefits they consider to be associated with learning in the arts. Analysis of data shows that students in some schools, particularly in the church primary sector, experience a limited range of arts resources and strategies. Some participants in the study argued that the status of the arts can improve

if they are connected to cross-curricular themes and make use of different parts of the school premises. Skills that are developed in specific arts subjects can be used in the teaching and learning of other curricular areas. Indeed, interdisciplinary and contextual aspects of arts subjects like dance and art are also promoted in SEC syllabi and the *LOF*. However, this study showed that the implementation of collaborative teaching methods and pedagogies depends on various factors, including the teachers' attitudes towards such processes, initiatives taken by heads of school and invitations received from external entities.

The involvement of teachers in decisions related to curricula and policy was also encouraged. Consultation helps to boost teachers' professional status. While the commitment of teachers and heads of school towards their students' learning is crucial, it was noted that curricular goals (let alone curricular innovation) are sometimes difficult to achieve due to the number of missed lessons in the arts. In some sectors, delivery of the arts subjects remains somewhat ad hoc and dependent on teachers' commitment and other activities that source the arts.

During the pandemic, online learning became the primary mode of instruction in many schools. While some students expressed their satisfaction with the online arts lessons they received during this period, a substantially larger percentage of students either did not attend online lessons or were dissatisfied with lessons. One of the main reasons for being dissatisfied was a preference for face-to-face delivery in the arts.

5.2.5 Teachers' professional development and students' career paths

The teaching of the arts in Malta is largely carried out by specialists like music teachers, art teachers and so on. This is not only the case in the secondary sector but also, to a great extent, in the primary sector. During the two academic years affected by the pandemic, many specialist arts teachers in the state primary sector were instructed to work as generalist teachers. Some responses in this study indicate that situations like this contributed to an erosion of confidence in the value of one's profession amongst arts teachers.

Given the overall omissions in the sector, continuous professional development is clearly essential for teachers in the arts. Data show that teachers like to attend and tend to enjoy meeting other arts teachers at these sessions, whenever they are available.

Data about parents' support or interest in arts education is varied. While a vast majority of students (83.9%) responded that their parents or guardians support their interest in art, music, drama and dance, a number of educators and other stakeholders indicated that parents or guardians tend to discourage their children from choosing arts subjects because they worry about a perceived lack of career options. Attitudinal barriers associated with perceptions about artists' low incomes persist. More information about career pathways for students studying a subject like music needs to be disseminated, in order to support students and raise awareness among parents and guardians as well as leaders in education. Interviewees noted that this kind of support could build on work carried out by ACM, particularly through funding.

5.2.6 Attendance at cultural events

More than half the respondents - 55.2% - stated that they never attended a dance show. 51.1% have never attended exhibitions in art galleries. 37.9% have never been to a show in a theatre, while 29.3% have never attended a music concert. When these figures are added to the percentages of those who stated that they attended such events less than once a year, it

becomes clear that a relatively large percentage of respondents are not exposed to cultural events, particularly dance and Art.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section concludes the report with a set of 50 recommendations addressed to the different entities and stakeholders concerned.

The Ministry for Education, Sports, Youths, Research and Innovation

1. The Ministry needs to ensure that students of different ages and from different backgrounds receive a high-quality arts education and should strive to halt any current decline in the provision of arts education. In practice, this means that the Ministry needs to guarantee universal access to arts education, as recommended in *NCP2021*.

2. The field of arts education would benefit from a more socially embedded curriculum (e.g., more inputs from renewed sociality, travel, group work, discussion work, recognition of diversity of identities, renewed pride in being Maltese, international engagements, media productions (TV, radio)), with further inclusion of creative and artistic skills – a way of applying the arts to general social life too; as well as from the development of cross-sectoral strategies with other ministries, stakeholders and organisations. In particular, the Ministry should explore synergies with the ministry responsible for culture and the arts (Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government).

3. More instruction time for arts education needs to be promoted. Discussions with different stakeholders and professionals, including Education Officers specialised in arts education, need to be held to evaluate outcomes of any changes in timetables.

4. Budgets allocated to schools need to take the specific requirements of the different arts subjects into account. Specialist teachers and Education Officers should be consulted about requirements to ensure that allocated budgets meet specific needs in different contexts. Existing gaps in funding in this sector need to be closed.

5. School performances can boost students' engagement with the arts and help to build strong bonds between different stakeholders in a school community. Consequently, the Ministry needs to support all schools in having a hall / performance spaces equipped with required technologies, facilities, resources and access to services (e.g., Directorate/College-based light and sound technicians to support in purchasing equipment, performance-related operations etc.).

6. The Ministry needs to keep track of developments in the field of arts education in the country and invest in research about educational access and implementation strategies. Research helps to improve the status of the arts. Research about lack of attendance to cultural events, particularly among students attending state schools, could be particularly useful to explore possible linkages between instruction time in the arts, interest in cultural activities and other factors.

