

2024 Pre-Budget Document Proposals by

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry on:

EDUCATION

PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

1. Governance of education needs to be **insulated from political interference and the attainment of short-term goals**. The strategy be dynamic and forward-looking, with clear objectives and measurable KPI metrics.
2. A **full curriculum review as opposed to periodic add-ons** is needed. All levels of the educational system need to be included in a root-and-branch educational reform for citizenship and entrepreneurship. This is the best option considering the new and evolving work opportunities, particularly in the context of the parallel digital and green transitions. Learning needs to become predominantly skills-based rather than knowledge-based because with today's technologies there is little value in being able to memorise a lot of information.
3. **The purpose and methods of assessment needs to be re-examined** to make it more accessible and holistic. MATSEC must be independent but also engaged and participative. Micro-credentials and proof of skills mastery must replace traditional rote exams because schools need to prepare students for life, not for exams. Integration of industry certifications into school assessments is therefore also required.
4. **Interest in technology needs to be promoted from an early age**. A new core subject that includes computation thinking, coding and robotics should be introduced at primary school level to develop **digital skills at par with traditional core subjects**. Tech industry practitioners possessing the necessary expertise should be engaged to contribute towards the education of young students. Concurrently, funding should be allocated to create a **TechExplore Initiative to promote interest in Technology from Year 5 to Year 8**. This initiative should be funded separately and operated independently from the Education Department.
5. **There needs to be mandatory training/exposure for educators to technology** within their continuous professional development (CPD).
6. **AI needs to be incorporated in assessment**. Rather than ban its use, students should be encouraged to use it purposefully and mindfully, the way they would in real life.
7. Programmes that allow students of all ages to connect with personal, societal, and life challenges, such as **social emotional learning and service-learning** need to be integrated in the curriculum and **school hours extended** to provide enough time for a more complete educational experience.
8. There needs to be **better remuneration for teachers linked to productivity and performance KPIs and a reorganisation of their work, including their working hours**. The amount of influence that teachers have on their students, their values, their aspirations, their career choices and ultimately who they develop into as adults is second to none, except parents.
9. The uptake of STEM and communications subjects can be improved by introducing a **critical thinking and effective communication approach to learning from a young age sustained with**

special interest state schools for trades and STEM from a certain stage onwards. This is not segregation – rather, it involves placing children in learning environments that match their aptitudes and are geared toward fostering their skills, giving them a greater chance of succeeding.

10. To achieve a long-term sustainable transition, **students need to be re-educated along sustainable development pathways.** It is therefore pertinent to:
 - Embed 'Education for Sustainable Development' not as a project but as a mandatory, cross-curricular theme for all school-aged children
 - Incentivise teachers and tutors to take on sustainability agendas within all Malta's schools including state, church and independent schools
 - Provide financial incentives for schools to measure their carbon footprint and to implement carbon reductions within their operations as well as their value chain through green procurement, digitalisation, energy efficiency measures, waste minimisation, rainwater harvesting, water conservation measures, increasing biodiversity, providing a reconnection to nature.

LIFELONG LEARNING, SKILLING & UPSKILLING

1. Vocational education is essential in bridging the educational and professional divides. To respond to changing needs swiftly, **constant dialogue between the University, MCAST, and businesses needs to be maintained.**
2. Businesses need to **make learning an intrinsic part of their long-term strategy and planning** if they want to grow sustainably and remain competitive. This necessitates having a significant spending budget for training and turning workplaces into learning centres.
3. **A green and just transition requires a new set of green skills.** Anticipating and accelerating the development of these skills is crucial.
 - Technical and core skills should be incentivised through paid study leave and in-house upskilling programmes respectively.
 - Funding geared towards preferential grants and tax incentives for on-the-job courses locally and abroad that support the green transition should be increased.
 - Students taking part in Green Skills courses should be provided with paid internships in local companies with recognition towards their commitment.
 - Traineeships from other EU countries through attractive funding opportunities and ease of access to companies taking on internships in various fields should be encouraged.
4. **Students should be provided with vouchers to choose where and what to study at the post-secondary level** based on their educational achievements. Specialized approved private education programmes are generally well-tuned to the future needs of businesses and offer a high-quality service because private education provision is a highly competitive sector.