7. In-service teachers in arts subjects should be offered a rich variety of possibilities for continuous professional development that are informed by research and relevant to local teachers' needs. Interviewees in this study referred to courses in innovative pedagogies, technologies for teaching and learning, teaching composition (for music teachers), and sustainability as areas that could be offered for teachers' professional development. The ministry can collaborate on this with higher educational institutions and ACM.

8. The Ministry should ensure that specialist teachers are actively engaged in teaching the arts in their schools, not transferred to other sectors as replacement teachers.

9. A new arts education support service or centre within the Ministry should be considered. This would provide high-quality support to schools and other stakeholders to enhance their arts education programmes, reward excellent initiatives within schools and even in the broader community, develop collaborations with external entities and promote equitable opportunities in arts education for all learners. Such a support service could also initiate a yearly event dedicated to arts education in Malta.

10. The personal, social and other benefits of arts education should be actively promoted through the media. The dissemination of such information should aim primarily to encourage educators, students, parents and guardians to recognise the intrinsic value of the arts. The Ministry should promote the appreciation of the arts as a first step towards making the general public aware of further specialisation and creative career pathways that are available. Research about arts education should also be publicly accessible.

Schools

11. School administrators in all sectors (primary, middle, secondary, state, independent, church) should ensure that no barriers to a quality arts education exist. Under-achievement and missed opportunities in all the creative arts should be avoided by allocating a minimum amount of time to the arts and ensuring that a broad range of art forms, materials, specialised equipment and creative strategies are available to students.

12. Arts lessons should be carried out during the whole scholastic year in both the primary and secondary sectors and a minimum duration of lessons in specific subjects should be established and monitored. A thorough evaluation of changes in timetables on students' overall education needs to be carried out.

13. Allocation of sufficient time to the arts and safe, inclusive, spacious and creative learning environments for arts education need to be quality assured on a regular basis. Heads of department can be an asset to this process, particularly in church schools. All types of schools involved in formal and non-formal education need to ensure arts rooms on their premises are fully accessible to all students; whilst ensuring provision of a hall / relevant performance space equipped with required technologies, facilities, resources and services (e.g., light and sound technical support).

14. Heads of school should encourage the use of the arts to support the needs of all students, regardless of age, cultural background, race, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

15. Formal and non-formal schools should ensure that qualified Learning Support Educators are available during arts lessons to assist teachers and learners and support optimal teaching and learning conditions.

16. Heads and other persons in leadership positions need to keep themselves informed about quality teaching and learning in the arts. This helps to put creativity at the centre of school life and leadership.

17. Heads of school should actively consider leadership models based on shared expertise in order to promote the competences of arts educators and to take advantage of creative collaborations.

18. Cross-curricular links need to be promoted and implemented in order to enrich the arts as well as other areas of the curriculum. Amongst the cross-curricular links that were suggested, schools could promote the infusion of principles of Education for Sustainable Development

(ESD) in the arts and a STEAM (Science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) approach to the curriculum.

19. Schools should regularly promote the arts and creative thinking as integral parts of everyday life within school communities and beyond, not merely as token activities like end-of-year concerts. Partnerships with cultural organisations should be actively sought in order to promote collaborations and lifelong learning.

20. Heads should explore ways of engaging students in community affairs through the arts and integrating students' creative work in activities taking place outside of school. Such initiatives help to reinforce school-community relationships.

21. Parents and guardians should be informed through online platforms about further educational possibilities (such as diplomas, degrees and evening courses offered by non-formal entities) and career pathways associated with the arts. ACM can contribute to this process by providing accessible information about such pathways.

22. Heads of school must ensure that all students experience the arts directly on a regular basis through museum visits and attendance at cultural events.

23. Heads of school should seriously consider the benefits of inviting artists and other professionals involved in culture and heritage to schools in order to expose students to exciting and creative local projects.

24. Schools should assess students' access to digital technologies and promote their use in order to engage students more effectively and interactively in the teaching and learning of all the arts.

Teachers

25. Arts teachers should develop cross-curricular work with teachers and Education Officers in other arts subjects and disciplines in order to expand the reach of the arts, build a more united sector and enrich thematic and other research in their own subjects

26. Arts teachers should actively explore collaborations and exchanges with organisations like museums, band clubs, and other networks that teachers may form part of. Arts teachers should actively explore local areas of interest to increase the social relevance of their subjects.

27. Arts teachers should aim for inclusive environments in which students of all backgrounds and representing different perspectives are actively encouraged to participate during lessons, creative activities, exhibitions and performances.

28. Arts education and local cultural activities as well as creative school productions should be promoted in parent/teacher associations.

29. Professional development courses that strengthen skills in online teaching should be sought. Teachers should seek to hone skills in the use of digital learning tools in order to promote collaborative work amongst students and identify new assessment strategies in different arts subjects.

30. In the primary sector, generalist teachers should support the provision of arts education by specialist teachers (like peripatetic teachers) by integrating the creative arts in other curricular areas.

Arts Council Malta

31. The Council should ensure that its funding schemes reach a wide spectrum of students based in different schools. A special emphasis needs to be made on students in state schools, given that data show a significantly lower attendance to cultural events in this sector.

32. Further partnerships with the Ministry for Education, Sports, Youths, Research and Innovation that push for the promotion of arts education in schools and non-formal settings need to

be explored. Synergies that provide support and serve to guarantee and monitor students' entitlement in the arts should be given priority.

33. The ACM could collaborate with the Ministry for Education, Sports, Youths, Research and Innovation to research recent developments in the arts in Malta and develop short AV productions for dissemination among young audiences. This would help to stimulate an awareness campaign about recent and current trends as well as career pathways in the arts.

34. While adherence to curricula and syllabi is to be supported, further recognition of the skills and experience enjoyed by teachers, sometimes even directly in the arts and as artists and practised in non-formal and informal settings at community level, is recommended.

35. Strategies and schemes proposed by the Council should aim to grant greater autonomy to teachers in developing and delivering creative activities with students.

36. The Council may play a greater role as facilitator of communication between teachers, students and parents/guardians at community level, engaging current resources including regional culture managers, research officers and programme managers employed by or funded by the Council through the various existing schemes. This would help to nurture a greater sense of belonging to contemporary cultural expression at a local and regional level.

37. The Council should recognise the strain on learning environments due to a degradation in natural and urban contexts that are not conducive to positive educational settings by advocating for schools and cultural organisations to work together for more sustainable models of living inspired by a deep appreciation of the arts.

38. Over the span of two national cultural policies, and related measures, the Council has promoted entrepreneurship in the arts, combining access to and education in the sector to employment and economic generation. In the light of the persistent marginal presence of the arts in society at large, including the creative economy, the Council should realign its priorities to allow teachers, students and their parents/guardians to rediscover the inherent benefits of the arts to functioning well in society, starting from the school communities.

39. In line with its stated and practised aims promoting the international connections pertinent to arts practitioners in Malta and Gozo, the Council should further boost this dimension in its support programmes to teachers and students in schools.

40. Foster collaboration and strengthen dialogue with the formal and non-formal sectors by including representatives of arts educators in the governance structures of the Arts Council Malta.

Cultural and heritage organisations

41. Different kinds of cultural and heritage organisations need to guarantee an ongoing investment in arts and cultural education. Events and programmes organised in such institutions need to include educational activities as integral components in their plans, linking education to other spheres of social life and citizenship.

42. Arts education activities organised by cultural and heritage organisations need to ensure that they provide only high-quality education. Qualified arts educators need to be consulted and recruited to provide essential arts education services.

43. Cultural and heritage organisations should strive to work with schools to improve current provisions in arts education. Such partnerships should aim to strengthen existing programmes by consulting schools and teachers about their specific needs.

Higher Education Institutions

44. Higher Education Institutions and academic staff involved in teacher training programmes need to ensure that pre-service generalist primary teachers receive adequate training in arts education and develop further skills in linking the arts to other areas of the curriculum.

45. Higher Education Institutions should work closely with schools and relevant stakeholders to promote arts education and offer motivational professional development and other accredited courses like MOOCs to teachers and other stakeholders.

46. Higher Education Institutions should study different ways of ensuring that sufficient numbers of arts teachers graduate, in order to strengthen current numbers of arts teachers in schools.

47. Academics and other researchers should investigate the possibility of conducting further research about creative pedagogies, cross-curricular links, social inclusion and the arts, and blended teaching and learning in arts education, possibly with the support of international funds like Erasmus+ or through collaborations with the Ministry and ACM.

Teachers unions and professional associations:

48. Establishing a working group / committee within the union / association that includes representatives of arts educators and related education officers to advocate arts educators in a targeted manner.

49. Consideration of arts educators' needs and contexts flagged in this research study in the negotiations leading to the forthcoming collective agreement.

50. Provision of CPD opportunities, particularly those flagged as required in this report, possibly in collaboration with the pertinent ministries and the Arts Council Malta.

Glossary Index

Table 31 - Working definitions

Term	*Definitions*
Arts	*In this report, the arts refer to various branches of creative activity, namely art, music, drama and dance.*
Arts education	*In this report, 'arts education' refers to the teaching and learning of distinct creative subjects, namely art, music, drama and dance.*
Cross-sectoral collaboration	*A collaboration that strengthens alliances between different cultural and social sectors.*
Cross-curricular	*Connections between different subject areas in the curriculum.*
Cultural education	*The engagement of people in various forms of cultural expression.*
Cultural organisation	*An organisation that aims to promote and disseminate forms of cultural expression.*
Formal arts education	*Any arts education programme that forms part of an official, structured and accredited system. Usually, a formal arts education programme takes place in an accredited academic setting and leads to applicable recognition and certification (Council of Europe, 2021; Musneckienė, 2014).*
Generalist teacher	*A teacher in the primary sector who teaches most subjects in the curriculum.*
Inclusive education	*An approach to education that values diversity and equity: the provision of quality learning opportunities to all students, regardless of ability, background or special educational needs.*
Learning outcomes	*Concise descriptions of the knowledge, skills and abilities that students should possess on completion of a specific course.*

Term	Definitions
Non-formal arts education	*Any arts education programme that takes place outside the formal arts education programme. Non-formal arts education is understood as any arts education initiative that takes place "in a planned but highly adaptable manner" (Eshach, 2006, p. 173) and/ or featuring a flexible curriculum and/or a curriculum and methodology adapted to the needs and interests of participants (Zaki Dib, 1988). Furthermore, the educational process can be engaged within a community-based scenario that goes "beyond the spheres of formal and informal education" (Eshach, 2006, p. 173).*
Peripatetic teacher	*A teacher who teaches a particular subject in more than one school.*
Specialised school	*A school that is specialised in the teaching and learning of the arts or a specific artistic discipline.*
Specialist teacher	*A teacher who is qualified to teach a specific subject.*

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Appendix A

This research will study the different art forms that are offered in the Maltese educational system (visual arts, music, drama and dance), different facilities and pedagogies adopted in state, church and independent schools, and also present data relating to non-formal educational initiatives both in the public and private sector. The study, which will be limited to ages up to and including secondary level education, will provide a theoretical framework for the research project, systematically study current literature and curricula on arts education and analyse evidence relating to the various contexts in which arts education is provided. By embarking on a literature review, document analysis of Maltese and EU strategic policy documents and an evaluation of local case studies, the research will first establish the project objectives and follow this up with an analysis of the current state of knowledge within the field of Maltese art education. This will be followed by a mixed methods research approach that delves deeply into the field of formal and non-formal education in Malta, using qualitative and quantitative research tools based on the results of the literature review. These tools will help to collect rich data that can be integrated into a coherent picture of the field, including an understanding of the number of hours dedicated to different art forms, general attitudes and pedagogies adopted and preferences for specific art forms. This will be supported by a survey that will be sent to a number of schools, interviews with selected educators and stakeholders as well as, where possible, a description of existing facilities compiled through onsite visits and documentation methods.

The proposed project will comprise of four phases:

Phase 1 – *Literature and policy review.* Literature and policy review including arts education experts' comments and feedback on literature and policy review.

Phase 2 – *Data collection tools development.* Development of data collection tools (interviews, focus groups, surveys including translations and back translations Maltese & English) and related FREC procedures.

Phase 3 – *Data collection.* This phase will comprise an estimated 20 interviews, five focus groups, the distribution and collection of a survey and an estimated 25 onsite visits to arts facilities in schools in Malta and Gozo. This deliverable is highly dependent on the level of containment of COVID-19.

Phase 4 - *Data analysis and report writing.* The data will be analysed with comments and feedback from the arts education experts who will also review the report before being finalised. Indications of areas in local Page 4 of 8 provisions for arts education that require improvement as well as recommendations will be presented.

Deliverables:
1. Research tools that will include focus group and interview schedules, surveys, consent and assent forms (as required), of which use is approved by the University Research Ethics Committee;
2. A research report that documents the literature and policy review and the establishment of criteria for comparative analysis between schools and educational provisions for the arts in Malta and will point out lacunae in existing literature, indicating how this research ha filled these gaps in knowledge.

Appendix B

Objectives of the research study, A Review of Arts Education up to School-leaving Age Research Project:

This research will study the different art forms that are offered in the Maltese educational system (visual arts, music, drama and dance), different facilities and pedagogies adopted in State, Church and Independent schools, and also present data relating to non-formal educational initiatives both in the public and private sector.

Draft Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Interview schedule for interviews with stakeholders like EOs, heads, possibly MATSEC boards in the arts etc. and non-formal sector counterparts

A. Ice Breaker Questions
1. How long have you been involved in education?

Resources: Skills, Infrastructure, Time
1. How often are art subjects taught?
2. How long are the lessons in the art subjects?
3. How are technological tools integrated?
4. What resources are available in teaching any of the art subjects?
5. Are educators adequately trained and supported?
6. Do you think that any art form is given more importance than other art forms in schools?

B. Methodology & Approaches
1. To what extent are art subjects integrated in the core curriculum?
2. What value are the arts subjects given in the core curriculum of the Maltese educational system?
3. What tools and procedures (if any) allow the monitoring of curricular requisites for the arts subjects in the Maltese educational system? What strengths do such tools and procedures contribute to your work? What are their weaknesses/limitations?
4. What student assessment methods are used for the arts in the entity you represent? What strengths do such assessment methods contribute to assessment procedures? What are their weaknesses/limitations?Are parents/guardians involved in the development and evaluation of the curriculum of the arts subjects? If not, why? If yes, in which ways? Please give specific examples.
5. What benefits, if any, would such involvement contribute? Are there any limitations/disadvantages?
6. Are stakeholders from the non-formal education sector (e.g. NGOs, associations, community-based entities) involved in the development, evaluation or implementation of the curriculum of the arts subjects? If yes, in which ways? Please give specific examples. If not, why?
7. What benefits, if any, would such involvement contribute? Are there any limitations/disadvantages?

C. Attitudes & Perceptions of Status of Educators & Subjects
1. What value do high level colleagues (e.g. heads, assistant heads, etc.) give to art subjects taught in your school/college?
2. What value do teachers give to the art subjects taught in your school college?
3. Do you feel fulfilled in your profession?
4. What professional development opportunities exist for educators of the arts subjects?
5. Are these opportunities being availed of and what outcomes are being reached? Please give reasons / examples.
6. Are non-education industry professionals and the non-formal sector, e.g. NGOs, associations, community-based entities involved in the development and monitoring of the curriculum?

D. Practices in Class
1. What are the main challenges faced in teaching art subjects?
2. What key core competencies & skills should students acquire in the art subjects?
3. What are the main cultural values and influences referred to and practised in class?
4. Has the pandemic impacted the arts education in the formal, compulsory sector? If yes, in which ways? Please give examples.

E. Would you like to add anything else?
Thank you.

Appendix C

Draft Focus Group Questions

A. Ice Breaker Questions

How did you get involved in teaching your subject?

What kind of training did you receive?

How long have you been teaching (the art subjects)?

Do you enjoy keeping up with updates, news and innovative practices?

What are your favourite aspects of the (art subjects) syllabus?

What are your least favourite aspects of the (art subjects) syllabus?

Do you frequent manifestations related to art subjects (exhibitions, shows, etc)?

B Methodology & Approaches

How valuable are the art subjects to instruction of the core curriculum?

What is the main function of the core curriculum during instruction of the art subjects?

What are the main approaches and strategies adopted in class?

How do you evaluate the students' learning process during art subject lessons?

What changes to methodology and approaches adopted would you suggest?

C. Attitudes & Perceptions of Status of Educators & Subjects

What value do colleagues give to art subjects taught?

What value do students give to the art subjects taught?

What value do non-educators give to your profession?

Do you feel fulfilled in your profession?

Do you have a private practice?

Are you aware of professional development opportunities? Do you make use of them?

D. Resources: Skills, Infrastructure, Time

How often do you teach any of the art subjects?

How long are the lessons in the art subjects you teach?

How do you integrate technological tools?

What resources are available in teaching any of the art subjects?

Which resources do you use in teaching any of the art subjects?

E. Practices in Class

What are the main challenges faced in teaching art subjects?

What key core competencies & skills should students acquire in the art subjects?

What are the main cultural values and influences referred to and practised in class?

Do you teach in more than one school / class? If so, how many?

Has the pandemic affected your wellbeing and teaching practice?

What changes in practice would you recommend?

Appendix D

Draft Data Template Observation Schedule 27 February 2022
(to use during site visits to be carried out by experts)

A2	**Subject (Art/Music/Drama/Dance):**

General Observations

B1	Does the school have a dedicated room? If so, how many teachers make use of the dedicated room?
B2	If the school does not have a specific dedicated room, where is the subject taught?
B3	What are the approximate dimensions of the room - is the room large enough for the size of the class?
B4	Is there an interactive white board in the room?
B5	Does the room have enough natural light? What kind of additional lighting does it have?
B6	How many windows does the room have? Is it well-ventilated?
B7	Is the subject room accessible to wheelchair users?
B8	Does the room have any visible health and safety problems?

Music Observation visits

C1	Is there a mobile classroom teaching and storage cart available for the music teacher?

C2	Does the room offer a space for free music and movement practice?

C3	Is there a digital piano or an acoustic piano available?

C4	Is the Orff instrumentarium available in the school? If so, which are the instruments and are they used regularly during the lessons?

C5	Does the room offer space for a teaching storage cabinet? Can it take both instruments and sheet music?

C6	Are choral risers available in the room?

C7	Does the room have a conductor's podium, chair and music stand?

C8	Do the students perform on mobile platforms in class or do they practice on the stage in the school hall?

C9	Are students provided with music chairs and music stands for all music spaces, that is whether they are performing in the classroom or rehearsing on stage?

C10	Are there any display walls in the room? Is the display space sufficient? Are students' compositions displayed?

C11	Which music technologies are available in the school?

C12	Are there facilities for students to audio record their own compositions? Are students familiar with DAW?

	Content: A thorough review of those programmes offered in music education.
D1	Is there a music room/s available in the school? Do choral risers feature in the music room and is there an open space for movement?
D2	What are the facilities and resources available in the music room?
	a) Keyboard b) Instruments: Specify which: c) Music Scores d) Recordings e) Videos f) Documents g) Material documenting students' work
D3	What are the equipment and resources available in the music room? (Refer to Appendix A)
D4	Additional Comments

Other General Observation Questions applicable

E1	Availability
E2	Accessibility
E3	Organisation
E4	Resourcing of space

Art Observation visits

F1	**Questions related to dedicated art rooms** Approximate dimensions of room /s - is the room large enough for the size of classes? Is the board easily visible from every part of the classroom?
F2	What kind of storage space exists in the room, if any? Can it take both flat works (paintings, etc) and 3D objects?
F3	Does the room contain any sinks? How many? Are they large enough?
F4	Do children work on regular school tables? Or do they share tables? Are there larger working surfaces (tables) for group work? How are the tables arranged in class (for example, a traditional setup, or U-shaped)?
F5	Are there any easels in the art room?
F6	Are there any display walls in the room? Is the display space sufficient? What kinds of things are shown on them? (e.g. teacher's resources, children's artworks, etc.)
F7	Is there an interactive white board in the room?
F8	Is there a TV monitor in the room for use during lessons?
F9	Does the teacher have a separate room for materials, tools, or a kiln room?
F10	Which visual arts media does the teacher use most often? Does the school provide these media to students or do they bring their own?
F11	Additional Comments

Other General Observation Questions applicable

G1	Availability
G2	Accessibility
G3	Organisation
G4	Resourcing of space

Dance Observation Visits

	Speak with the on-site dance teacher if there is one, or the physical education teacher who includes dance – especially related to the dance option of the O Level in Physical Education.
H1	How is dance a part of the curriculum at your school? Is it a stand-alone subject? Or is it included as a part of the physical education curriculum?
H2	Do dance activities happen within regular classroom spaces as a part of an arts integrated curriculum?
H3	How many dance teachers do you have at your school? Do they teach dance full time, or do they also teach another subject?
H4	How many students participate in dance classes? (Total number as well as within each class).
H5	If it is a part of PE – How many students take up the option of the dance related portion of the Physical Education O-Level?
H6	What is the response from your students to having the opportunity to have dance as a part of their learning experience?

H7	Is there a dedicated dance space such as a dance studio? Or does it take place in a gymnasium or other space such as an auditorium or theatre?
H8	Do you feel the space dedicated for dance classes is appropriate? (Does it have the correct type of flooring, barres, mirrors, etc. Is it properly heated and ventilated?)
H9	Is there a clear understanding on the part of the school, of the health and safety needs for dance classes?
H10	Do students have appropriate spaces for changing and showering before or after class?
H11	What kinds of accommodations are in place for students with different physical or learning abilities in relation to their participation in dance classes?
H12	Additional Comments

Other General Observation Questions applicable

I1	Availability
I2	Accessibility
I3	Organisation
I4	Resourcing of space

Drama Observation visits

J1	**Get information related to the drama room.** Are there chairs/tables? Carpets? • Other fixed or movable resources: cushions, air condition, windows, natural light, interactive board, sound system, projection, screens, wifi, etc. • Decorations: with work produced from students? Drama charts or information produced by the teacher? • Availability of costumes, prop rooms, and other storage spaces
J2.	Where is the room located? Close to others? In a separate wing? What are the noise levels? (Drama lessons can be noisy!) How do they impact other lessons? How does noise/activity from other classes impact the drama lesson?
J3.	Is a separate stage available for lessons and/or rehearsal? Is it adjacent to the drama room? Distance?
J4	How well is the library equipped in terms of plays, resources, resources for planning sessions, etc.? Is there a dedicated drama section in the library?
J5	Additional Comments

Other General Observation Questions applicable

K1	Availability
K2	Accessibility
K3	Organisation
K4	Resourcing of space

Appendix A

A REVIEW OF ARTS EDUCATION IN MALTA UP TO SCHOOL-LEAVING AGE

Orff Instrumentarium

Rhythm sticks
Mallets
Boomwhackers
Drum sticks
Hand drums
Tambourines
Maracas
Shakers
Jingle bells
Scrapers
Recorders
Xylophone Specify number
Glockenspiel Specify number
Metallophone
Bongos
Wind chimes
Temple blocks
Bass Xylophone   Specify number
Bass metallophone
Snare Drum
Bass drum
Djembes

Other Equipment:

Keyboard/ Acoustic Piano
Decent sound system whiteboard with staves
Ipad to record lesson evidence
Channel Mixer
Cordless Microphones
Music stands

Appendix E

Questionnaire

Kindly answer the following questions

* Required

1. How old are you? *

    Type-in your age in numbers, e.g. 14

    _____

2. Type of school *

    Mark only one oval.

    ( ) State

    ( ) Church

    ( ) Independent (i.e., private school)

3. Level of school *

    Mark only one oval.

    ( ) Primary

    ( ) Secondary

4. SECONDARY STUDENTS ONLY: Do you attend Art/Music/Drama/Dance as
   General or Option subject?

   You can tick more than one response, tick all the responses that are applicable to your
   case.   If you are in
   primary school do not answer this question; go to the next question.

   Check all that apply.

   ☐ Art General
   ☐ Art Option
   ☐ Music General
   ☐ Music Option
   ☐ Drama General
   ☐ Drama Option
   ☐ Dance General
   ☐ Dance Option

5. How often have you had Art lessons at school this scholastic year (September   *
   2021 to present)?
   Tick only one response, the one that most applies to your case.

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Never
   ◯ Sometimes (1 lesson/week)
   ◯ Often (2 lessons/week)
   ◯ More often (2 or more lessons/week)

6. How often have you had Music lessons at school this scholastic year   *
   (September 2021 to present)?
   Tick only one response, the one that most applies to your case.

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Never
   ◯ Sometimes (1 lesson/week)
   ◯ Often (2 lessons/week)
   ◯ More often (2 or more lessons/week)

7. How often have you had Drama lessons at school this scholastic year   *
    (September 2021 to present)?

    Tick only one response, the one that most applies to your case.

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Never

    ◯ Sometimes (1 lesson/week)

    ◯ Often (2 lessons/week)

    ◯ More often (2 lessons or more/week)

8. How often have you had Dance lessons at school this scholastic year   *
    (September 2021 to present)?
    Tick only one response, the one that most applies to your case.

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Never

    ◯ Sometimes (1 lesson/week)

    ◯ Often (2 lessons/week)

    ◯ More often (2 or more lessons/week)

9. Do you go to Art, Music, Dance or Drama lessons regularly AFTER school? *
    For each subject tick "Yes" OR "No", as applicable to your case

    Check all that apply.

	Yes	No
Art	☐	☐
Music	☐	☐
Dance	☐	☐
Drama	☐	☐

10.   What do you like about Art, Music, Dance or Drama lessons?
       You can tick more than one response, tick all the responses that are applicable to your case.

       Check all that apply.

       ☐ I feel creative
       ☐ I feel happy
       ☐ I feel calm and safe
       ☐ I can express my feelings
       ☐ Other: _____

11.   How many times during the year do you visit Art galleries? *
       Tick only one response, the one that most applies to your case.

       Mark only one oval.

       ◯ Never

       ◯ Once a week

       ◯ Once a month

       ◯ Once every few months

       ◯ Once a year

       ◯ Less often than once a year

12.   How many times during the year do you visit Music shows, concerts or   *
       festivals?
       Tick only one response, the one that most applies to your case.

       Mark only one oval.

       ◯ Never

       ◯ Once a week

       ◯ Once a month

       ◯ Once every few months

       ◯ Once a year

       ◯ Less often than once a year

13.   How many times during the year do you visit Dance shows? *
      Tick only one response, the one that most applies to your case.

      Mark only one oval.

      ◯ Never

      ◯ Once a week

      ◯ Once a month

      ◯ Once every few months

      ◯ Once a year

      ◯ Less often than once a year

14.   How many times during the year do you visit theatre shows? *
      Tick only one response, the one that most applies to your case.

      Mark only one oval.

      ◯ Never

      ◯ Once a week

      ◯ Once a month

      ◯ Once every few months

      ◯ Once a year

      ◯ Less often than once a year

15.   Do your parents or guardians support your interest in Art, Music, Dance or   *
      Drama lessons?
      Tick only one response, the one that most applies to your case.

      Mark only one oval.

      ◯ Yes

      ◯ No

      ◯ Sometimes

16.   During the Covid-19 pandemic did you attend online Art/Music/Dance or Drama
        lessons? Write one or two sentences about your experience of the online
        classes.

        _____

        _____

        _____

        _____

        _____

Appendix F

Dear Head of School/Head of College Network/Head of Department/EO,

The undersigned are currently leading a research study commissioned to the Department of Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education at the Faculty of Education by Arts Council Malta titled 'A Review of Arts Education up to School Leaving Age'. This research will study the provision of different art forms (art, drama, dance and music) up to school-leaving age that are offered in Malta and Gozo by formal and non-formal, State, Church and Independent providers.

In order to conduct this study, the undersigned are requesting your permission to conduct:

1) Focus group meetings about arts education with small groups of arts subject teachers (held online, approx. 40-45 minutes).

2) Interviews about arts education with yourself, the Head of School/Head of College Network/ Head of Department/EO (held online, approximately 35-40 minutes).

3) Questionnaires about arts education for students from Year 6-Year 9 (Google form, conducted online, can be completed in 10-12 minutes), with further details to follow.

4) Visits to arts facilities in schools (art rooms, music rooms, etc) by experts in specific fields of Art, Music, Drama and Dance education (visits will last approximately 30 minutes each and will be scheduled in agreement with heads of schools and respective teachers).

In detail, the Head of School/Head of College Network/Head of Department/EO interview will be held on a one-to-one basis whereas the Focus group interview will be in small groups. Both interviews will consist of questions about pedagogy, attitudes and perceptions, along with questions of general nature such as resources and class practices.

Interviews with the participants will take place via Zoom and will be recorded. Participation will be entirely voluntary, and participants will be free to log-in using pseudonyms and withdraw from this study at any point, without any repercussions.

In order to start gathering our research data, we need to receive your official permission by kindly replying to this email.

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,

Professor Raphael Vella
Email: raphael.vella@um.edu.mt
Phone: +356 2340-2954

Dr Maria Brown
Email: maria.brown@um.edu.mt
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Dr Karsten Xuereb Research Support Officer
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Appendix G

Faculty of Education

University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080, Malta

Tel: +356 2340 3058/2932
educ@um.edu.mt

www.um.edu.mt/educ

15th November 2022

RE: Application for Research Ethics Clearance EDUC-2022-00074 Dr Karsten Xuereb

Dear Dr Karsten Xuereb,

With reference to your application EDUC-2022-00074 Dr Karsten Xuereb for Research Ethics clearance, I am pleased to inform you that **FREC finds no ethical or data protection issues in terms of content and procedure**.

You may therefore proceed to approach potential informants to collect data using the tools/documents outlined in this application.

You are reminded that it is your responsibility - under the guidance of your supervisor - to distribute Information Letters and Consent/Assent Forms that are written in appropriate and correct English and Maltese.

Yours sincerely

Dr Joseph Gravina
Chairperson Faculty Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education

Appendix H

GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
DIRECTORATE FOR RESEARCH, LIFELONG LEARNING AND EMPLOYABILITY

Tel: 25982743   **researchandinnovation@ilearn.edu.mt**

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Date: 5th May 2022

Ref: R03-2022 1085

To: **Head of College Network - GC**
From: **Director**

Title of Research Study: *A Review of Arts Education up to School Leaving Age.*
_____

The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability would like to inform that approval is granted to **Prof Vella, Dr Brown, Dr Xuereb** to conduct the research in State Schools according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the Ethics Committee of the respective Higher Educational Institution.

The researcher is committed to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research. The researcher will be sending letters with clear information about the research, as well as consent forms to all data subjects and their parents/guardians when minors are involved. Consent forms should be signed in all cases particularly for the participation of minors in research.

For further details about our policy for research in schools, kindly visit www.research.gov.mt.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.

Claire Mamo
MA Ed (Open)
Research Support Teacher
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability

f/ Alex Farrugia
Director
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability
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MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH,
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

The schools accessed as finally confirmed with FREC are below:

Dance

Malta Visual and Performing Arts Academy
St Michael's Academy/Foundation
Saint Nicholas College
SOPA in St Martin's College

Drama
Malta Visual and Performing Arts School

Music
Naxxar Middle School
St. Albert Church school Church school
Malta Music school
MVPA
St Paul's Missionary College

Visual Arts
MVPA
School of Art
St Michael Foundation
Middle school Gozo
St Paul's Bay Primary
St Joseph Sliema

Appendix I

Segretarjat għall-Edukazzjoni Nisranija
16, Il-Mall, Furjana FRN 1472
Num. ta' Tel. 27790060

Secretariat for Catholic Education,
16, The Mall, Floriana FRN 1472
Tel. No. 27790060

The Head
St Dorothy's School, Zebbug (Jr)
Sacred Heart College (Jr)
St Monica School, Gzira
St Paul's Missionary College
St Albert the Great College
Immaculate Conception

17th May 2022

Professor Raphael Vella, Dr Maria Brown and Dr Karsten Xuereb, currently conducting a research study commissioned to the Department of Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education at the Faculty of Education by Arts Council Malta titled "A Review of Arts Education up to School Leaving Age", request permission to conduct the following at the abo 8ve mentioned schools:

1- Online focus group meetings with small groups of Arts Teachers;
2- Online interviews with Heads of School, Principals;
3- Distribute online questionnaires to Students from year 6 to Year 9;
4- Visits to arts facilities in schools (art rooms, music rooms).

The Secretariat for Catholic Education finds no objection for Professor Raphael Vella, Dr Maria Brown and Dr Karsten Xuereb, to carry out the stated exercises subject to adhering to the policies and directives of the schools concerned.

Dr Ian Mifsud
Director for Curriculum & Standards
Secretariat for Catholic Education

Appendix J

Dear Teacher,

Good day and I hope this email finds you well.

I would like to bring to your attention the following information letter related to this research named 'A Review of Arts Education up to School Leaving Age'. Our research team and group of experts will be pleased to have your participation.

The undersigned are currently leading a research study commissioned to the Department of Arts, Open Communities and Adult Education at the Faculty of Education by Arts Council Malta titled 'A Review of Arts Education up to School Leaving Age'. This research will study the provision of different art forms (art, drama, dance and music) up to school-leaving age that are offered in Malta and Gozo by formal and non-formal, State, Church and Independent providers.

In order to conduct this study, the undersigned are requesting your participation in a focus group online interview which will be held on a group basis and will consist of questions about pedagogy, attitudes and perceptions, along with questions of general nature such as resources and class practices. The interview will be in a group of about 6-8 arts teachers from different arts disciplines (music/drama/dance/visual art).

The interview will take place via Zoom and will be recorded. Participation will be entirely voluntary, and your personal data may be coded upon request. You may decide to withdraw from this study at any point, without any repercussions.

For your information, the full research consists of the following:

1) Focus group meetings about arts education with small groups of arts subject teachers (held online, approx. 40-45 minutes).

2) Interviews about arts education with Heads of School/EOs (held online, approximately 35-40 minutes).

3) Questionnaires about arts education for students from Year 6-Year 9 (Google form, conducted online, can be completed in 10-12 minutes), with further details to follow.

4) Visits to arts facilities in schools (art rooms, music rooms, etc) by experts in specific fields of Art, Music, Drama and Dance education (visits will last approximately 30 minutes each and will be scheduled in agreement with heads of schools and respective teachers).

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned. We are awaiting your kind response, and desirably, your valuable input.

Sincerely,

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